

**Spectres of the Past, Prospects for the Future:
The Spatial and Conceptual Development of the 'New Berlin'**

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Abstract

For much of the 1990s, the central area of Berlin was most notorious as the largest construction site in Europe, with an aim to recreate an urban environment that had been all but erased by the ravages of the Second World War and the exigencies of Cold War division. After 1989, urban development plans called for the rejuvenation of central Berlin into a political and economic hub while also reflecting aspects of German culture and memory. The objective in many ways was to re-establish the city as an international metropolis by altering the physical landscape in order to conceptually acknowledge the spectres of its past, in anticipation of a re-energized future. In one sense, Central Berlin in particular was to represent a symbolic heart for the progression of the nation as a whole. It is with these factors in mind that this paper examines the following question: how do recent physical and conceptual developments in Berlin influence the interpretation of the past, present and future metropolis?

To address this question, three categories of Berlin's spatial and conceptual development since 1989 are examined: political, economic and cultural memory. Political structures are represented by the renovated *Reichstag* (German Seat of Parliament) and the former East German Palace of the Republic (*Palast der Republik*), both of which lie beside the Spree River. The construction of *Potsdamer Platz* and the Berlin Main Train Station (*Berlin Hauptbahnhof*) are examples of economic development. Finally, cultural memory sites are identified in the emergent 'Memory District', encompassing the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (*Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas* or Holocaust Memorial) and the Topography of Terror (*Topographie des Terrors*).

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Special mention should also be made of the group of thirteen Berliners who offered their time throughout the Spring and Summer of 2007 to participate in interview sessions throughout the city. I have always been fascinated with discussing German and European history with those that experience it on a daily basis, and it was a special opportunity to do so this time around. The same is also true for the representatives from various organizations that I met with as well; Ute Wueest von Vellberg, head of the Public Relations department for the Daimler Chrysler portion of Potsdamer Platz; Uwe Neumärker, the Executive Director of the *Foundation for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, Thomas Lutz, head of the Memorial Museums Department of the *Topographie des Terrors Foundation* and Hilmar von Lojewski, a representative from Berlin's Senate Department for Urban Development.

At the end of the day, though, it is my wife, Pascale that has always offered a wealth of inspiration, perpetual support and enduring love. Therefore, this thesis is dedicated to you.

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Introduction

Between 9 June and 9 July 2006, twelve German cities hosted one of the largest sports events in the world, the FIFA World Cup. While international observers applauded the sportsmanship of the games, more significantly there was widespread approval of the way that Germany had hosted the tournament.¹ As the capital of reunified Germany, Berlin was a central venue for the World Cup. Considerable effort was invested to create a vivid experience for all, both for soccer fans and bystanders alike. For instance, the opening hours of shops and museums were extended, transportation links adapted and free public viewing zones established. The largest public viewing site was located in front of the eighteenth-century Brandenburg Gate, extending nearly two kilometres along the *Straße des 17. Juni* to the nineteenth-century Victory Column.² An estimated nine million people gathered on the Fan Mile throughout the tournament before large television screens to view the action live.³ On days when the German national team was playing, the stretch was filled to capacity. For the estimated one million international soccer fans that came for the games, Germany had adopted the slogan “A time to make friends,” and the perceived success of this idiom was certainly apparent in Berlin.⁴

¹ Deutsche Welle, *European Press Review: Germans Should Be Proud* <<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2084777,00.html>>. British Prime Minister Tony Blair praised the organization of the event, noting that “old clichés have been replaced by a new, positive and more fair image of Germany”. This quote excerpted from Deutsche Welle, *Germans Earn Praise For Successful World Cup* <<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2084795,00.html>>.

² The Brandenburg Gate is the last remaining of the fifteen original city gates. It was designed by Carl Gotthard Langhans and unveiled in 1791. The Victory Column, dating from 1873 by Johann Heinrich Strack, originally stood before the Reichstag and is topped by Friedrich Drake’s sculpture of Viktoria, Goddess of Victory. It currently rests in a central spot within the Tiergarten park.

³ Deutsche Welle, *Berlin Fan Mile Beats Oktoberfest in Popularity Contest* <<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2094063,00.html>>.

⁴ Deutsche Welle, *European Press Review: Germans Should Be Proud* <<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2084777,00.html>>.



Image A “One Million at Brandenburg Gate” obtained from <http://www.press.ce.philips.com/apps/c_dir/e3379701.nsf/alle/D9DC250A0CF82839C12571A8003FB44F?opendocument/index.page>. Undated, but taken during the FIFA World Cup in June/July 2006.

In many ways, the World Cup became a reference point for the emergent ‘New Berlin’ and ‘New Germany’ to local citizens as well as regional and international visitors. This was exemplified by the Fan Mile, which lies in the geographical center of Berlin, the site of an extraordinary show of civic life during the games. This kind of activity had not been present in this part of the city since the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989, which had marked the informal end to four decades of political, economic and cultural division between the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany, FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany, GDR).⁵ Indeed, the German flag was last seen with such vigour in the days after the Wall fell. During the World Cup, every

⁵ Surely events like the famous Love Parade may have equalled attendance numbers on individual days – but the stream of visitors every day for a month was unparalleled.

imaginable way of displaying the flag was visible; on hats, shirts and the faces of those gathered. Apartment buildings, storefronts and offices were similarly bedecked with the adornments of civic pride.

Those visiting Berlin during the games may not necessarily have realized how much the city had changed since the end of the Cold War. In fact, for much of the 1990s, the central area of Berlin was most notorious as the largest construction site in Europe, with an aim to recreate an urban environment that had been all but erased by the ravages of the Second World War and the exigencies of Cold War division. After 1989, urban development plans called for the rejuvenation of central Berlin into a political and economic hub while also reflecting aspects of German culture and memory. The objective in many ways was to re-establish the city as an international metropolis by altering the physical landscape in order to conceptually acknowledge the spectres of its past, in anticipation of a re-energized future. In one sense, Central Berlin in particular was to represent a symbolic heart for the progression of the nation as a whole.⁶ It is with these factors in mind that this paper will examine the following question: how do recent physical and conceptual developments in Berlin influence the interpretation of the past, present and future metropolis?

To address this question, three categories of Berlin's spatial and conceptual development since 1989 will be examined: political, economic and cultural memory.⁷

⁶ Andreas Ruby, "The Eternal Return of the Void: German Architecture after German Reunification" in *New German Architecture: A Reflexive Modernism*, Ullrich Schwarz, ed. (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2002), 303.

⁷ Spatial development in this analysis refers to the tangible built environment of Berlin. As prominent urban design theorist Alexander R. Cuthbert explains, there is a powerful relationship between architecture, urban design and urban planning. While architecture as a term pertains to individual built structures, urban design references how cities as a whole grow and change to achieve their physical form and urban planning is conceived as the agent of the state in controlling these transformations. For more detail, see Alexander R.

Political structures will be represented by the renovated *Reichstag* (German Seat of Parliament) and the former East German Palace of the Republic (*Palast der Republik*), both of which lie beside the Spree River. The construction of *Potsdamer Platz* and the Berlin Main Train Station (*Berlin Hauptbahnhof*) are examples of economic development. Finally, cultural memory sites are identified in the emergent ‘Memory District’, encompassing the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (*Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas* or Holocaust Memorial) and the Topography of Terror (*Topographie des Terrors*).⁸ The focus on these particular structures reflects two specific aspects of centrality within the contemporary German capital. First, all six are located in or near the historic political, economic and cultural heart of Berlin, the Mitte district. Second, each site can be intimately tied to the fractured history of Germany since the foundation of the German Reich by Otto von Bismarck in 1871.

In recent years, a wealth of secondary literature has emerged exploring spatial and conceptual development. Hence, the utilization of such research will form an essential component of this thesis. One of the most influential works on this topic is Brian Ladd’s *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*. The book is a largely chronological examination of the urban history of Berlin from the original medieval city of Cölln, through the unification of German lands in 1871, to the ruinous episodes of European conflict as well as Cold War geopolitics of the twentieth century. Ladd’s two introductory chapters contain the theoretical foundation that has largely been

Cuthbert, *The Form of Cities: Political Economy and Urban Design*. (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), 1, 9 and 13.

⁸ A full listing of architects and completion dates for these six sites will be provided at later stages of this analysis. The term ‘Memory District’ has been brought into regular usage in part by Karen E. Till. In addition to the Holocaust Memorial and the Topography of Terror, Till also includes Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum. As she notes, the ‘Memory District’ “acknowledges a violent national past at the same time that it locates Germany as central to an emerging global moral community”. See Karen E. Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 196. Till, p. 196.

used to establish the framework of this thesis: namely, that buildings and places give form to a city's history and identity through an intricate and constantly evolving socialization process.⁹ Alexander R. Cuthbert further develops this idea by explaining that “since all human action is infused with meaning, so the spaces that we inhabit also are replete with symbolic values, collective memory, association, celebration and conflict”.¹⁰

As a cultural critic, James E. Young has similarly shaped this project by emphasizing the enduring place that Holocaust memorialization has secured both spatially and conceptually in Germany and worldwide. This position is unsurprisingly identified as ambiguous, particularly in the New Berlin, where politicians and citizens must reconcile the Germany of the present with the history and memory of the Holocaust. However, Young also posits that this ambiguity may also be of benefit as “the best German memorial to the Fascist era and its victims may not be a single memorial at all – but simply the never-to-be-resolved debate over which kind of memory to preserve, how to do it, in whose name and to what end”.¹¹ Nevertheless, as significant as this perspective may be, it remains the case that the actual completion of not only cultural memory structures, but also political and economic sites has also spurred continuing discourse in recent years as people visit and experience these sites firsthand, lending to the mix a whole host of new considerations for the imparting of memory.

The analysis of the identified political, economic and cultural memory projects incorporates multidisciplinary sources from a variety of perspectives not limited to

⁹ Brian Ladd. *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 1.

¹⁰ Cuthbert, *The Form of Cities*, p. 1.

¹¹ James E. Young. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 21.

history and sociology. For this analysis, of equal importance is the field of architecture. The public nature of architectural design competitions has allowed for access to large amounts of primary and secondary data when interpreting the development of the city, providing a candid glimpse into the very ideas that shaped the physical structures under examination here. Meanwhile, the evaluation of planning strategies, architectural methods and site design is often rather judicious. Hence, the secondary assessments have served to temper the individual viewpoints of the architects, allowing for a range of analytical perspectives.

Despite the flurry of interest in specific architectural sites, there has been a relative absence of comprehensive analyses of the spatial and conceptual development in Berlin since the release of Ladd's The Ghosts of Berlin in 1997. While numerous studies have addressed individual topics related to the political, economic and cultural memory development in the city, an encompassing study echoing the correlations between these categories has yet to surface. In the span of the last ten years, the nature of spatial development has likewise changed in Berlin. Some of the projects of focus for Ladd were not yet completed or remain undeveloped, while other sites have been finished and open to the public for a number of years.

Drawing on Ladd's contribution in shaping the terms of debate, a grassroots research method was adopted for this project that involved interviewing long-term residents of Berlin. The purpose was to have Berliners consider the relationship between the spatial and conceptual development of Central Berlin within the context of the six sites outlined above. Given the breadth of historiography on these subjects in contemporary Berlin, the value of including grassroots data provides an innovative and

unique contribution to the related scholarship. It also extends the discussion beyond the desires of city planners and architects in to the realm of public discourse and self-reflection.

Throughout the summer of 2007, thirteen citizens of Berlin took part in an interview process.¹² Twelve had responded to an open ended email sent in April 2007 via Katrin Hecker, Coordinator of the *BalticStudyNet* at Humboldt University Berlin.¹³ Each participant filled out a brief questionnaire pertaining to relevant personal background information.¹⁴ Responses were typically short sentence length. Participants then took part in an oral interview, which was taped on a digital voice recorder, each lasting about one hour. A set of open-ended questions was established that allowed for a great deal of leeway when a subject of particular interest arose. This approach allowed for responses that distinguished an individuals' perception of commonly recognized themes within the established discourse of spatial development in Berlin.

Each of the interviewees was a long-term resident of Berlin, thereby having experienced the city before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The youngest participant was 29 while the oldest was 44. The balance between former East and West Berliners was almost even – seven experienced the time before the Wall from the west side, six from the east side. It is also significant to note that all thirteen interviewees were well educated and seemingly secure financially, an assumption derived from the range of

¹² The framework of these interviews was approved by the Carleton University Ethics Committee and governed by the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans. For details, please visit <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/pdf/TCPS%20October%202005_E.pdf>.

¹³ The thirteenth was a gentleman that I met personally at a 'Language Party', an event held weekly on a houseboat on the River Spree in former East Berlin for all those that wish to attend, but particularly to gather an international crowd for discussion and drinks. Thereafter, we met for a formal interview.

¹⁴ Nine of the citizen interviews took place in May, three in June and one at the end of August.

white-collar positions that they held and at times expressed in their own responses to different queries.

These factors are important to note for two reasons. First, there has emerged a well-publicized notion of ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ after reunification, the latter more often than not characterizing former East Germans. However, there was no sense from any of the former East German interviewees that they considered themselves ‘losers’ as a result of German reunification. In fact, several noted the opposite, that they were in fact ‘winners’ as a result of the collapse of the GDR, holding stable and authoritative employment in the years since 1989. The second is closely related in that the educational and professional achievements of the respondents place them in a demographic category that subsequently reflects an interest in political, economic and cultural subjects. After all, the original method of contact by email was based on a departmental list serve within Humboldt University Berlin. Only those whose curiosity was perked (and who met the criteria laid out) by this email would have taken the time to respond and arrange a time to meet.

In a way, given the great amount of discourse surrounding the recent development of the New Berlin, it is surprising that a study has yet to emerge that specifically examines the evident range of perspectives that typify the citizens of Berlin. Too often, related literature concludes that there is a link between spatial and conceptual development in Berlin, yet fails to give primacy to the very citizens themselves. That studies spanning the disciplines of history, sociology and architecture do not place more emphasis on those directly affected by the layout of the city can hence be seen as a gap in the literature. Although the opinion of citizens may not always be articulated in the same

way as that of politicians, architects or scholars, if the spatial development of Berlin is by nature designed for the citizens of the city, then their voice is equally deserving of a wider platform. While it should be emphasized that this survey group does not necessarily reflect a representative sample of Berlin residents, information collected from these sessions has nevertheless dynamically added to the qualitative texture of this analysis.

These sessions were also complemented by interviews with official representatives of three landmark sites in Central Berlin: Ute Wueest von Vellberg, head of the Public Relations department for the Daimler Chrysler portion of Potsdamer Platz; Uwe Neumärker, the Executive Director of the *Foundation for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*; and Thomas Lutz, head of the Memorial Museums Department of the *Topographie des Terrors Foundation*. A fourth interview took place at Berlin's Senate Department for Urban Development (Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, SDUD), where Hilmar von Lojewski provided insight into numerous planning issues from the perspective of the city.¹⁵

In addition to oral interviews, primary source documentation provided essential perspectives of both elite and grassroots commentators. Official websites for various prominent landmarks in the city, such as the Reichstag, have been excellent sources for relevant topical data.¹⁶ The website for the Senate Department of Urban Development,

¹⁵ Representatives from the Reichstag and the Berlin Main Station declined interviews for this project. Although an initial connection was made with Christoph Wagner, a member of the *Palast Alliance* (an organization that fought for alternative usage of the Palace of the Republic), unfortunately an interview did not materialize. Efforts to be in contact with Wilhelm von Boddien's *Stadtschloss Society* (formed to advocate for the façade reconstruction of the historic palace that preceded the Palace of the Republic) were unsuccessful.

