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# Urban identity policies in Berlin: From critical reconstruction to reconstructing the Wall

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## Abstract

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, the East-Central European cities had to re-invent themselves to quickly adapt to a globalising world. Urban identity production policies were usually geared to connect to a chosen pre-socialist ‘Golden Age’, ignoring the socialist past as a simple disturbance of a ‘normal’ development path. This story the cities were to tell, however, frequently conflicted with the socio-economic realities of a rather unsmooth transformation process, making the socialist past part of the urban identity. In the case of Berlin, a post-socialist and at the same time a post-western-stronghold city, urban identity production is bound to be more complicated than anywhere else. After the failure of the policy to ‘critically reconstruct’ the cosmopolitan metropolis of the 1920s and thus erasing the past of the divided city, policies developed in the run-up to the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Wall aim at turning the Cold War past into a central element of the story that is to support its urban

identity, notably leading to the comprehensive re-emergence of the Berlin Wall in the cityscape. This policy “ unmatched in other East-Central European cities ” has its origins in a historic struggle for identity, leading to the questionable attempt to make “œchange” the main story Berlin is to tell. This theme however “ in conjunction with the reconstructed Wall as image brand ” may fall short of creating an urban identity accepted by large population parts.



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## Keywords

East-Central European cities; Berlin Wall; Critical reconstruction; Urban identity; Marketing story

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