Map critique :   Berlin during the Cold War

Growing up in Berlin, Germany for the biggest part of my life created a

very strong bond to the city. A throughout historical place with a lot of background, change and development, especially after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1998. Maps always have been and still are used as propagandist and political instruments mainly in times of

Figure 1: East German map with West Germany as a blank spot, 1988

conflicts like the Cold War. The separation of Germany and with it Berlin, presented a big problem to map makers on both sides. East German maps often did not even show the western part of the city but had a blank spot instead (see Figure 1). West German maps put the emphasis on the actual division and with that their separation from the outer world.

The map discussed in this assignment shows Berlin in 1964, three years after the construction of the wall. On the first sight the map illustrates the street network and some other futures but it does not need close inspections to realize the actual massage: the separation of West Berlin. The main element is the dominant red-brick, three dimensional wall that cuts the city into two. Eight little gaps in the wall and numbered circles are explained in the legend as border crossings. The three-dimensional barb wire surrounding the rest of West Berlin is another discouragement to anyone, who might have thought of crossing the border.
The most important buildings in the western part are pictured two-dimensional, numbered and explained in the legend. A few of the main buildings of the eastern part are shown but only as little rectangles, showing that the focus of this map lies on West Berlin. All roads are presented in white, whereby the main roads are wider. Because many long roads have more than one name throughout their length, there is a lot of

lettering, making the map look a bit untidy. The large railway network with the different trains such as long distance trains, elevated trains and subways are shown in different colours and explained in more detail in the legend. The lettering of the train stops are very small, especially in the dense city centre. Due to the fact, that trains from the West would not stop in the East, there are no stops ladled in the East. The dashed brown lines showing the district borders are not very visible and merge together with the different railway lines. However, the district names are additionally written down in the map showing their location. Furthermore, the crenulated blue line representing the canals also merge together with the railway tracks. The symbolisation for the two airports is chosen relatively big, making them stand out.

The colours chosen for the background are reasonable and not too bright. Nonetheless the outline of the waterbodies is a bit too intense and the green shades of the greenspaces and the cemetery are too similar.

The lettering is partly litigable and partly hard to see. In the denser city centre there is a lot of information, which might be hard to distinguish from each other especially for someone, who does not know the city. In terms of contrast, the lettering stands out from the background, giving it a good visibility. The form of the lettering is chosen well: the district names are bold and bigger than the rest of the lettering. Nonetheless, some of the district names are presented smaller than others which gives them the impression of being more important. Furthermore, the very dominant roman numbers are neither explained in the map nor in the legend.

The maps headline is short and clear but does not tell any additional information. There is no date or publisher shown. Also there is no north arrow. Two scale bars are showing two different units (kilometres and miles). The legend might seem very extensive and detailed on the first sight but everything is explained in 4 different languages (German, English, French and Spanish). Although it seems like a lot of information, everything in the legend is clear and visible.

Overall this map seems very busy and includes a lot of information and explanations. Nonetheless it shows Berlin with its street and railway networks and with a strong emphasis on the separation at that time.

BERLIN

West-Berlin

Ost-berlin

Potsdam