

Stories without borders: the Berlin Wall and the making of global iconic event

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Abstrak

This book asks how particular news events become global iconic events, while others fade into oblivion. Focusing on journalists covering the fall of the Berlin Wall and on subsequent retellings of the event (from Legoland reenactments to segments of the Berlin Wall installed in shopping malls), it discusses how storytellers build up certain events so that people in many parts of the world remember them for long periods of time. The East German border opening that we now summarize as the fall of the Berlin Wall was in fact unintentional, confusing, and prompted in part by misleading media coverage of bureaucratic missteps. But its global message is not about luck or accident or happenstance in history. Incarnated as a global iconic event, the fall of the Berlin Wall has come to communicate the momentary power that vulnerable ordinary people can have. The events story, branded into a simple phrase, a short narrative and a recognizable visual scene, provides people from China to Turkey to the United States with a contemporary social myth. This myth shapes our debates about separation walls and fences, borders and refugees, and the possibilities of human freedom to this day.