



Population changes in Berlin & Beijing

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Before I went to Berlin, I did not realize I would end up liking and taking interest in the composition of the Berlin population. I am quite interested in cultural phenomenon in different countries and regions and I was thinking a lot about various things like their eating habits, customs, social life, etc. Before I go, I usually like to share information with some of my friends and like to talk with them. I remember that one of my friends who stayed in Germany for two years told me “you will see a lot of old people in Berlin.” I have heard of the problem of population aging is getting worse in Germany from the news. Moreover, a German student shared with me that he thinks there are not a lot of Berliners in Berlin anymore. I identified that I could relate with what my friends told me because I also noticed that in Beijing, there were less and less Beijingers too. I remembered what I have been told unnoticed. When I arrived in Berlin and walking on the street and different places, I cannot stop observing the environment around me. I had never felt so interested in observing different people, cars coming and going and the dynamic of the city in which I stayed. I can feel the elegant magnificence of the European style architecture, but I was more interested in the small tiny details of their cultural behavior.

While I was in Berlin, what I saw reminds me of the conversation that my friends told me. I indeed saw many people of different races. Surprisingly, I did not realize it when I first got there, but as time went by, what I saw confirmed the diversity in Berlin and what I was told. For example, there are different Asian restaurants and shops owned by Vietnamese. I also see Chinese restaurants and banks. One day, I went to the Turkish quarter where Turkish people are highly populated in the area. Walking through the street, I saw people from Africa and Arab. In addition, there were Russian artists in the subway station playing the harmonicon. I was also curious to listen to the local folks speak in German and wanted to know if the people in Berlin came from different parts of Germany and perhaps maybe spoke with a different accent. What I saw and heard made me realize the diversity of the Berlin population and at the same time reminded me of the diversity of my hometown, Beijing, the city where I was born and raised. Looking back, there were sweeping changes that were so easy to sense in my hometown. I remember when I was little, there were not so many people in Beijing and wherever I went, people spoke with a Beijing accent. Additionally, there were not so many streets, buses, and train signs that were bilingual yet.

The environment that a person grows up within is influenced more or less by that from my experience.. During my teenage years, the city started getting more crowded and welcoming people from neighboring provinces and then before I knew it, Beijing became loaded with people from all over China and the world. Living there, I heard many different accents and languages whenever taking a bus or train. Also, there were less and less people speaking with the local Beijing accent. In regards to my own views of these changes, I refused to accept it and

I started cherishing the old times. I missed the quiet and simple Beijing that I grew up in. However, looking back now at my friend's comment on Berliners brought back my hometown memories as well as my feeling of rejecting new things and changes back while I was in Berlin. I realized that I only saw the unpleasant side of changes while ignoring the delightful ones. I found myself as an outsider of the city would love to accept what Berlin presents to me today. When I was in the city, when I saw the crane and realize the construction of the city, I felt the change of the

My Experience

The Berlin trip helped me to realize the changes in my hometown and gave me an open mind to take a different view at the changes there. There may be are some similar reasons of change between my hometown and Berlin that are good for the city's development. Not only that, I feel the changes in my hometown helped me perceive the population changes in Berlin and how I view the changes in Berlin enriched my mind of seeing things from a different perspective. It even changed my ingrained opinion of my hometown's diversity. I want to compare the population changes in Berlin and my hometown, and want to know what makes the population diverse. Moreover, I believe History and government policies are definitely playing an important part in influencing the changes of the population. I will start my research paper with my observations in the neighborhood that I visited while I was in Berlin.



This picture I took it above was at one of Berlin's oldest neighborhood called Mehringplatz. The resident buildings are at least four or five stories tall and the bottom floor of the building consists of some convenient stores, fruit stands, little restaurants, etc. This neighborhood made me feel something very familiar of my hometown. Why did this neighborhood make such a deep impression on me? Wandering around the neighborhood, I felt like the residential buildings, the hustle and bustle of the morning market and people bargaining all were the reasons that brought me back to my hometown. It was a common and normal morning for the neighborhood, not so busy, but an image of a flourishing morning neighborhood appeared in my head. The design of the neighborhood meets the needs for people living there. The little shops make it convenient for residents in the neighborhood in their every day life. For example, a typical day could be to get breakfast downstairs and directly go to work without worrying about cooking for a long time in the kitchen. Furthermore, they do not have to go to a supermarket to buy groceries. All these shops play an important role in the neighborhood and greatly facilitates to people's life.

I kept observing the residence buildings wherever I went around Berlin. I believe the style of a residence building has something to do with the population constitution. I took this picture (Figure 2) when I was near the Jewish museum. There are some neighborhoods around the Jewish museum, which consists of tall apartment buildings like the one I showed above. Judging from the picture, the apartment is at least ten-stories tall. Moreover, if we guess the capacity of every floor then it can probably take ten apartments. The entire building would take a hundred apartments. If we roughly calculate there are at least two people in an apartment, there would be at least two hundred people in the whole building. It becomes a social practice in big cities to prefer more apartments than houses. Apartments can use less amount of land to take ten times as much as people in the neighborhood. With more people studying and working in the big cities, apartments become a top choice for living. The neighborhoods in Berlin are not strange to me at all.

I am from big cities like what I mentioned earlier and I do not even challenge the idea of big cities being highly populated, busy and claims it of having more opportunities to lure people to become part of it.



“I felt the change of the city will be more positive and promising.”