¹⁶ The Reichstag website, <<http://www.bundestag.de/>>. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe website, <<http://www.holocaust-mahnmal.de/>>. The Topography of Terror website, <<http://www.topographie.de/index.php>>.

meanwhile, contains detailed information about the urban development strategies of the city.¹⁷ It also includes policy and planning memos, statistical figures, and a vast array of municipal maps that illustrate various stages of the development that Berlin has undergone to date and projections for the future. One of Germany's foremost English language news websites was also extensively utilized for this analysis: *Deutsche Welle*, <www.dw-world.de>. *Deutsche Welle* features major German news stories but also reports on international issues as well. While the articles on this website are sometimes short and fairly general, they typically provide a reliable chronological perspective. Finally, the tourism website for the city of Berlin, <www.berlin.de>, surprisingly contains useful background information. Though rarely offering substantial qualitative data, it does provide a good introduction to the six sites examined in this analysis alongside a plethora of other locations throughout the city.

In examining the data from the relevant secondary literature, interview sessions and other primary sources, the following analysis has been divided into three sections. Chapter One will deal with the political development of Central Berlin, assessing the conflicting ideologies that have been at play surrounding the renovation of the Reichstag and the demolition of the Palace of the Republic. The fall of the Wall in 1989 decisively altered the political status quo for citizens of Berlin as well as the German nation. After successively serving as the capital of Prussian and unified imperial Germany, the fragile Weimar Republic, Adolf Hitler's Nazi dictatorship, and a discredited communist government, Berlin was a scarred yet evocative conurbation. Indeed, after the country was reunified in October 1990, a parliamentary vote on 20 June 1991 decided in favour

¹⁷ The website of the Senate Department of Urban Development, <<http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/index.shtml>>.

of restoring Berlin to its status as the national capital. This placed the Reichstag and the Palace of the Republic within a rather sensitive political discourse.

The Reichstag had been the seat of Germany's first parliament between 1894 - 1933, but was stripped of its eminence by Hitler, bombed in the Second World War and only symbolically utilized throughout the Cold War. The Palace of the Republic, meanwhile, was a multiuse facility for both political and cultural events in East Berlin. Viewed with genuine affection by many in East Berlin because the amount of cultural activities far outweighed its political usage, it was generally unloved by West Berliners who associated it most prominently with its usage by the repressive East German government. Both sites have been the focus of intense discussion about their position in reunited Berlin and Germany, particularly with the completion of the Reichstag's renovation in 1999 and the demolition of the Palace of the Republic scheduled to be concluded by 2008.

Chapter Two will evaluate the economic impact of Central Berlin's revitalization through the lens of Potsdamer Platz and the Berlin Main Station. Following the devastating allied bombing raids on Berlin during the last eighteen months of the Second World War, the economic position of the city center was further scarred by the complete partition of West Berlin on 13 August 1961 with the construction of the Berlin Wall. In the years that followed, additional barriers and reinforcements created a vast no-man's land right through the former center of the city severing infrastructure and transportation connections between East and West Berlin.

Reunification led to ideal conditions for the economic redevelopment of the no-man's land. The two largest developments to be established to date are Potsdamer Platz

and the Berlin Main Station. As it now stands, daily visitation reaches 100,000 people at Potsdamer Platz, which includes three large plots developed by Daimler-Chrysler, Sony and entrepreneur Otto Beisheim. The Berlin Main Station, meanwhile, tallies upwards of 300,000 visitors a day to the largest train station in all of Europe. Yet, as economic sites, both represent an area of daily life that can be tailored to the everyday needs of the individual— the diversity of shopping and recreational pursuits at Potsdamer Platz and the potential for increased mobility on hand at the Main Station are outstanding examples of this. Thus, the following analysis will contextualize the development of Potsdamer Platz and the Main Station within the broader framework of these sites' historical significance and their subsequent economic development after Berlin's reunification.

Perhaps more than any other subject in contemporary German society, the period of rule between 1933 – 1945 by Adolf Hitler's National Socialist German Workers Party (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, NSDAP or Nazi) is most contentious. This remains the case, for it was not only members of the NSDAP but also many 'ordinary' citizens who shared responsibility for aggression and annihilation that typified Nazi rule in Germany throughout the 1930s and 1940s. The remembrance of this state sponsored campaign thus has paramount connotation in the renamed capital of Germany.

Two large sites in Central Berlin memorialize the tragic events of Hitler's rule, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and the Topography of Terror. Chapter Three will therefore examine the complicated trajectory of development that has characterized these two sites. Complex deliberations and disagreements have characterized the development of each. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, which includes a documentation center, was inaugurated on 10 May 2005, seventeen

years after its conception. The Topography of Terror, a site that seeks to document the perpetrators of Nazi crimes on the Gestapo terrain (*Gestapo-Gelände*), still has no permanent facility after twenty years, yet features an interesting, if dated exhibit first developed in 1987. The delays experienced with these two projects point to the intensity of discussion about the legacy of the Third Reich in Berlin, the way it is being dealt with in the present and how this will reflect upon the city in the future.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, those responsible for development in New Berlin have had an objective to re-establish the city as an international metropolis by altering the physical landscape. In varying ways, the development process and the palpable presence of these sites in the city have informed conceptual awareness. The relationship between the physical and conceptual development in New Berlin will therefore be the focus of this thesis and will be analysed by way of the specified political, economic and cultural memory sites that have emerged as especially visible among local, national and international observers. Significantly, this approach will also allow for an understanding of how contemporary Berlin has acknowledged the spectres of its past in anticipation of a re-energized future.

I. Centres of Past, Contemporary and Future Political Power: The Reichstag and the Palace of the Republic

After successively serving as the capital of Prussian and unified imperial Germany, the fragile Weimar Republic, the Nazi dictatorship, and a discredited communist government, the historical significance of Berlin for contemporary German society is unambiguous. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and with the decision to once again name the city as the capital of Germany two years later, anticipation about the renewal of democratic governance in the country was high. Indeed, spatial development and reconstruction efforts throughout Berlin rapidly changed the layout of large portions of the centre of the city. Two sites in particular have been the focus of Berlin's political redefinition, the Reichstag and the Palace of the Republic. On the one hand, the Reichstag is a pre-eminent example of a historical restoration that has since become widely popular. Alternatively, the Palace of the Republic represents a site that was mostly without use after 1989 and is now in the advanced stages of being demolished.

The Reichstag had been the seat of Germany's first parliament between 1894 and 1933, but was stripped of its role by Hitler, bombed in the Second World War and only symbolically utilized throughout the Cold War. The Palace of the Republic, meanwhile, was a multiuse facility for both political and cultural events in East Berlin. Viewed with genuine affection by many in East Berlin because the amount of cultural activities far outweighed its political usage, it was generally unloved by West Berliners who associated it most prominently with its use by the East German regime. Both sites have been the focus of intense discussion about their position in reunited Berlin and Germany, particularly with the completion of the Reichstag's renovation in 1999 and the demolition

of the Palace of the Republic scheduled to be concluded by 2008. Within this discourse, aspects of history, symbolism and transparency have consistently been among the most prominently debated subjects. Indeed, these three aspects are particularly worthy of examination as they have also informed the broader discussion about how the spatial and conceptual political development in contemporary Berlin influences the interpretation of the past, present and future metropolis.

The Division of Germany and Berlin

With hindsight, one can trace the division of Germany to the last eighteen months of the Second World War, when the devastation of the conflict reached Berlin. Aerial bombing by the English and Americans followed by the relentless advance of the Soviet army reduced many parts of the city to rubble and led to the capitulation of National Socialist rule in Germany on 2 May 1945. Within three months, Berlin had been divided into four occupation zones administered by the United Kingdom, France, the United States and the Soviet Union. Over the next four years, these circumstances became increasingly untenable, as the international geopolitical confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union intensified.

On 23 May 1949, the Federal Republic of Germany (or West Germany, FRG) was declared in the western occupied territory of Germany including Berlin. Significantly, the status of capital city was stripped from Berlin and provisionally conferred upon Bonn, with Konrad Adenauer as its first Chancellor. Over the next decade, West German political maturity, economic success and societal stability followed. The Basic Law of the FRG provided a framework for effective democratic governance along with the

reestablishment of three main political parties: the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union (CSU).

In response, the German Democratic Republic (or East Germany, GDR) was formed on 7 October 1949. Under the leadership of Walter Ulbricht and with East Berlin as its capital, an ideologically opposing political system materialized in East Germany. In contrast to an earlier Communist Party manifesto dating from 1945 that called for a pan-German “anti-fascist democratic regime, a parliamentary democratic republic with all the rights and freedoms for the people”, scholars ranging from Eric D. Weitz to Peter Grieder and Mary Fulbrook have noted that the GDR became characterized by the authoritarian governance of the Socialist Unity Party (SED).¹⁸ In addition, the emergent East German state was both dogmatically and militarily supported by the Soviet Union. Rigid top down structures of the SED determined state mobilized, coercive participation. As outlined comprehensively by Mike Dennis, responses to subversion were swift and forceful, as demonstrated during the June 1953 uprising in East Berlin.¹⁹ With the construction of the

¹⁸ Eric D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890-1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 313. The form of SED dominance in East Germany was not predetermined in the immediate aftermath of the war. In fact, leading members of the Communist Party, most prominently Anton Ackermann, had publicly advocated for a ‘special German way to socialism’ as early as 1946. This position was widely supported by many party members in the Soviet Occupation Zone (SBZ) of Germany because it was seen as a ‘third way’ between the external pressures from the communist Soviet Union and Western liberal capitalism. Yet, by mid 1948, Walter Ulbricht had consolidated a position of power within the party and forced Ackermann to officially repudiate the notion of a ‘special German way to Socialism’. For the citizens of the Soviet Occupation Zone, this development had wide-ranging impacts: further consolidation of political power in the hands of the SED; abolition of free and fair multi-party elections; along with repression and purging of political opposition. These factors can be collectively labelled as both Stalinist as well as totalitarian and are perhaps most eloquently described by Ulbricht himself when he noted that “[things] must look democratic, but we must control everything”. This latter quote excerpted from Peter Grieder, *The East German Leadership 1946-1973: Conflict and Crisis*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 14.

¹⁹ See Mike Dennis, *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1990*. (New York: Longman, 2000), 105. The catalyst for the uprising was Walter Ulbricht’s announcement at the Second Party Congress in July 1952 that East Germany would accelerate its efforts to ‘construct socialism’. For the citizens of the GDR, the nature of this change tangibly materialized over the next year and the response was overwhelmingly negative. As dictated by the SED, collectivization of agriculture gathered momentum and increased quotas were introduced for the newly formed Collective People’s Farms (LPG), which led to food

Berlin Wall on 13 August 1961, a partition that had already informally existed since 1949 was comprehensively substantiated.

However, by the 1980s, the polemics of division had decisively changed. Political, but also economic and societal cracks had become overtly evident and continued to widen in the GDR. Despite the heavily guarded border between East and West Germany, four million East Germans had fled from the state between 1961 and 1989.²⁰ In the spring of 1989, Hungary became the first East European socialist country to remove border controls with Western Europe, via Austria. Thousands of East Germans journeyed to Hungary, pouring across the frontier during the ensuing months. Those that remained were instrumental in an emerging movement referred to as ‘the turning’, characterised by peaceful demonstrations against the rule of the SED. Initially, these did little to sway the SED leader, Erich Honecker, but during celebrations of the GDR’s fortieth anniversary in October, Mikhail Gorbachev withdrew Soviet military support from East Germany. With this external factor removed, the SED regime began to collapse. Three weeks later, the Berlin Wall fell.²¹

and supply shortages throughout the state. For the workers in the industrial and manufacturing sectors, the ‘construction of socialism’ entailed, most provocatively, a further ten percent increase in Technical Work Norms (TAN). After the death of Stalin in March 1953, many of the harshest decrees that had been promulgated during the previous year were retracted. This ‘New Course’, however, did not rescind the TANs for the industrial and manufacturing employees, which prompted sporadic demonstrations throughout the state. On 16 June, workers throughout East Berlin walked off their jobsites in protest and by the following day, over 100 000 citizens were on the streets and protests spread to more than 370 localities throughout the GDR. Unable to disperse and unwilling to compromise with the demonstrators, the East German regime turned to the Soviets for support. It was with the military assistance of Soviet tanks that protest was thus quelled.

²⁰ Mike Dennis and Eva Kolinsky, eds, Introduction to *United and Divided: Germany Since 1990*. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 3.

²¹ This was not, in fact, planned by the new East German administration. However, on the evening of 9 November, SED State Secretary Günter Schabowski accidentally inferred that travel restrictions were to be lifted “immediately”. Thousands of East Germans converged on the border crossings with West Berlin, and overwhelmed guards soon had no choice but to yield to the masses.

The Reunification of Germany and Berlin

On 10 October 1990, Germany and Berlin were reunified. Bonn remained the provisional capital and unsurprisingly continued to host intense discussions about the future of the nation. One of the most contentious questions of all related to which city would become the capital of the contemporary Federal Republic of Germany – Bonn or Berlin. Those in favour of retaining Bonn cited two main reasons. First, Bonn had successfully served as the capital of West Germany for forty years and as such, represented the successful integration of post-National Socialist Germany within western political culture. Second, the move would cost an enormous amount of money given the poor state of the building stock in Berlin, not to mention the price of moving the bureaucracy of a nation. Advocates of the move to Berlin, however, also had two potent stances. To begin with, the West German Basic Law of 1949 had officially retained Berlin as the capital of a united Germany. Although it did not explicitly state that the day-to-day functions of governance needed to be relocated from Bonn, nevertheless the precedent for a move to Berlin was evident. In turn, the contemporary connection to the unity of Germany was also cited by Helmut Kohl, who declared that the country would “stand a better chance of growing together if the decision were taken soon to move the government from Bonn to Berlin”, the latter which “deserved special trust” because of its “achievements during the years of division”.²²

With these and other factors in mind, on 20 June 1991 members of the Bundestag voted 338 - 320 in favour of Berlin as the capital of reunited Germany. The decision contributed to profound spatial and conceptual reflection about the city, mainly among

²² Alexandra Richie, *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. (New York: Carroll&Graf Publishers, 1998), 856.

domestic politicians, the media and international observers. Two of the most high profile political structures that would become the objects of attention were the Reichstag and the Palace of the Republic. Both were representative sites used by their respective governments in Bonn and East Berlin to establish particular antipodes for the populations of divided Berlin and Germany. For West German politicians, the bombed-out shell of the Reichstag awaited German reunification, at which time it would be reconstructed and once again become home to the German parliament. The East German regime, meanwhile, regarded the Reichstag with disdain. Within their concept of a nation, it was emblematic of the very root of fascism: the imperial underpinnings of the capitalist west.²³ Predictably of course, the Palace of the Republic was in turn viewed with contempt by the politicians in West Germany who refused to accept the legitimacy of the GDR state to begin with. However, the SED had shrewdly developed the site with the suggestion that it was a 'people's palace' and hence claimed it to be representative of the 'democracy' of East German socialism.

