Deutschland eine Wiederbegegnung/A German Reunion

2 x 53’00 Radio documentaries

Broadcast: Deutschlandfunk/Radio Bremen/Saarländischer Rundfunk 1.10.2010

ABC Radio National, 9.10.2010

Research Background

This bilingual international radio co-production, commissioned by the ABC and three German public broadcasters for the 20th anniversary of German reunification, asks how the dramatic changes in German society since reunification have been reflected in the lived experience of ordinary citizens of the former GDR (East Germany). In particular, it asks to what extent a common German identity has emerged which embraces both East and West.

Research Contribution

This production employs an unusual and innovative “longitudinal” approach to documentary. The author, who speaks fluent German, travelled as a reporter in the GDR in 1990 shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In 2010 he reinterviewed some of the same interview subjects – an environmental activist, a young journalist, a writer - whom he met in 1990. From their biographies emerges an original portrait of social change, and of the transformation of one of the most environmentally devastated regions of East Germany into the headquarters of the solar energy industry.

Research Significance

The excellence of this production was demonstrated when it was chosen by a jury of German public broadcasters as one of three German entries in the prestigious Prix Europa (EU wide radio and television documentary competition) in 2011. Its environmental themes are significant for the author’s ongoing research on the emerging field of environmental journalism, on which he presented a peer-reviewed conference paper in November 2011.
'Let what belongs together, grow together.' Willy Brandt, former German chancellor, spoke those famous words shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, declaring that it was time to end the Cold War division of Germany.

This month, Germans are celebrating the 20th anniversary of reunification. Tom Morton travelled around the former East in 1990 as a reporter for the ABC. Earlier this year, he returned to meet some of the same people he met then, to find out how life has changed for them in a united Germany and whether East and West really have grown together.

Guests

Monika Maron
A prominent German writer and essayist.

Hans Zimmermann
An environmental activist from the town of Bitterfeld and former member of the German Federal parliament. Before the collapse of the GDR, he was active in the Green Network Arche, an underground environmental network under the umbrella of the Protestant Church.

Peter Bommels
A painter and Professor of Art at the Academy of Fine Arts at the University of Dresden. Originally from Cologne, he was one of the founding members of the Mühlheimer Freiheit, a group of young West German painters who came to prominence in the early 1980s (also known as the "New Wilds").

Heiner Müller
One of the most prominent and controversial East German writers and dramatists of his generation. He died in 1995.

Jan Peter
An independent film-maker, television producer and writer. He was a founding editor of die andere zeitung (DAZ), an independent newspaper which commenced publishing in Leipzig immediately after the fall of the Wall.

Uwe Schmorl
Chairman of the works council at Q-Cells, Germany's most successful manufacturer of solar cells, based in Bitterfeld-Thalheim.

Ralf Kerbach
A painter who was born in Radebeul, near Dresden, and studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Dresden in the late 1970s. He was expelled from the Academy in 1980. He was also a member of the avant-garde/post-punk group Zwitschermaschine.

Publications

Flight of Ashes
Monika Maron
Bitterfelder Bogen
Monika Maron

Further Information

LE Vision
Jan Peter's TV production company
Q-Cells
The solar cell manufacturer based in Bitterfeld-Thalheim that was profiled in the program

Credits

Tom Morton
Steven Tilley

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