Let us take a look at the picture combination above. I saw a Sweden national flag hanging straight on the second balcony from the left on the third floor. On the right side of the picture is the one I took on SPSU campus. There is a Cameroon national flag hanging on the balcony on the third floor. When I saw that scene, it reflects back to my mind is that this apartment has someone else that “isn’t originally from” here.

Maybe he/she is a student or a worker, no matter what he/she’s occupation is, by doing so, I got the idea of the person stays in this apartment is a foreigner, and he/she is proud of it. This particular flag makes the apartment stand out among the standard balconies. My eyes were paying more attention on the flag than the entire building. I saw that these are parts of the city symbols of being diverse.



Behind the Diversity

Berlin reaches its diversity in many different ways. Berlin is home to 75 universities and institutions, in which two of them are global top-150 universities. Berlin attracts International students with low tuition fees and opportunities to work in big cities. According to the statistics from topuniversities.com, there are 84,000 students in different universities, in which 16% of them are international students, which account for 13,500. Take Humboldt university of Berlin for example, one of the top universities in Germany, there are more than 5,000 international students in the university, in which cover over 15% of the total students in the university. International students are from worldwide; include western, central and eastern Europe, Northern and Latin America, Asia, Australia, New Zealand and Africa. After the loss of World War 2, the population of the whole country declined. Take the city Berlin for example, “today’s Berlin has less than half the population that it has before the Second World War” (Cahn, 69). Germany left a deep impression on many people who believe Germany is not a country for immigration. However, it is true that Germany changes from a reluctant country of immigration to a country that welcomes immigrants. Berlin was separated in 1961. What happened to Berlin’s population during and after the Cold War? West Berlin participates in the “guest workers recruitment

schemes” between the 1960s and early 1970s (Clarence, 60).

These guest workers are mainly from the Mediterranean region especially from Turkey. The earlier intention for the guest worker recruitment was to fill the gap of labor shortage in industry, agriculture, and other working areas where needed labors to do low skilled works. They were given temporary visas and expected to return to their home countries after their temporary permits expires. A lot of them did leave, but this short coming and leaving system did not satisfy the employers and unions in the long run. Foreign workers are gradually receiving “permanent contracts” and there were more settlements for foreign workers. Now one large group of the guest workers became the largest ethnic group, the Turkish people, in Germany. There was a ban on foreign labors after 1973, but since those labors who came earlier were young men, “family reunification” became a legal way to bring Turkish woman to Germany and family reunification continues today (Clarence, 61). East Berlin accepted contract workers like from West Berlin as well as hosting refugees from socialist states such as Southeast Asia, Africa, South America, and Eastern Europe. According to the statistics I found online by the Cartographic Research Lab of the University of Alabama, Germany accepted 40,000 Vietnamese refugees between 1975

and 1989. There are up to 84,000 Vietnamese community groups in Germany.

The migration happened in the West and East in Berlin. After the reunification of the West and the East, immigration affected both parts of the city. Except the labor immigrants, refugees, “Ethnic Germans” were resettled after 1990. “Ethnic Germans” are those ancestors had been living in the countries of the Soviet Union (Beer, Deniz and Schwedler 1). There were approximately 126,000 people to whom were granted the German citizenship between 1991 and 2004 according to Beer, Deniz and Schwedler. They were either Ethnic Germans or naturalized German citizens.

Those immigration situation shaped Berlin today into its demographic diversity. I also did a little bit research on my hometown Beijing and compared the similarity and differences between these two cities. Beijing’s population keeps growing rapidly, with an annual average population growth of 3.8%, and migration is the key contributor to the growth. According to the statistics from news.xinhua.com, people who were originally from other provinces of China that became a permanent Beijing resident had an annual growth rate of 10.6% and make up for 35.9% of the total amount of the city residents. This ratio had increased compared to the last ten years and will keep increasing.

With a huge population of its own, China is a country that does not accept naturalized citizens and holds a strict immigration policies. However, with the globalization and the economic growth, there are a great number of international immigrants from different countries who came to China in search of study and job opportunities. According to the statistics of the sixth national population census, there are 593,832 foreigners residing in China and it is the first time for the census to count foreigners and the residents outside the Mainland China. It becomes hard to ignore the population of the foreign immigrants, who are playing an important role in the transformation of the Chinese society. Data shown by the National Bureau of Statistics that the top five countries of foreigners in China are the Republic of Korea, the United States, Japan, Myanmar, and Vietnam. International communities start to attract people's attention. It is estimated that there are 200,000 Koreans at Wangjing, Beijing and people are starting name the city "Korean Town". (Brooking.edu) International immigrants are becoming a new section of the cities and country's population. To sum up, both Berlin and Beijing have experienced dramatic demographic changes. The population changes in Berlin were under the influence of the immigration policy evolution after the Second World War and the Cold



War. The migration pressure of Beijing mainly comes from the people who originally from other parts of China and with the influence of the globalization and economic development, international migration emerges. The changes brought to both cities are filled with bright mingles and challenges. Immigrants contribute to the social and economic development of the city. However, Berlin faces the challenges of problems occurred during the immigration process as well as the social integration for those immigrants. Beijing has the pressure of having a large population inside the city as well as city pollutions created by overpopulation. In conclusion, regardless if it's Beijing or Berlin, population changes are a trend for both cities and how to appropriately deal with the side effects of the change, it then becomes an emerging topic for the cities.

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