In the years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the development of both the Reichstag and the Palace of the Republic have principally been framed within the opposing contexts of Cold War rhetoric and the recent transformation of Berlin into the capital of reunited Germany. A great deal of ambiguity marked both of these time periods, and an assessment of the situation today reveals that these two sites continue to offer sharply contrasting political narratives for the New Berlin that have come to be reflected

²³ For the SED, the division of the German state marked a transition from promoting socialism throughout Germany (dating from the end of the Second World War) to focusing on its consolidation within the territorial boundaries of the GDR. The SED thus adopted a *Nationskonzept*, which delineated the social or conceptual character of East Germany within the larger German nation. This notion was based on the representation of the GDR as an 'antifascist democracy', around which a new national consciousness could develop within the framework of socialism. Antifascism came to overtly demarcate East Germany from the FRG; street names, wall plaques, monuments, national celebrations and school curricula all seized upon the notion of the GDR as a bulwark against the capitalism of the west. See Weitz, p. 369.

in the themes of history, symbolism and transparency. The following assessment thus characterizes how these three aspects influence the spatial and conceptual political development in contemporary Berlin.

The Reichstag

The historical significance of the Reichstag as a House of Parliament dates to the foundation of the German Reich in 1871. An international architectural competition commenced in 1872 for the commission to build the Reichstag, and a design by Ludwig Bohnstedt was selected. However, due to a land dispute, the site chosen for the Reichstag was not available. Nine years later, in 1881, a location was chosen on the eastern side of the King's Square (later Republic Square). This spot was just outside of the Berlin's medieval city wall, only two hundred meters from the Brandenburg Gate and directly adjacent to the Tiergarten. As the site was unsuitable for Bohnstedt's earlier proposal, a second competition was announced, won by German architect Paul Wallot with a design regarded as eclectic.²⁴ After a ten year long construction process, the first parliamentary session in the new building took place on 5 December 1894.

Neither Wilhelm I nor his grandson and heir Wilhelm II held the Reichstag in high regard, the latter referring to Wallot's building as "the pinnacle of tastelessness" when it was under construction, and the "imperial monkey house" upon its completion.²⁵ However, one of the unique and modern construction features of the Reichstag was a glass cupola supported by iron girders. Alongside the two domes of the Berlin Cathedral

²⁴ In the discipline of architecture, eclecticism refers to the use of different period styles in a given structure. Paul Wallot integrated Renaissance and Baroque elements into the Reichstag. As historian Michael Cullen notes "it was a house that could not decide what it wanted to be"! Michael Cullen in David Clay Large, *Berlin*. (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 59.

²⁵ Peter Chametzky, "Rebuilding the Nation: Norman Foster's Reichstag Renovation and Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum Berlin". *Centropa* 1, no 3 (2001): 252.

and the Hohenzollern City Palace, the Reichstag's dome was seen as representing a “third pillar of society: the people, along with church and court”.²⁶ This uneasy relationship between the monarchy and the citizens was a factor in delaying the symbolic inscription ‘To the German People’ on the western portal of the Reichstag. Despite being part of Wallots original design from 1892, it was not inscribed until 24 December 1916, amidst and largely due to the chaos of the First World War.²⁷



Image B “Berlin: Reichstagsgebäude mit Bismarckdenkmal” (“Berlin: Reichstag Terrain with the Bismarck Monument”) obtained from <<http://redlitos.files.wordpress.com/2007/01/reichstag.jpg>>. Undated, but taken after the inscription “To the German People” was placed on the building in 1916 and before the removal of the Bismarck Monument by the Nazis in 1938.

²⁶ Chametzky, p. 252.

²⁷ As David Clay Large explains, the addition of the inscription was only part of the government’s futile effort to maintain a level of morale in Berlin and Germany in the face of the privations that had become increasingly apparent as the First World War persistently continued. See Large, p. 61.

The Reichstag secured an enduring connection to the citizenry of Berlin and Germany on 9 November 1918, when Philipp Scheidemann famously proclaimed the foundation of the German Republic from a second floor window. Two days later, an armistice ended the First World War and also signalled the end of the German monarchy, with Emperor Wilhelm II fleeing to The Netherlands. Thereafter, the Reichstag naturally took on a more central role within the first democratic republic on German soil. However, the christened Weimar Republic was not immune to the effects of the post-war economic downturn and the subsequent worldwide Great Depression, which weighed heavily on German politics and society. The instability contributed to the rise of the Nazi party in Germany and after a suspicious fire in the Reichstag on 27 February 1933, Adolf Hitler gained power via the Enabling Act, which stripped the parliamentary deputies of power.²⁸ The Reichstag building remained unused during the ensuing years of the Third Reich, with a mock parliament meeting instead at the Kroll Opera House on the western end of Republic Square.²⁹

Despite the fact that the Reichstag building sat largely unused throughout Hitler's reign, it was nevertheless considered the ultimate prize for advancing Allied troops in 1945. The assault on the city by the aerial bombardment and the advancing Soviet army badly damaged the building, and it remained derelict, yet structurally intact during the

²⁸ Dutch arsonist Marinus van der Lubbe had been found at the scene and confessed, noting that he had acted alone. Yet, this confession was distorted by the Nazis, who declared that the fire was only the first stage in a planned Communist insurrection. On the night of 27-28 February, Hermann Göring therefore organized a roundup of almost 4,000 political opponents to the Nazi regime, of which the majority were Communists. As there remains no conclusive proof that van der Lubbe acted on his own, debate still continues about the details of the Reichstag Fire. An alternative suggestion has been put forward that it was in fact Nazi operatives that started the blaze and that van der Lubbe was merely a Communist scapegoat. Nevertheless, a review of a number of main works for this analysis including Cullen, Ladd, Richie, and Large seems to favour the former explanation. See Large, p. 260, 261 for more details.

²⁹ Completed in 1844 based on the designs of Ludwig Persius, Carl Ferdinand Langhans (the son of Carl Gotthard Langhans) and Eduard Knoblauch, the Kroll Opera House was destroyed by Allied bombing on 22 November 1943. Although parts of it remained intact, the ruins were nevertheless demolished in 1951.

following years, as Cold War tensions led to the division of the Berlin and Germany in 1949. The Reichstag fell just inside the Western sector of the city, and following the demolition of the dome in 1954 due to safety concerns, a debate ensued about the future use of the site. A decision was made to restore the building, with an architectural competition announced in 1961, the same year that the East German regime began construction of the Berlin Wall alongside the eastern façade of the Reichstag. This intensified the importance of the architectural competition, won by German architect Paul Baumgarten. By 1964, renovations were completed, a remodelling which was a “wholesale modernization with little concession to the Reichstag’s historical shell”.³⁰ However, a stable use for the building was not established until it was chosen to house an exhibit on German history in 1971. The Reichstag was clearly underutilized during this time period, prevented from playing a more significant role by the nature of Cold War geopolitics.

It was not until the reunification of Berlin and Germany in 1990 and the subsequent decision to transfer the structures of governance to Berlin in 1991 that the Reichstag regained a fundamental position of importance as it was again chosen to house the Bundestag. Hence, another architectural competition was held for a second renovation in 1992 and 1993, with the English architect Sir Norman Foster eventually chosen.³¹ Foster’s original idea was to evoke transparency by draping a large glass roof over the entire building, which would also have allowed for a variety of other features to balance

³⁰ Norman Foster. *Rebuilding the Reichstag*. (Woodstock: Overlook Press, 1999), 56.

³¹ Originally, a round of first prizes were awarded to Pi de Bruijns, Santiago Calatrava and Norman Foster. After deliberations, Foster was the selected candidate. de Bruijn proposed to modify the old building but to place a new plenary chamber adjacent to, but outside, the existing structure. Calatrava planned surface changes to the historic façade and favoured a new dome as well as updates to the interior of the building. For more details, see Deborah Ascher Barnstone, *The Transparent State: Architecture in Postwar Germany*. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 185.

out the opaque external construction of the original design. Due to financial concerns and a strong desire on behalf of the Bundestag members for the inclusion of a modernized dome reminiscent of Wallot's original, several new plans were drafted. By March 1995, Foster's finalized version for the renovation of the Reichstag was accepted.

Before the project was to begin, though, conceptual artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude fulfilled their dream of 'wrapping' the Reichstag between 27 June and 9 July 1995.³² The project involved encasing the entire building in silver polypropylene fabric, secured by bright blue ropes. This was a landmark event of great symbolism and importance. Not only did more than five million people personally view the 'Wrapped Reichstag', but surveys also showed that 96% of German adults were familiar with the event.³³ Commenting on Christo and Jeanne-Claude's project, Foster noted that the wrapping was cathartic, as "it seemed to relieve the building of its tragic associations and to prepare it for the next stage of its history".³⁴ Indeed, as Berlin historian David Clay Large notes, Christo's exhibit allowed the building to "undergo a ritual rebirth: [to] be wrapped as the Reichstag and unwrapped as the Bundestag".³⁵

Questions of History, Symbolism and Transparency

Discourse about the connotation of the Reichstag flourished following the wrapping. As Large predicted, "by matching the parliament's building new look with the

³² Christo and Jeanne-Claude had become well known for their 'wrapping' projects. A few examples demonstrate the eclecticism of their ideas; wrapping the coast of Little Bay near Sydney, Australia (1969), surrounding eleven islands in Biscayne Bay near Miami, United States (1983) and wrapping the Pont Neuf in Paris, France (1985). They had been lobbying the local, regional and national government for 23 years to allow them to wrap the Reichstag. The initial idea in fact came from Reichstag specialist Michael S. Cullen, who sent a postcard to the couple in 1971 suggesting that the building be wrapped.

³³ Michael S. Cullen, *The Reichstag: German Parliament Between Monarchy and Federalism*. (Berlin: Be.bra Verlag, 1999), 70.

³⁴ Eric Jarosinski, "Architectural Symbolism and the Rhetoric of Transparency: A Berlin Ghost Story". *Journal of Urban History* 29, no 1 (2002): 65.

³⁵ Large, p. 612.

principles and confident aspirations of its new tenants, Foster's Reichstag would show the world that the German government's return to Berlin meant neither an abandonment of the ideals of Bonn nor a relapse to the weaknesses of the pre-Bonn Parliamentary order".³⁶ As Eric Jarosinski explains, planners and architects were well aware of the metaphorical importance of how the Reichstag and its surrounding government structures were being developed so as to create "a new urban identity and a language that would seek to proclaim Berlin as the new, the open, the democratic and the transparent".³⁷ During the first five days that it was open to the public in 1999, 150,000 people visited the site, almost all of whom ascended to the dome and experienced Foster's "quest for transparency and lightness as well as democracy".³⁸ As is apparent, commentators have particularly focused on different perceptions of history, transparency and symbolism when referencing the Reichstag. All three aspects resonate because of one key dynamic – Berlin as the capital of the reunited and democratic Germany.

After the ceremonial opening of the site on 19 April 1999, *The New York Times* noted that the "new Germany, exquisitely sensitive to its past, informally welcomed back its Parliament to a refurbished Reichstag in Berlin...[topped] with glass to symbolize the political transparency on which the country has based its postwar revival".³⁹ Meanwhile, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* noted that the renovated Reichstag "stands not just for the past but for the present situation of the nation – we can't imagine a better one".⁴⁰ Indeed, when speaking with Berliners for this analysis, respondents consistently reacted

³⁶ Large, p. 613.

³⁷ Eric Jarosinski, "Building on a Metaphor: Democracy, Transparency and the Berlin *Reichstag*" in *Berlin: The Symphony Continues: Orchestrating Architectural, Social and Artistic Change in Germany's Capital*, Carol Anne Costabile-Heming, Rachel J. Halverson and Kristie A. Foell, eds (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 60.

³⁸ Foster, p. 243 and 13, respectively.

³⁹ Ascher Barnstone, p. 176.

⁴⁰ Excerpted from Cullen, p. 78.

positively when asked about the Reichstag. In fact, six expressed great enthusiasm, four were generally positive and only three were content yet noncommittal about the historical character of the building.

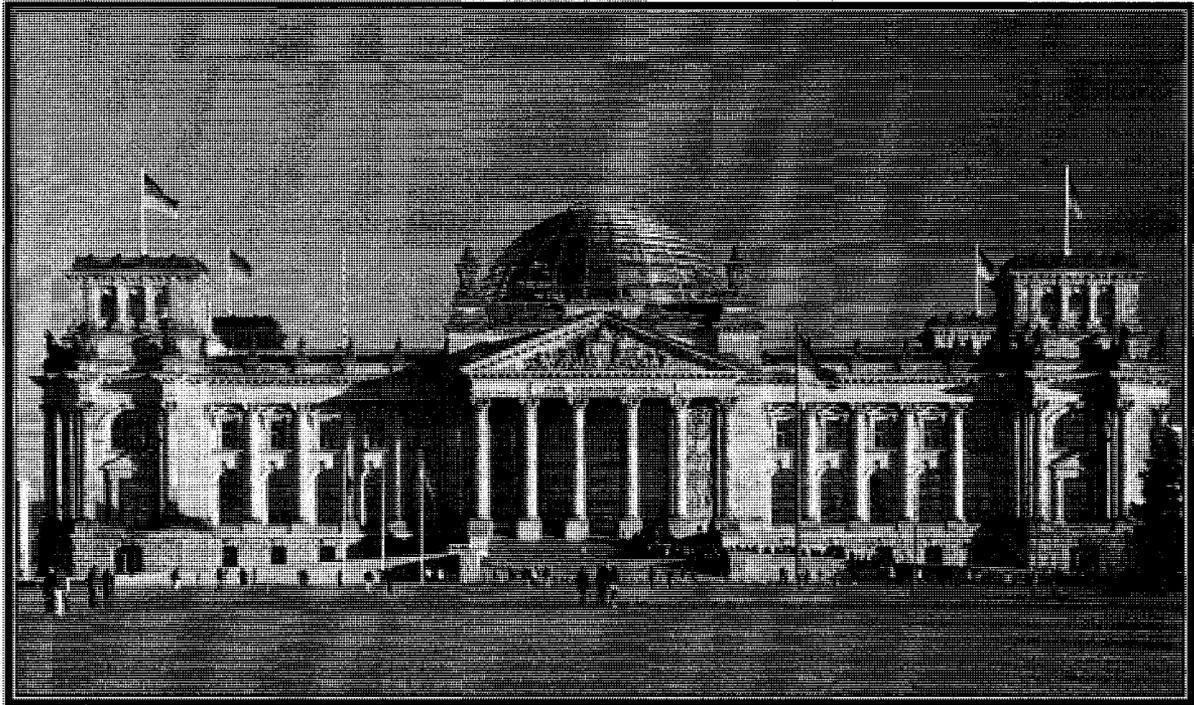


Image C “The Reichstag” obtained from <http://www.aip.de/image_archive/images/reichstag.jpg>. Undated, but reflecting the renovation by Sir Norman Foster.

There was no overt divide between former West and East German respondents when assessing the building historically. Those from the former East exhibited no attachment to the site – not really for ideological reasons, but more for practical reasons. After all, access to the Reichstag was restricted by the construction of the Berlin Wall. Hence, for someone living in East Berlin, the Reichstag “isn’t a very special building...because it has always been in the western part of Berlin”. Former West Germans also displayed no real attachment to the Reichstag as it stood during the Cold War. Again, this was in no way related to ideological reasons, but more practical reasons.

As we have already seen, the Reichstag was an underutilized building in West Germany as the structures of governance were based out of Bonn. Hence for a number of interviewees, it “was a building...just a building...practically without use”.

In fact, one respondent maintained a detachment from the building that had been established during the Cold War even while noting its importance for contemporary visitors to the building, whether German or foreign. Meanwhile, others referenced the site as a national landmark, but noted that “it does not have so much to do with me personally. The emotional attachment is just not there.” Another echoed these comments by noting that “it’s there, and there are a lot of people working there and it’s important that they are working there. However...it’s not in my history so much. It’s not, in an emotional way in my history...or daily life”. Another interviewee was more cautious about the significance of the site, explaining that “the Reichstag is a symbol for almost every German person but it reflects almost totally different ideas of Germany depending on who looks at it. When I see the Reichstag, I feel different feelings than my girlfriend or my mother.” This is an important point for determining the connotation of the renovated Reichstag, as the interpretation of ‘democratic symbolism’ will oscillate among citizens’ of diverse backgrounds, taking into consideration the nature of division in Berlin during the Cold War.

It was these types of interpretations that were influential when assessing the decision to renovate the Reichstag. Interviewees recalled a degree of scepticism about the restoration plans given the buildings’ lack of use during the Cold War and what was described as “a very problematic history”. As a result, they were naturally unsure if it was the right building for the German parliament. Indeed, a stark alternative was even

suggested: "...wouldn't it be better to break it down and build an entirely new parliament – to...have a new beginning". Interestingly enough, though, the same subjects acknowledged that after the renovations were completed, they were pleased with the outcome. A transformation was evident as "it was really like taking out the old soul of that building and replacing it with a modern German thing". Others used connotative phrasing to describe the conversion process, such as how the Reichstag had been "neutralized" between 1995 and 1999 or how the building was "reactivated" and "rejuvenated" by the changes.

The success of Norman Foster's 'neutralized', 'reactivated', and 'rejuvenated' Reichstag was also echoed in the article in *The New York Times* with the reference to the subject of symbolism. Interviewees also clearly found that the Reichstag reflected the most symbolism compared to the other five sites examined in this analysis. One respondent took into consideration the historical significance of the renovated site, noting that the building became "a positive symbol as to how German history can reflect in a building" that is at the political heart of modern Berlin and Germany. The importance of the building as a symbol for democracy in Berlin and Germany was also mentioned, as "it is a signal for all people in Germany that the government is more close to the people".

Foster's intention to create a symbolic connection to the citizenry was often specifically connected to the design of the Reichstag's cupola. As Eric Jarosinski notes, the cupola "quickly became the symbol of the New Berlin and a readily marketable logo for democracy, gracing everything from campaign posters and beer advertisements to tourist souvenir coffee cups and the covers of guidebooks"⁴¹ Interviewees for this analysis concurred with Jarosinski about both symbolism and the 'marketable' aspect of

⁴¹ Jarosinski, "Building on a Metaphor: Democracy, Transparency and the Berlin *Reichstag*", p. 64.

the renovated Reichstag. Most prominently, allowing individuals to look down on the heads of the Parliamentarians meeting in the Plenary below was an idea that resonated very positively. Moreover, the connotation of exposing a site of such symbolic importance to international audiences, the ‘marketable’ side of the sites existence, resonated positively with interviewees impressed that “people came from all over the world to queue for two hours” just to experience “the aura that surrounds the building”. Perhaps most significantly, such open democratic symbolism was seen by one respondent as “something I can be proud of”. Indeed, as Deborah Ascher Barnstone explains:

no matter what, the viewer will read some association into the structure – his or her memory will be engaged. It is perhaps here that democracy is most aptly represented...because meaning cannot be assigned to architecture by its author, but is read into the construction by others.⁴²

That visitors alongside Berliners interpret a measure of democratic symbolism while exploring the Reichstag can therefore be seen as a reflection of one of the most compelling and well-received justifications behind the renovation.

When referencing the Reichstag, historian Michael Wise commented that it “represents a determined rupture with the subdued expression of German democratic power as conceived by postwar architects in Bonn, but retains its familiar modernist idiom of glazed transparency”.⁴³ Historian Jane Kramer has noted that particularly for architects, transparency became the “most revered word in western Germany” after the Second World War, which Deborah Ascher Barnstone correlates to a broader

⁴² Ascher Barnstone, p. 208

⁴³ Michael Z. Wise, *Capital Dilemma: Germany's Search For a New Architecture of Democracy*. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 133.

‘transparency ideology’ within the discipline worldwide.⁴⁴ Yet, Ascher Barnstone expresses a certain amount of hesitation about the Reichstag renovation. Her critique centers upon the nature of a “near mystical association” between transparency ideology and German democracy. In her view, while Foster succeeded in efforts to “confront the past and its relationship to identity, to reveal German history even as it is being made anew”, the idea that this can be explained by way of the use of transparent materials is too often overstated.⁴⁵

However, contrary to the hesitation of observers such as Ascher Barnstone, interviewees felt that the intention of representing transparency in the renovated Reichstag was achieved persuasively. Similarly to the theme of symbolism, respondents clearly related transparency to democracy. One respondent identified the importance of retaining open access to the Reichstag as “it’s so important that they do not keep people outside”. To do otherwise would strike down the perception of both openness and transparency identified by a number of interviewees as a cornerstone of the buildings acceptance by Berliners, Germans and international guests.

It is perhaps this aspect that is the most important factor that contributes to the positive reflection of the Reichstag among Berliners. Certainly, Norman Foster’s redesign would have been just as architecturally impressive were the site closed to the public.

⁴⁴ Jane Kramer, “Private Lives: Germany’s Troubled War on Terrorism” *New Yorker* 11 February 2002, 36-51, excerpted from Eric Jarosinski, “Building on a Metaphor: Democracy, Transparency and the Berlin Reichstag”, p. 60 and Ascher Barnstone, p. 175, respectively. As Ascher Barnstone explains, the architectural roots of transparency lie in the International Style and the New Objectivity schools that emerged during the Weimar Republic in Germany involving such renowned architects as Bruno Taut, Paul Scheerbart and Mies van der Rohe. These schools countered traditional architectural approaches that had favoured “monumental, solid, massive, stone, opaque and neo-classical” design. The concept was based on the understanding that transparency implies control through surveillance; “things that can be seen can be controlled while opacity implies the opposite – things that remain hidden or obscured cannot be controlled”. Concerning the architectural roots of transparency ideology see Ascher Barnstone, p. 14 – 17. For the two quotes found in this footnote, see Ascher Barnstone, p. 26 and p. 31, respectively.

⁴⁵ For both the previous two quotes, see Ascher Barnstone, p. 175.

Foster would still have a landmark Berlin project to his name. The press alongside academic and professional commentators would have assessed the site in varying detail and with differing judgment. However, by allowing open access to the most important political site in reunited Germany, a clear signal is being sent: the Reichstag is a contemporary symbol for a more transparent German democracy than that experienced by subsequent generations since the original unification of the nation in 1871. As the group of interviewees for this analysis expressed, the signal has been clearly understood.

Summation

The renovation of the Reichstag brought forth diverse narratives about the context of German political history as well as the dynamics of symbolism and transparency. Among the interviewees for this analysis that referenced history, it became evident that the traditional problematic perceptions of the Reichstag building were balanced with the changing dynamics of German governance after reunification. This was reflected by the indeterminate position of the site during the Cold War, the influential ‘wrapping’ of the building in 1995 and the broadly popular restoration by Sir Norman Foster. The renovated Reichstag has also been broadly cited as being an emblem of symbolism among observers and the same was evident for interviewees. Many respondents consistently referenced the site above all others in this analysis when taking the aspect of symbolism into consideration. Furthermore, while the transparency of the restored building was a subject of debate among numerous political, architectural and academic observers, interviewees noted the appropriateness of the idiom. Indeed, considering the perspectives of history, symbolism and transparency, it can be said that the Reichstag certainly represents an important site of significance. Not only has it physically

recaptured its past architectural grandeur, it also conceptually reflects dominant political paradigms of contemporary Berlin and Germany. In addition to popular public reception to its renovation, this indicates that it has secured a lasting symbolic position within New Berlin.

The Palace of the Republic

While the renovated Reichstag may very well have secured a lasting position in the New Berlin, the former East German Palace of the Republic has not been as fortunate. In its current partially dismembered state on the Castle Square a kilometre away from the German Parliament, the Palace of the Republic lies in stark contrast to the Reichstag. Indeed, while €300 million was spent renovating the Reichstag between 1995 and 1999, more than €92 million has and will be spent on tearing down the Palace of the Republic.⁴⁶ In turn, while discourse related to renovating the Reichstag has largely coalesced around the theme of vitality in contemporary German democracy, debate about the Palace of the Republic continues to be sharply disparate.

The significance of the Palace of the Republic dates back generations and is intimately tied to its location. In 1709, King Friedrich I united five towns within what is today known as Berlin *Mitte*.⁴⁷ Plans were already underway at this point to enlarge a royal residence dating from 1442 for the increasingly powerful Hohenzollern family located on the Spree Island in the center of the city. The City Palace extension by

⁴⁶ Reichstag figure from Cullen, p. 74. For the Palace of the Republic, this figure may indeed be much more. Only the costs of removing asbestos during the early 1990s and the current projected costs of demolishing the building have been factored in; the latter figure has already been revised due to the discovery of more asbestos! Asbestos removal cost from the 1990's from Deutsche Welle, *Lights Out for Erich's Lamp Shop* <<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,1029320,00.html>> and demolition projected costs from Mathis Winkler, *The Struggle to Shape the Heart of Berlin* <<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2140162,00.html>>.

⁴⁷ United Berlin – Berlin, Cölln, Friedrichswerder, Dorotheenstadt and Friedrichstadt,

architect Andreas Schlüter “established the final scale of the palace and – it has been argued – of all Berlin architecture” when it was completed in 1713.⁴⁸ August Stüler’s prominent dome was a further notable addition in 1850.

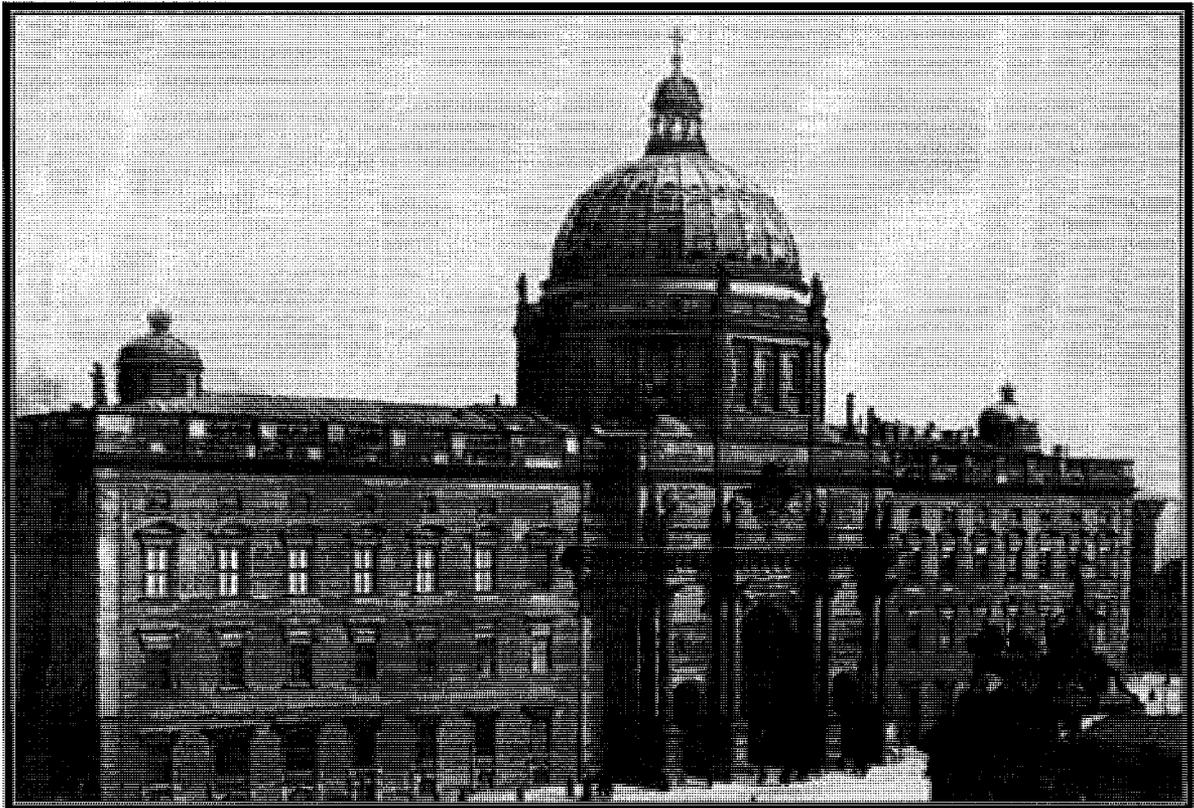


Image D “The western front of the palace with the trademark chapel dome” obtained from < <http://www.germany.info/relaunch/culture/new/images/Bschlosswest.JPG>>. The baroque elements of the façade and Stüler’s dome are easily distinguishable, and this undated photo gives an impression of just how dominant the City Palace was in central Berlin.

With the abdication of Emperor Wilhelm II in 1918 and the departure of the Hohenzollern family from Berlin, the City Palace was left with no monarchical use. The subsequent governance of the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich (sic) chose not to utilize or maintain the building for ideological reasons. In turn, its central location and

⁴⁸ Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, p. 52.

size ensured that the City Palace was heavily damaged during the Second World War. The next step was an overtly political one: at the SED's Third Party Congress in August 1950, Walter Ulbricht decreed that the "center of our capital, the Lustgarten and the area of the palace's ruins, must become a grand square for demonstrations, upon which our people's will for struggle and progress can find expression".⁴⁹ On 6 September 1950, despite protest from those in both East and West Berlin, demolition began. After several months, the parade ground of the GDR was ready to receive the masses, complete with a viewing platform for senior party members. On May Day in 1951, a million East Germans inaugurated the site, renamed Marx-Engels Platz.⁵⁰

In the long run, plans called for a representative party structure to be constructed on the square. Early proposals had called for the construction of buildings that emulated those in Moscow, such as a large Stalinist skyscraper that would house central offices of the SED.⁵¹ However, there were neither the finances nor the will to build such archetypal buildings, particularly after the death of Stalin in March 1953. Over the next twenty years, structures of governance were constructed around the square such as the GDR's Foreign Ministry and Council of State. Yet, the site itself could very well be referred to as an overvalued parking lot as it had no other practical use outside of hosting marches and parades.

That changed with the opening of the Palace of the Republic - the 'People's Palace' - on 23 April 1976. The central idea behind the building was quite clever. While a third of the building housed the East German Parliament (also known as the People's Chamber), the rest of the building was dedicated to leisure space. There was a large 5000-

⁴⁹ Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, p. 56.

⁵⁰ Wise, p. 43.

⁵¹ Wise, p. 43.

seat auditorium that could be flexibly customized for theatre, concerts or sporting events. In addition, there were restaurants, cafes, bars and even a bowling alley.



Image E “Palace of the Republic” obtained from <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/der_palast_der_republik_488.jpg>. This photo is undated, but would have been taken after reunification, as the GDR insignia that hung above the main entrance is not present, nor are a number of bronze glass panels and the front steps! The East German Television Tower is seen in the background.

Architects Heinze Graffunder and Karl-Ernst Swora matched the interior décor to the theme of leisure: chandeliers illuminated marble floors and lavish furnishings. Wolf Eisentraut, one of the architects who worked on the project explained that “we wanted it to be something special for a person to go into the palace”.⁵² In many regards, it was thus a fine example of multifunctional modern architecture. Nevertheless, commentators such as Gary L. Catchen have noted that the Palace of the Republic exemplified “the banality

⁵² Wise, p. 52, excerpted from an interview by the author with Wolf Eisentraut, 10 December 1996, Berlin.

characteristic of many buildings designed under Communist rule”.⁵³ Yet for the citizens of East Germany, it came to be seen as a unique addition to the otherwise dreary center of the GDR, as the Palace of the Republic became a well known, highly trafficked, and generally well regarded destination.⁵⁴

The affection, however, paled in comparison with the rising dissatisfaction of the East German populace throughout the GDR in the 1980s. By the summer of 1989, as thousands fled to West Germany via Czechoslovakia and Hungary, the regime began to collapse and on 9 November, the Berlin Wall fell.⁵⁵ Within a year, the first democratically elected East German Parliament had voted to join the Federal Republic of Germany and celebrations on 3 October 1990 marked the formal reunification of the country. Amidst the euphoria of these landmark events, the Palace of the Republic underwent a building inspection and the extensive use of asbestos warranted that the building be sealed off from public access. The site stood in limbo until March 1993, when a Bundestag resolution determined that it be demolished. Yet, this decision was deferred due to vocal opposition and budgetary concerns until a second binding vote in November

⁵³ Gary L. Catchen, “Gedächtnis and Zukunft, Remembrance and the Future: A Photo Essay” in *Berlin: The Symphony Continues: Orchestrating Architectural, Social and Artistic Change in Germany’s Capital*, Carol Anne Costabile-Heming, Rachel J. Halverson and Kristie A. Foell, eds (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 20.

⁵⁴ While isolated examples of fine East German architecture existed, such as the well known *Stalinallee* and the Television Tower (*Fernsehturm*), the center was generally unkempt due primarily to a lack of funding and political will.

⁵⁵ Despite the heavily guarded border between East and West Germany, four million East Germans had fled the GDR between 1961 and 1989. (Dennis and Kolinsky, eds, p. 3). In the spring of 1989, Hungary became the first East European socialist country to remove border controls with Western Europe, via Austria. Thousands of East Germans journeyed through Czechoslovakia to Hungary, pouring across the Austrian frontier during the ensuing months. Those that remained in the GDR were instrumental in an emerging movement referred to as ‘the turning’ (*Wende*). This development was characterised by peaceful demonstrations throughout the summer of 1989 against the SED regime. Initially, these did little to sway the First Secretary of the SED, Erich Honecker, but during celebrations of the GDR’s fortieth anniversary in October, Mikhail Gorbachev withdrew Soviet military support from East Germany. With this external factor removed, the SED regime began to collapse, and Honecker himself stepped down on 18 October. Three weeks later, on 9 November 1989, the Berlin Wall was opened.

2003 confirmed the demolition of the Palace of the Republic. Crews began dismantling the building in January 2006, and while the discovery of more asbestos has delayed progress, the demolition is expected to be complete by May 2008.

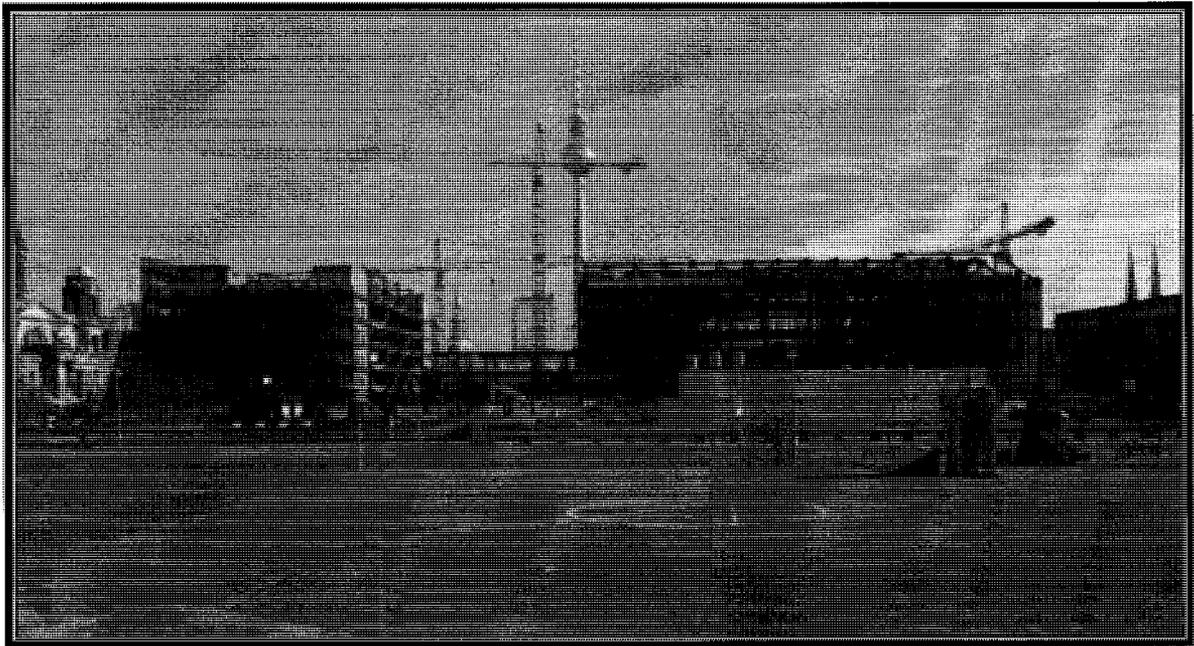


Image F “Palast der Republik” obtained from < <http://www.berliner-verkehrsseiten.de/schloss/Palast/palast.html>>. The photo is dated March 2007 and shows the cranes in place to dismantle the building and the progress to that date, given the fact that the skyline can be seen through the frame.

Questions of History, Symbolism and Transparency

The discourse that has surrounded the Palace of the Republic and the future of the site has centered upon a number of competing narratives, of which history, symbolism and transparency are the most prominent. Each of these aspects has been characterized by great ambiguity and disagreement among commentators and Berliners alike. Indeed, debate has grown well beyond an audience of politicians, planners, architects and academics. While none of the interviewees for this analysis were directly involved in specific advocacy relating to the Palace of the Republic, each had knowledge of the site

and the discussions that surrounded it. However, it is interesting that the strong emotional reactions among both East and West Berliners identified in many mainstream media sources and certain academic analyses were noticeably tempered or even lacking during the sessions. While clearly maintaining a stance about the fate of the site, interviewees all maintained that the decisions were beyond their control. Yet, when examining these perspectives, the themes of history, symbolism and transparency repeatedly surfaced and will thus now be assessed in more detail alongside the perspectives of elite observers.

Among interviewees for this analysis, there was an evident divide between those who viewed the history of the Palace of the Republic positively and those that perceived it disapprovingly. In fact, for a number of East Berliners, the building did not represent a political space at all. Each had been quite young when the Palace of the Republic was inaugurated and hence their initial visits were largely free of ideological content and GDR symbolism. One subject noted that “the Palace of the Republic was a building for cultural things, so when I was a kid, I was in there to see some musical style things, some operas, some dancing...in the basement, we went bowling. So, for us it was really a very popular cultural place to go in. We did not see it as ... the main place for the East German government”.

Others recalled similar introductions to the Palace of the Republic when quite young, although this did seem to change as teenagers, when they became more knowledgeable of the intricacies of the everyday reality of life in the GDR. Thereafter, while there were “a lot of positive ideas represented” in the Palace of the Republic, it also epitomized a lot of negative ideas “because for all in the east side were clear that this is the palace of Erich Honnecker”. For one East German respondent, the memory of the

Palace of the Republic was somewhat asymmetric. While sharing the sense of the more cultural connotations of the site, the subject of a *Jugendweihe* ceremony at the Palace of the Republic was brought up. This secular youth indoctrination ceremony was a widespread practice in East Germany and had a distinctive ideological premise and for some “it was a very important place for the development to adulthood”. Needless to say, a judgment about this is withheld here, but all the same, *Jugendweihe* is not typically regarded as an apolitical or cultural event.

West Berliners typically viewed the Palace of the Republic as representative of an unpleasant chapter in Germany’s history, one that “stands for the GDR regime and for ... bad decisions that were taken in the past”. Moreover, contrary to many in the former east, the building was not considered a cultural site, but only a place where the East German government met. One interviewee was very direct about the Palace of the Republic declaring that the hatred felt for the regime was naturally directed onto the most visible and representative edifice of the SED.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, only one East Berliner noted a dislike of the building itself because “it was a very cold and formal building”.

With the deconstruction of the Palace of the Republic well underway, it could be said that those in favour of its demolition throughout the 1990s won the debate over what to do the site. However, an unambiguous amount of acrimony lingers and has influenced another issue regarding what to do with the site after the building has been levelled that is also intricately connected to the history of the site dating back to Hohenzollern period.

⁵⁶ Marx Engels Platz accommodated two other government buildings of the GDR, the Foreign Ministry and the Council of State. In fact, the Council of State building was where the real machinations of the SED regime were engineered as the East German Parliament held no real power. Nevertheless, the Palace of the Republic was an East German showpiece that hence received the brunt of the derision. A parallel can be seen to the position of the Reichstag at the end of the Second World War, misguidingly viewed by the allies as the ultimate Nazi symbol to conquer despite the fact that it was unused throughout the Third Reich.

The July 2002 Bundestag vote not only confirmed demolition, it specified that a cultural facility be constructed on the site that complemented the collections of the already existing and renowned Museum Island.⁵⁷ While the planned museological content for the designated ‘Humboldt Forum’ is largely uncontroversial, the building design is another matter entirely. The structural plans call for the reconstruction of the historical façade of the Hohenzollern City Palace, an idea that had its genesis in the 1993 design competition for the site. Although the results of the competition were essentially annulled by the years of impasse about the fate of the Palace of the Republic, the idea for a facade reconstruction proved enduring.

Those in favour of the reconstructed façade found resonance with the goal of Hamburg businessman Wilhelm von Boddien to create a mixed public-private funding scheme for the Humboldt Forum.⁵⁸ His perspective centered on the historical importance of the area on which the Palace of the Republic stood. As he explains, “we're returning Berlin's identity...It's the cure for an architectural ensemble [on the Spree Island], which had its core ripped out”.⁵⁹ The case is indeed strong for von Boddien’s reference to the historic importance of the site, once again renamed Castle Square in 1994. After all, the walls of the City Palace had in fact predated the founding of Berlin in the eighteenth century. Yet, interviewees for this analysis were not so enthusiastic about the potential reconstruction. One subject was particularly critical, venturing that “I am sure that

⁵⁷ Museum Island contains five celebrated institutions: The Old Museum (1830) by Karl Friedrich Schinkel, The New Museum (1859) and Old National Gallery (1876) by Friedrich August Stüler, the Bode Museum (1904) by Ernst von Ihne and the Pergamon Museum (1910) by Alfred Messel.

⁵⁸ von Boddien was the primary benefactor of the 1993 erection of the façade, which “spoke much more eloquently for the [Hohenzollern] Schloß than all the boosterish newspaper articles and speeches”. Within the canvas shell, an exhibition was also organized that outlined how the City Palace had defined the centre of Berlin historically and how a mixed public-private structure would benefit the city in the future with its mixture of amenities that would include a hotel, library, ballrooms and a conference centre. See Large, p. 603 for more information and the above quote.

⁵⁹ Winkler, <<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2140162,00.html>>.

whatever they build there will be a catastrophe...just a block of concrete". Others identified comparisons of the façade similar to what David Clay Large identifies as a "Disneyesque piece of fakery...a project that smacked of a royalist theme park".⁶⁰ Interviewees reasoned quite simply that if the City Palace was not authentic, then "why would you ever rebuild that?". Instead, it was submitted that Berlin should use this historic opportunity to build something "useful, functional, modern...[to] show that there is a modern Berlin after walking down the *Unter den Linden*. Why should everything refer to history?". With this comment, the ambiguity of the discussion about the site is made even clearer, for the importance of reflecting history is here tempered while having been earlier advocated by a number of interviewees when referencing the East German edifice.

Several interviewees related the ambiguity that has characterized discussions about both the Palace of the Republic and the Castle Square to the continued symbolism of the site during the post-Wall period. East and West Berliners alike noted how the symbolism of the Palace of the Republic as a building was an influential aspect of importance for how the site was treated in the New Berlin. One East Berliner remarked that as the representative seat of the East German Parliament, its demolition would ensure that a powerful GDR icon would disappear. Furthermore, "the East Germans took down [the City Palace] because they wanted to get rid of the...old symbols of the old times... and that's the same as what the West Germans do at the moment". A West Berliner agreed with this emphasis, explaining that the demolition "is a great tragedy in my mind because this was and is a very important symbol of this town". Meanwhile, another East Berliner called attention to the contextual aspect of symbolism by emphasizing that the

⁶⁰ Large, p. 604.

debate surrounding the Palace of the Republic “reflects different opinions of how to treat history...especially the forty years [of division] which starts getting the footnote...As Helmut Kohl always said the ‘GDR will be a footnote of German history’ and this debate is reflecting that he was right”.

For others, the sensitivity to the negative history of the site influenced their views on its symbolism. One of the West Berliners was openly critical of the indeterminate status of the Palace of the Republic since 1989, remarking that “as a symbol of the East German regime, I think that it should have been torn down as early as you could have done it... but even worse than not tearing it down after German reunification was that the place still looks as it does today...I think it is just a shame”. Yet, one of the East Berliners offered an alternative explanation about the representation of the site. In one sense, the vacillation over its future was viewed as a way to gain distance from the symbolic attachment that East Germans in particular had with it. The expectation was that, with time, “people in the city will see that we have more interesting things in Berlin than the Palace of the Republic”.

Among those observers critical of how the Castle Square site has been and will be dealt with, a broader trend of selectively censoring aspects of the GDR period in favour of nostalgic visions of the German monarchical era seems evident. Indeed, the motives of the Berlin government have been lambasted by those who have critically assessed the ambiguous years between the demolition decisions and view the plans for Humboldt Forum as contributing to the ‘Disneyfication’ of Berlin, a “clear case of the falsification

of history”.⁶¹ Interconnected with this assessment is the notion of transparency on behalf of the governing bodies responsible for the site, which featured strongly among Berliners who commented for this analysis. However, in contrast to how the theme was expressed when referencing the Reichstag, interviewees from both former East and West Berlin emphasized the lack of transparency that characterized the discussion. One East Berliner somewhat pessimistically summarized how he viewed the entire discussion by explaining that “if you have a majority in favour of something, then who cares about the minority?”. There was a feeling that the decision to raze the Palace of the Republic and build the City Palace façade was in many respects a democratic resolution. However, interviewees also noted that former East German politicians are outnumbered by former West Germans and hence political agendas are often lopsided.

East and West Berliners also spoke of what was regarded as an unequal and unconstructive debate surrounding the layout of the future Castle Square site. One of the East Berliners referenced the destruction of the original City Palace and Palace of the Republic when stating that a ‘winners mentality’ was “what the East Germans had and now the West Germans have...which does nothing but tear down our memories”. A West Berliner agreed, noting that the discussion was one that focused on ‘victors justice’ and was “just awful...I have friends from the eastern part of Berlin and they had a connection to this building...[and] politicians thought that taking down the Palace of the Republic could be one more symbol of taking down communism - and I don’t agree with that”. The choice of the two terms ‘winners mentality’ or ‘victors justice’ typifies what the interviewees regarded as a discussion that lacked transparency.

⁶¹ ‘Disneyfication’ is a term from James S. Russell, “The New Berlin”. *The Architectural Record* 190, no 3 (2002): 71. Quote excerpted from Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, p. 69.

Once again referencing history and symbolism, a number of West Berlin interviewees concurred, speaking of the importance of Palace of the Republic was for German history as a whole, not just isolating its importance to East Germans. The word ‘neglect’ was utilized to describe how the history of the site was categorized negatively despite that “people actually lived in that state, they had memories dating back to that time. Even if they didn’t agree with the state, even if they weren’t free. Even if it wasn’t the best life – it’s their history”. Another referenced the destruction of the Palace of the Republic as an “erasure of history” that ensured that an important way of exhibiting aspects of GDR life was lost. Interviewees referenced other modernist architectural styles favoured among architects working in Berlin as a better solution than reconstructing the City Palace façade. The renovation of the Reichstag was cited as well as Potsdamer Platz and the Berlin Main Station, the latter two the subject of examination in Chapter Two.⁶²

Summation

Given the intensity of the discussion to date, it remains to be seen whether the planned façade of the City Palace will be built for sure. City officials have announced that funding will not be made available until 2012 - and a lot could change within this time frame.⁶³ Moreover, perhaps the sentiment that clearly lingers about the destruction of the Palace of the Republic is an indication that specific plans for the reconstruction of the City Palace will be protracted. Interviewees spent much more time speaking of the East German building than its proposed Hohenzollern replacement. The knowledge of the past on this site far exceeded that of the plans for the future. This discussion thus balances

⁶² It may very well be the style favoured, but under the guidelines of the SDUD inspired by the concept of ‘Critical Reconstruction’, the creation of stylistic modern architecture has, until recently, been tempered in Berlin. Mention of this will also be made within the Potsdamer Platz section of Chapter Two.

⁶³ Winkler, <<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2140162,00.html>>.

that offered by the Reichstag earlier in this chapter. For, while the Reichstag represents a formerly problematic political site that has been restored to reflect a specific history, symbolism and transparency, the Castle Square in its current state of deconstruction only reflects these three aspects in a splintered way, noticeably divergent among former East and West Berliners.

Conclusion

The Reichstag and the Palace of the Republic represent contrasting positions about how the New Berlin is being developed after the Cold War that are strongly influenced by history and interpreted through expressions of transparency and symbolism. Both sites have at times been the focus of heated debate since 1989 as Berlin is the only urban space in Germany that was spatially divided during the Cold War, ensuring markedly different political progression. Among the interviewees for this analysis that referenced history, it became evident that the traditional problematic perceptions of the Reichstag building were balanced with the changing dynamics of German governance after reunification. This was reflected by the indeterminate position of the site during the Cold War, the influential ‘wrapping’ of the building in 1995 and the broadly popular restoration by Sir Norman Foster. The renovated Reichstag has also been broadly cited among observers as being an emblem of symbolism in the New Berlin and the same was evident for interviewees. Many respondents consistently referenced the site above all others in this analysis when taking the aspect of symbolism into consideration. Furthermore, while the transparency of the restored building was a subject of debate among numerous political, architectural and academic observers, interviewees noted the appropriateness of the idiom.

Meanwhile, consensus about the future of the Palace of the Republic was never palpable, for both observers and interviewees alike. While its history can also be viewed as problematic, the direct and durable association with the East German regime created a great deal of ambiguity after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Former West Berliners had been inculcated to view the site with disdain while former East Berliners had known it predominantly as an agreeable cultural venue. Yet, when referencing the contemporary symbolism of the site, the distinctions between former East and West Berliners tended to dissipate. As an empty shell after reunification, the Palace of the Republic no longer seemed as threatening to former West Berliners, nor as compelling for former East Berliners. That does not mean, however, that Berliners necessarily disengaged from discussion about the fate of the building. In fact, the interviewees for this examination were knowledgeable about the situation of the site during the last years, even noting what was perceived as an unequal and uneven public discussion that lacked a measure of transparency. It is here that the connection to the future development of the site was frequently referenced, as several interviewees noted their displeasure that a 'Disneyfied' reconstruction of the Hohenzollern City Palace would be built, a structure envisaged as potentially lacking the transparency of a building such as the Reichstag.

The strength of the comparison between the Reichstag and the Palace of the Republic is evident. For, in contrasting ways, the physical development of these two sites demonstrates the significance of dominant conceptual political paradigms in the New Berlin. The restoration of the former has led to a persuasive argument that New Berlin has established a reliable way to approach the notions of history, symbolism and transparency. Yet, the perceived accomplishment of Norman Foster's renovation is

countered by the impasse that characterized debate about the fate of the Palace of the Republic and the potential reconstruction of the City Palace. Here, divergent interpretations of history, symbolism and transparency remain unresolved even as the site is in an advanced state of demolition. It can be said that while an example of western tradition has been effectively reflected with the restoration of the Reichstag, the same cannot be said for the Palace of the Republic, a site of representative importance in former East Germany. The comparison of the two sites seems to reveal that the successful physical development of political sites in the New Berlin requires a conceptual acknowledgment of past political realities, while also referencing the tenets of the current democratic political paradigm.

This idea that successful spatial development conceptually encompasses aspects of the past, present and future provides an ideal bridge into an examination of Berlin's economic development after the fall of the Wall. The two sites in question in Chapter Two, Potsdamer Platz and the Berlin Main Station, are both located on or near the former 'death strip' that separated East and West Berlin during the Cold War and have since been developed as prominent economic ventures. In both cases, special care has been taken to elucidate the important historical significance of their respective locations, focusing on their impact on the citizens of divided Berlin. In turn, the fortunes of the city's economy have historically been closely linked with its political influence. Thus, discussion will now turn to an examination of Potsdamer Platz and the Berlin Main Station, both key economic sites in reunited Berlin.

II. Contextualizing Economic Development in the New Berlin: Potsdamer Platz and the Berlin Main Station

The historical importance of Berlin politically identified through the Reichstag and the Palace of the Republic is also mirrored in the economic development of the city. However, the strength of the city's financial and industrial sectors dating from the late nineteenth century was all but erased during the Second World War and the Cold War, when geopolitical forces ensured that Berlin increasingly lost its position of economic significance. After 1989, the city thus inherited an economic base that lacked international competitiveness and dynamism. With the decision to once again name Berlin as the capital of Germany, anticipation about the possibility of rejuvenating the economic prospects of the city grew, but proved to be somewhat ephemeral. Yet two projects, Potsdamer Platz and the Berlin Main Station, can be viewed as commercially viable among investors. Located on or adjacent to property that used to be part of the Berlin Wall's no-man's land, the historical importance and centrality of these sites is therefore significant.

Nevertheless, controversy among city planners, architects, academics and observers about these two sites has been evident throughout the development process. Regarding Potsdamer Platz, scepticism was widespread during the early stages of the site's development and critics lament the absence of a genuine civic life and the imposition of building codes that prevented the widespread use of modern architectural design methods. Meanwhile, the Main Station has been criticised for changes that altered the original design of the building, the lack of citywide accessibility and for the choice of location with no complementary surrounding infrastructure to date. Yet, as economic sites, both represent an area of daily life that can be tailored to the everyday needs of the

individual – the diversity of shopping and recreational pursuits at Potsdamer Platz and the potential for increased mobility on hand at the Main Station are outstanding examples of this. Thus, the following analysis will contextualize the development of Potsdamer Platz and the Main Station within the broader framework of these sites' historical significance and their subsequent economic development after Berlin's reunification.

The Economics of the Cold War

During the last eighteen months of the Second World War, the allied advance ensured that much of Berlin's economic infrastructure was destroyed. Industrial sites in particular had been targeted with efficiency, but the centre of the city was also heavily damaged. The pre-war commercial area of Potsdamer Platz was almost completely levelled and the same was evident in densely populated inner-city residential districts. With these factors in mind, the Soviets named the skilled architect Hans Scharoun head of the Berlin Construction and Housing Division on 19 May 1945, a process elucidated by Elizabeth Strom in her examination of Berlin's changing economic situation throughout the Cold War. Scharoun initially advocated a 'Collective Plan' for the entire city's reconstruction, a comprehensive approach where residential, and commercial "bands of slim towers and wide plazas of the modernist idiom would bloom".⁶⁴ However, it soon became apparent that the shortage of housing and the rising geopolitical tension would dictate a markedly different, less utopian method of redevelopment.

The political polarization that emerged between 1945 and 1949 mirrored the ongoing economic division of the city, culminating with the introduction of different currencies and competing economic strategies for rebuilding. In the western sectors,

⁶⁴ Elizabeth A. Strom, *Building the New Berlin: The Politics of Urban Development in Germany's Capital City*. (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2001), 44.

development plans advocated for the industrial and commercial recovery of Germany. As the geopolitical situation was so uncertain, however, Berlin was not seen as a compelling place to maintain operations. Therefore, many companies turned their back on the city; Siemens transferred its setup to Munich and the financial sector became established in Frankfurt. In the Soviet sector, economic development proceeded towards the realization of a communist command economy. What was left of Berlin's industry was nationalized, an undertaking that has been correlated to negative economic growth by academics Mike Dennis and Jochen Laufer.⁶⁵ Nationalization was also extended to private enterprise and the agricultural sector with similarly disastrous effects.

With the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic in 1949, the economy in Berlin changed dramatically. As a result of its unique situational circumstances, West Berlin obtained special monetary transfers from the government in Bonn. Codified as the Berlin Subsidy Law, these subsidies resulted in what *The Economist* cheekily referred to as a situation whereby "West Berlin was almost as socialist as East Berlin".⁶⁶ Diverse methods of financial support were extended to firms willing to maintain or establish their operations in the western sector of the city. Nevertheless, as a result of the barriers created by division, West Berlin did not

⁶⁵ The Soviet Union, in and of its own, had made decisions as early as 1943 about what economic policies it would adopt vis-à-vis Germany should the war end in their favour. Their strategy called for a markedly different approach than had been employed following the First World War. Rather than demanding only monetary indemnities, the Soviets planned to dismantle the infrastructure of German industry and manufacturing and relocate these facilities to the Soviet Union. This was put into motion in the closing months of the war; between March and June 1945, with conflict still at hand, the Soviets had already removed 1575 factories from German territory. For more details see Mike Dennis, *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1990*, p. 40 and Jochen Laufer, "From Dismantling to Currency Reform: External Origins of the Dictatorship, 1943 – 1948" in *Dictatorship As Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, Konrad H. Jarausch, ed (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999), 76.

⁶⁶ *The Economist*, *Hip, Troubled Berlin*. [The Economist Online](http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=7953479). <http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=7953479>. Furthermore, according to Elizabeth A. Strom, during the 1980s, Berlin spent 30-50% more than the other city-states of Hamburg and Bremen, even as per capital tax collections were 50-70% lower. See Strom, p. 80.

maintain a leading position in the 'Economic Miracle' experienced by West Germany during the post-war years, particularly after the construction of the Berlin Wall.

Within the capital of the emergent East Germany, citizens responded to the nationalization by the SED disapprovingly. This was most visibly manifested by the flood of East Germans to West Berlin and West Germany, where they were granted automatic citizenship after a series of interviews in a temporary processing facility. On the whole, though, reaction merely simmered until 16 June 1953, when workers on East Berlin's residential showpiece *Stalinallee* began protesting against the 'New Course' taken by the regime. By the following day, over 100,000 citizens were on the streets in East Berlin and protests spread to more than 370 localities throughout the GDR.⁶⁷ Unable to disperse the crowds and unwilling to compromise with the demonstrators, the East German regime turned to the Soviets for support. As noted GDR historian Mike Dennis explains, it was only with the military assistance of Soviet tanks that protest was thus quelled.⁶⁸ In the aftermath, the SED altered certain aspects of their economic strategy, but this failed to stop the exodus of East Germans to the FRG. Between 1953 and 1961, upwards of two million East Germans fled the 'Workers and Socialists State'.⁶⁹

Although it would be seven years before it was built to stem the tide of refugees, the Berlin Wall completely transformed the historical center of the city into a vast no-man's land and further reinforced early post-war centers of economic development that had been established in the competing occupation zones. In West Berlin, the area along

⁶⁷ Dennis, *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1990*, p. 62.

⁶⁸ See Dennis, *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1990*, for more comprehensive details.

⁶⁹ Berliner Mauer Online, *Die Flucht aus der DDR und Ost-Berlin: Fluchtbewegung aus der DDR in den Westen 1949-196*. Berliner Mauer Online. <<http://www.berlinermaueronline.de/geschichte/fluchtzahlen.htm>>.

the Kurfürstendamm was resurrected as a center of commercial life, the location of choice for a wide selection of shops, restaurants and hotels. In East Berlin, a communist counterpart emerged surrounding Alexanderplatz, an area that had already been a commercial hub prior to the Second World War. Due to the ideology of the East German regime, however, the site did not equal the bustling character of the Kurfürstendamm. Yet it did become a destination for East Germans, particularly after the construction of the Television Tower in 1969 and the Hotel Stadt Berlin in 1970.⁷⁰

A measure of equilibrium characterized both sectors of the city throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. In West Berlin, the post-war prosperity of the FRG ensured that Berlin would remain subsidized indefinitely. In contrast, the reality of the communist command economy in East Germany increasingly led to fiscal stagnation and deficient living standards throughout the nation. To a certain degree, East Berlin was protected from these problems as the capital of the GDR. However, as Andreas Staab has identified, the televised images of the modern consumer society in West Germany only emphasized continuing material shortcomings and diminishing living standards within the GDR.⁷¹ By the summer of 1989, more and more East Germans began expressing their discontent with the economic conditions by fleeing the country; the complete collapse of communism followed within months.

⁷⁰ The Television Tower was designed by Fritz Dieter and Günter Franke, opening for the first time in 1969. The Hotel Stadt Berlin was designed by Roland Korn, Heinz Scharlipp and Hans-Erich Bogatzky and dates from 1970. It was renamed Forum Berlin in 1993 and Park Inn Berlin in 2003, at which time the entire building was remodelled and modernized.

⁷¹ Compared with other communist countries throughout Eastern Europe, East Germany can certainly be viewed as having a high standard of living. The contrast to West Berlin and West Germany, however, can be described as drastic. For more details on this subject, see Andreas Staab, *National Identity in Eastern Germany: Inner Unification or Continued Separation?* (Westport: Praeger, 1998), 108.

Another Economic Miracle...Falls Through

In the early 1990s, Berlin was full of optimism as the experiment of amalgamating competing communist and capitalist systems unfolded. Indeed, as Elisabeth Strom explains, initial indicators were positive as observers predicted that the post-war economic success of the FRG could be emulated in reunited Germany.⁷² By 1993, though, it became clear that this was not the case for Berlin or Germany. The economic restructuring of the early 1990s profoundly disturbed the status quo of the city which had been largely uninhibited by the global market forces that had shaped other post-war Western European cities during the Cold War. Former East and West Berlin equally shared a bloated and inefficient public sector, which remained essentially unchanged even after federal transfers were cut from €8 to €2 million in 1995.⁷³ Meanwhile, nourished by decades of subsidies rather than innovation, what industrial base was left following the Second World War completely collapsed when exposed to the open market. By 2004, over 300,000 jobs had been lost in the industrial sector alone.⁷⁴

Unemployment figures for the city from the Office of Statistics in Berlin-Brandenburg are sobering. In 1991, when data for former East and West Berlin was compiled jointly for the first time following the Cold War, the unemployment rate was 10.6%.⁷⁵ In the following ten years, the number incrementally rose, to 17.9% in 2001. In 2005, the peak of unemployment reached 21.5%. The latest numbers from June 2007

⁷² Strom, p. 83.

⁷³ Jabeen Bhatti, *Questions Arise about the Future of "Sexy But Poor" Berlin*. Deutsche Welle. <<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2208661,00.html>>.

⁷⁴ Martina Koll-Schretzenmayr, *Berlin - 15 Years On*. Network City and Landscape Online. <<http://www.nsl.ethz.ch/index.php/en/content/view/full/100/>>.

⁷⁵ Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg, *Arbeitslose und Arbeitslosenquote in Berlin nach Angaben der Bundesagentur für Arbeit Regionaldirektion Berlin-Brandenburg*. <<http://www.statistik-berlin-brandenburg.de/>>. The figures for each of the following years, 2001, 2005 and 2007 are also from the same source.

show that the number has since declined to 18%. The reduction is encouraging, but Berlin still retains the third highest unemployment rate of any state in Germany.⁷⁶

Despite the economic downturn, Berlin was still the largest construction site in Europe for much of the 1990s, a highly visible situation widely identified by a range of commentators. The ubiquitous presence of cranes and construction crews was a sign to all who were in the city that the urban fabric was being fundamentally altered. The central area along the former no-man's land spanning the distance from the Spree River to Potsdamer Platz was of particular significance in the urban redevelopment of Berlin. Bordering this former section of the Berlin Wall are the Reichstag (see Chapter One), the Holocaust Memorial (see Chapter Three) as well as the new Potsdamer Platz development and the Berlin Main Station. These latter two sites are emblematic of the commercial aspirations that private investors and politicians had and have for the reunited capital city. In addition, in the centre of the city, the sheer size of both sites to date compare only to the development of the Government District neighbouring the Reichstag. As both sites tally thousands of visitors per day, they also represent highly trafficked destinations. Finally, given the generally depressed financial situation of the city as a whole, the fiscal accountability of Potsdamer Platz and the Main Station are notable.⁷⁷

The subsequent analysis of Potsdamer Platz and the Main Station will contextualize these defining aspects within the broader theme of economic spatial

⁷⁶ Bhatti, *Questions Arise about the Future of 'Sexy But Poor' Berlin*. <<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2208661,00.html>>.

⁷⁷ According to Ute Wüest von Vellberg, head of the Public Relations for the DaimlerChrysler project at the Potsdamer Platz portion of the site, there has consistently been 93-97% occupation rates of their commercial and residential holdings. From personal interview with Wüest von Vellberg on 4 May 2007. Sony Centre, meanwhile, has a 98% occupancy rate according to the Urban Land Institute. See Urban Land Institute, *Sony Center am Potsdamer Platz: Filling the Core*, [Urban Land Institute Online](http://www.uli.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Search&template=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=39765). <<http://www.uli.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Search&template=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=39765>>. The financial situation of the Main Station will be elaborated on below.

development in reunified Berlin. While significant discourse relating to both sites has been evident, academic appraisals have been generally limited to circles of architects, urban planners as well as academics. Hence, an examination that more thoroughly incorporates how the citizenry assess Potsdamer Platz and the Main Station is valuable. Given that both sites have come to represent fiscally successful strategies for the economic development portfolio of the city, does this necessarily mean that they have become an integral part of the daily lives of its citizens? Moreover, what do these sites suggest about Berlin as a burgeoning metropolis at the turn of the twenty-first century?

Potsdamer Platz

For a host of commentators, there is perhaps no other pre-Second World War site as representative of the modernity of Berlin than Potsdamer Platz, which was the location of “crowds, lights, noise, machines [and] buildings all on a scale that dwarfed the individual”.⁷⁸ Yet in the early decades of the nineteenth century, the site was little more than a traffic juncture on the western side of the historical customs wall leading to the city of Potsdam. With the construction of Karl Friedrich Schinkel’s Potsdam Gate in 1824, the surrounding area became a busy marketplace, accentuated by the arrival of a small terminus for the Potsdam railway line in 1838 and Julius Ludwig Quassowski’s grand Potsdamer Railway Station in 1872.⁷⁹ Northern sections of the area around Potsdamer Platz that bordered the Tiergarten also saw the development of an upper-class

⁷⁸ Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, p. 115. Also, see one of Giles MacDonogh’s ‘Berlin Itineraries’ in Giles MacDonogh, *Berlin: A Portrait of Its History, Politics, Architecture and Society*. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 136, 137.

⁷⁹ Further traffic was directed to the vicinity of Potsdamer Platz opened in 1841, with the opening of a terminus for the Anhalter railway line. This was later followed by the construction of Franz Heinrich Schwechten’s Anhalter Railway Station, completed in 1882.

residential district that later become a prominent location for foreign embassies from around the world at the turn of the century.

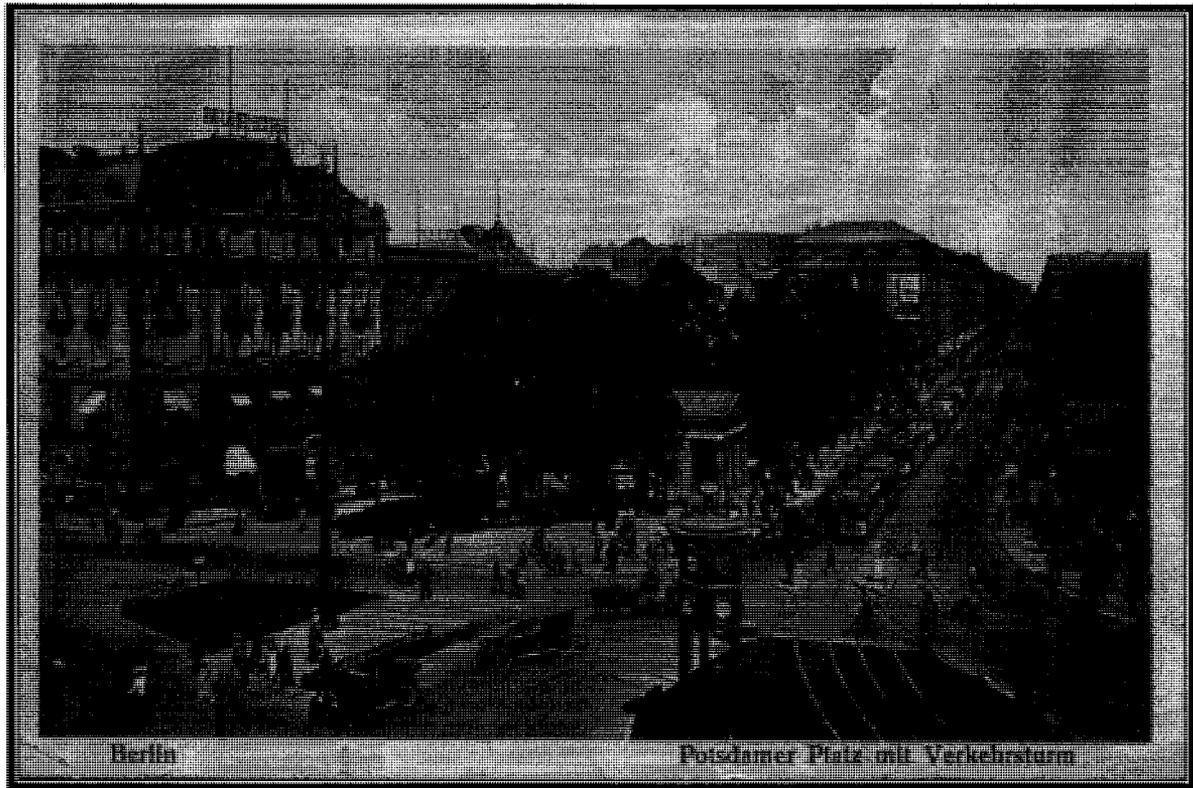


Image G “Berlin: Potsdamer Platz mit Verkehrsturm” (“Berlin: Potsdamer Platz with Traffic Tower”) obtained from <<http://archimedes.fas.harvard.edu/mdh/cartes/PotsdamerPlatz.jpg>>. Although the shot is undated, the presence of the traffic tower means that it was taken after its installation in 1924.

On the Potsdamer Platz itself, marketplaces soon gave way to the development of a diverse range of commercial enterprise: shops, cafes, restaurants and guest houses. By the 1930’s Potsdamer Platz had come to be considered a first class address because it had a solid economic base, was a gateway to social change and was a place for privileged mobility.⁸⁰ Hence, small commercial enterprises were inevitably followed by

⁸⁰ Meinhard von Gerkan, “Renaissance of Railroad Stations – Nuclei of a New Stage in Urban Development” in *Renaissance of Railway Stations: The City in the 21st Century*, Bund Deutscher Architekten BDA, Deutsche Bahn AG, Förderverein Deutsches Architekturzentrum DAZ in cooperation

internationally renowned hotels, fashionable shops and department stores, as well as a host of impressive office buildings. The decadence that came to be associated with the Weimar Republic was nowhere more visible in Berlin than at Potsdamer Platz. However, this excess was antithetical to the ideology of National Socialism, and with Hitler's seizure of power, plans were laid out to raze the site and begin construction of a monumental north south axis. Before the outbreak of the Second World War, nearby blocks were duly cleared, but the exigencies of the German war effort halted further progress.⁸¹

The devastation of the Second World War was thorough at Potsdamer Platz, particularly given its proximity to a number of government buildings of the Nazi regime, including Hitler's infamous Reich Chancellory. Traffic dissipated thereafter as the Potsdamer Railway Station was badly damaged and later demolished. Moreover, despite the fact that it was the site of a flourishing black market in the weeks and months after the war ended, the growing division between the western and eastern sectors led to the gradual decline of commercial activity.⁸² Despite its pre-war status as a hub of the city, Potsdamer Platz hence became increasingly peripheral. As Wolf Thieme describes it, "the last bit of life was extinguished by the construction of the Wall" as a section of the no-man's land enveloped part of the plaza and the orientation of commerce in West Berlin

with Meinhard von Gerkan, eds (Braunschweig: Friedr. Vieweg & Sohn Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 1996), 32, 33.

⁸¹ Just to the west of Potsdamer Platz, for instance, Speer had already directed the demolition of a large swath of the plaza that surrounded August Stüler's Matthäikirche, which dated from 1846. The area, site of the present day Cultural Forum (see below), was supposed to be the location of one of the large plazas in Speer's North South Axis. According to MacDonogh, the Matthäikirche would have been destroyed and the plaza fully constructed were it not for the commencement of allied bombing raids that diverted Nazi resources elsewhere. See MacDonogh, p. 135, 353.

⁸² Paul Steege, *Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 105.

shifted to Kurfürstendamm.⁸³ Only the storied *Weinhaus Huth* and fragments of the *Grand Hotel Esplanade* survived the war and subsequent demolition.

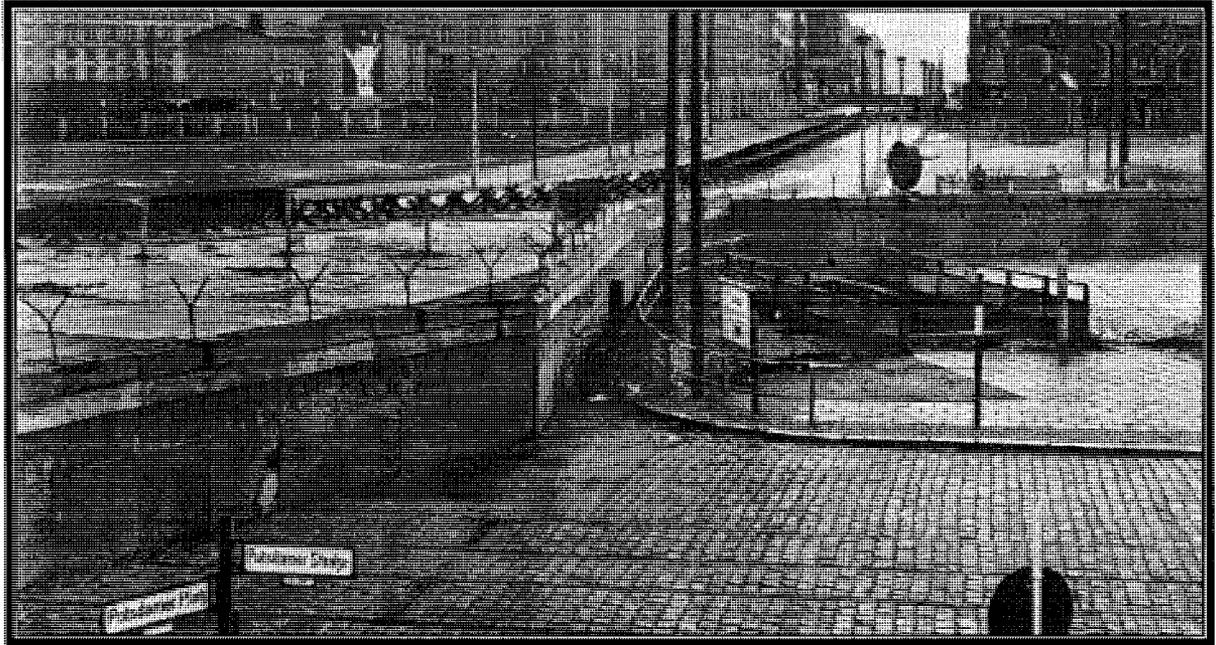


Image H “Berlin Wall at Potsdamer Platz” obtained from <http://www.berlinermauer.se/bilder4/b_mur25.jpg>. The signs for both the Potsdamer Platz and the Potsdamer Street are clearly visible only a few feet away from the Berlin Wall.

The eastern portion of Potsdamer Platz remained a no-man’s land for the next thirty years and the western portion was left equally barren. The exception to this was property west of the former plaza that came to be known as the Cultural Forum, an element of Hans Scharoun’s post-war proposals for the redevelopment of Berlin. However, due to the inherent physical barriers and geopolitical situation in Berlin at this time, the Cultural Forum was no longer oriented towards Museum Island to the east, but toward the west. Scharoun’s Philharmonic Hall and State Library were opened in 1963 and

⁸³ Wolf Thieme, *Das letzte Haus am Potsdamer Platz – Eine Berliner Chronik*. (Hamburg: Rasch und Röhrling Verlag, 1988) excerpted from MacDonogh, p. 139.

1976, respectively, together with Mies van der Rohe's New National Gallery in 1968.⁸⁴ As architectural critic Markus Sebastian Braun notes, although the Cultural Forum was an important municipal project for West Berlin, it did little to bring back the civic life that had characterized Potsdamer Platz prior to the Second World War.⁸⁵ While a destination for cultural activities, outside of scheduled events, little pedestrian activity was evident. Potsdamer Platz and its surroundings thus remained peripheral.

In 1988, West Berlin was given the opportunity to revise the state of affairs. Based on an agreement with the German corporation DaimlerBenz, a large plot of land directly adjoining the west side of the Berlin Wall was to be developed for the corporate headquarters of its subsidiary, debis. As this project moved forward, there was no consideration about an end to the division of Berlin, but with the fall of the Berlin Wall, entirely new possibilities emerged for the development of the site. As a result, two other major investors joined the initiative in the 1990s, Sony Europe and A+T (Asea Brown Boveri (ABB) and Terreno). Following an Urban Planning Competition for the site in 1991, a Master Plan for Potsdamer Platz by Hilmer & Sattler determined the conceptual layout of the entire site. Architects then competed for the Master Plans of each of the three complexes; Daimler-Benz selected Renzo Piano's proposal, Sony Europe went with Helmut Jahn and A+T chose Giorgio Grassi. In turn, individual buildings were subject to

⁸⁴ A later addition was completed in 1985, Rolf Gutbrod's Museum of Decorative Art. It was in many ways a controversial building for it had been designed in the 1960s and by the time construction was underway, the architectural culture had changed in such a way that its appearance was no longer esteemed. Gutbrod was thus relieved from the project and it was completed by the firm Hilmer & Sattler, who also took on responsibility for the Art Library and the Museum of Prints and Drawings, completed in 1987. A further Picture Gallery neighbouring the Museum of Decorative Art was completed in 1997. For further details see Markus Sebastian Braun, *Berlin: The Architectural Guide*. (Berlin: Verlagshaus Braun, 2006), 193, 255, respectively.

⁸⁵ Braun, p. 193.

a further competition, with a selection of eminent architects selected from around the world.⁸⁶

DaimlerBenz, Sony Europe and A+T adopted a scheme for Potsdamer Platz that would involve favouring the development of office space overall, but also allowing for the integration of commercial and residential sections. The hope was that this kind of mixed-use development would prevent civic life from dissipating after working hours. DaimlerBenz also instituted a number of programs that sought to create an emotive link between visitors and the site. After crews began work in 1993, DaimlerBenz opened the Info Box, a center that chronicled each stage of construction and what was to follow. Alongside ‘Open Site Tours’ and unique ‘Crane Operas’, the developers utilized promotional tools to establish Potsdamer Platz as a popular attraction among Berliners and tourists alike. Indeed, several interviewees for this analysis had attended these events, which shaped their perspective of how the site was being developed during the early stages of construction. Numerous others had also visited the ‘Info Box’ when it was open, obtaining a glimpse of what was being undertaken at a site that they had formerly known only as part of border fortifications or a vacant lot.

The first site to be completed was the DaimlerChrysler (formerly DaimlerBenz) Quarter in 1999, followed by the Sony Center in 2000 and the A+T Complex in 2002. The Beisheim Center, a fourth complex privately funded by entrepreneur Otto Beisheim opened in 2005. Located in the northeast corner of Potsdamer Platz, it was designed by the firm Hilmer & Sattler and Albrecht. Among the main public attractions within

⁸⁶ The architects of individual buildings for the DaimlerBenz complex are Renzo Piano, Richard Rogers, Arata Isozaki, Jose Rafael Moneo, Hans Kolhoff and Lauber and Wöhr. Helmut Jahn was responsible for the entire Sony Europe complex. For the A+T complex, Giorgio Grassi, Diener + Diener, Jürgen Sawade and Schweger & Partner were the architects of choice.

Potsdamer Platz are the Arkaden Shopping Complex, the Museum for Film and Television, a casino, two large movie theatres and a handful of hotels. A wide selection of restaurants and bars has been incorporated, as well as a number of open-air spaces containing public art and recreational equipment for children. Estimates show that between 70,000 – 100,000 people transit the site everyday on average, indicating that it has indeed become a destination within central Berlin.⁸⁷

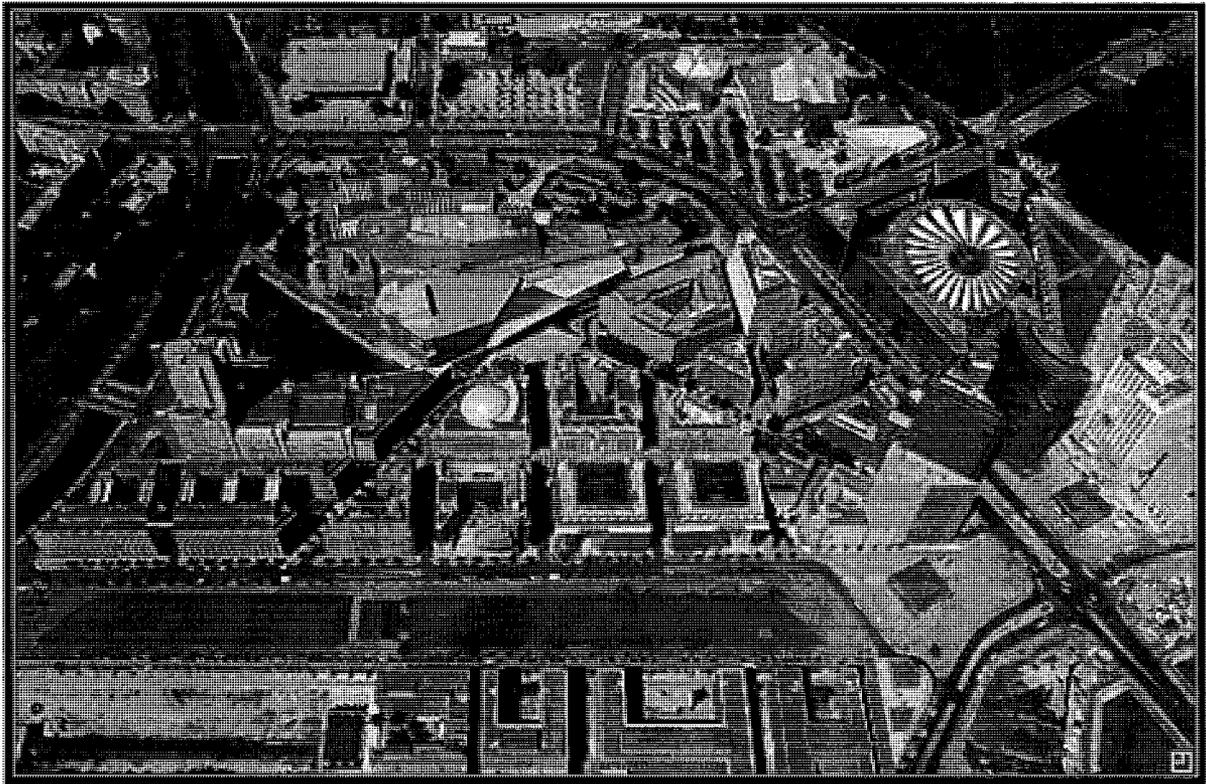


Image I “Potsdamer Platz 2003, Schrägluftbild aus östlicher Richtung” (“Potsdamer Platz 2003, Oblique Aerial Photograph from Eastern Direction”) obtained from <http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/pla nen/staedtebau-projekte/leipziger_platz/pix/030714_luftbild_470x308.jpg>. The street emanating from the lower right corner and extending to the upper left corner is Potsdamer Street. Below the green belt is the A+T Complex. Just below Potsdamer Street (and above the green belt) is the DaimlerBenz Quarter. Above this street in the middle right corner is the Beisheim Center followed by the Sony Center. Above all these in the top center are the buildings that encompass Hans Sharoun’s Cultural Forum.

⁸⁷ DaimlerChrysler Immobilien Press Materials, *The DaimlerChrysler Potsdamer Platz District*, DaimlerChrysler Immobilien, Berlin, p. 1.

Scepticism, Civic Life and Architecture

That traffic to and through Potsdamer Platz has been high is a fact that has not been disputed among observers. Yet, the development of Potsdamer Platz has had its share of detractors. Initial criticism emerged after finalized plans for the site were originally announced to the public. To begin with, there was concern that the process of negotiations between DaimlerBenz and the city had not included public consultations – an issue that would perhaps have been less potent had the Berlin Wall not been breached and the value of inner city property not exponentially increased as a result.⁸⁸ One interviewee for this analysis explained how he was bothered by the fact that the property of Potsdamer Platz is now almost exclusively in the hands of private investors, a decision that was made behind closed doors. While “normally, we would not have the chance to establish [a place like] Potsdamer Platz without these big companies and big money”, nevertheless, it has “left a little bitter taste for me”. Moreover, there was a great deal of initial scepticism about how the project would be physically developed. As Berlin largely lacks the towering skylines that typify many other large international cities, the call for a series of high-density skyscrapers for Potsdamer Platz evinced concern. Sceptics pictured an area that would be void of life after the workday ended and the sun had set. This was also evident among interviewees, one of which noted that “I always thought...it will be a vast place built in vain - a concrete cemetery”.

⁸⁸ Indeed, according to Elizabeth Strom, even a number of public officials had no knowledge of the agreement negotiated between DaimlerBenz and the city until the public announcement by DaimlerBenz officials about the new development on Potsdamer Platz. See Strom, p. 188. David Clay Large further explains that the price paid was estimated to be between 1/3 and 1/7 of the lands actual value. Furthermore, the city was viewed by some as “selling off the symbolic heart of Berlin at a bargain-basement price to a company known to have worked hand-in-glove with the Nazis”. See Large, p. 553.

As the staged opening of the different plots progressed, scepticism continued to be discernable. While the development had been ‘promoted’ as being a way to re-establish a link to the vibrancy that had characterized Potsdamer Platz prior to the Second World War, commentators like Brian Ladd lamented that “fabled Potsdamer Platz...is now a shopping and entertainment center with few fragments of pre-1989 physical substance that offer scarcely more of an immersion in history than the act of having a drink at a café named Billy Wilder’s or lingering on a new square named after Marlene Dietrich”.⁸⁹ Historian E. J. Gittus was more frank, noting that “the connection between the past and the present has been brutally severed at Potsdamer Platz”.⁹⁰ Interviewees for this analysis also noted continued scepticism. One respondent explained his reservations about the building of “an entire area of town in five years and expecting that it works like a quarter that should normally have grown within fifty years”. Another had doubted that “it can bring back the former city center, the old Potsdamer Platz of the Golden Twenties”.

According to Brian Ladd, the Potsdamer Platz of the ‘Golden Twenties’ was a fusion of “crowds, lights, noise, machines [and] buildings all on a scale that dwarfed the individual”.⁹¹ These characteristics embody expressions of civic life, something that contemporary observers find lacking at present-day Potsdamer Platz. As architectural commentator Bruno Flierl explains, although the number of visitors to the site is high, this is a somewhat deceiving factor as:

later, often only after a second look, they notice the lack of content in these freely accessible outdoor spaces, the lack of an

⁸⁹ Brian Ladd, “Ghosts on Display Reconstruction and the Meanings of History in Berlin since 1989”. *Network City and Landscape Online*. <<http://www.nsl.ethz.ch/index.php/en/content/view/full/100/>>.

⁹⁰ E. J. Gittus, “Berlin as a Conduit for the Creation of German National Identity at the End of the Twentieth Century”. *Space & Polity* 6, no 1 (2002): 103.

⁹¹ Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, p. 115.

urban public aspect. Potsdamer Platz was conceived, fully along the lines of Disneyland, as a theme park. Its theme was city and downtown. But it is not a real city and downtown, only a virtual one. And that is not enough.⁹²

Howard Watson agrees, citing great disappointment with what was proposed as the centerpiece of the New Berlin:

While the post-Wall city has quickly returned to being an edgy, cultural centre and a natural home for radical, contemporary artists, the Platz itself is an emotional vacuum. Potsdamer Platz should have been a celebration of Berlin. However...rather than capturing the café society, street life and rough-and-ready mix that makes Berlin an enduringly captivating and culturally inspiring city, in the end [it] seems to be a tone poem to the joys of the motor car and the American model of commerce.⁹³

Representatives from the architectural firm responsible for the Master Plan of Potsdamer Platz, Hilmer & Sattler, responded to these types of criticism with a pointed statement explaining that:

the proposal is based not on the American city model of an agglomeration of skyscrapers, which is used all over the world, but on the idea of a compact, spatially complex European city. City life should not happen in the interior of grand structured complexes of buildings but in the streets and on plazas.⁹⁴

Corresponding to this perspective, it is clear that earlier scepticism of the project among interviewees for this analysis has in the meantime aligned more closely to that of proponents of the Potsdamer Platz development.

⁹² Bruno Flierl, "Public Space: Goods for Sale". *Topos: European Landscape Magazine* 33, no 6 (2005): 12.

⁹³ Howard Watson, "Berlin's Empty Heart". *Architectural Design* 76, no 3 (2006): 103.

⁹⁴ Catchen, p. 50.

Indeed, overwhelmingly positive comments about civic life at Potsdamer Platz were evident from the majority of respondents. Putting aside earlier scepticism, one interviewee had changed his mind about the site since it had opened to the public because “It simply works. It really works – it’s popular, people are going there. I am going there”. Another compared the site’s existence during the Cold War, when Potsdamer Platz “used to be neither East nor West” to the contemporary development, where “they built something completely new...It attracts people, even at night. It’s a nice area where you can just spend time because it’s partly green, it has a good infrastructure and you can get there easily”. This perspective was echoed by another respondent when she mentioned that “you had this huge area that was quite empty after the wall came down...and now I think it is really accepted as a new center. It was about creating the center as a place for the people to be, to shop, to have museums and spend their free time. As well, with all the companies there as well, I think you have a good combination for this area”. One interviewee even referenced how Potsdamer Platz has become the united economic, cultural and entertainment center of the city where “people see it as just normal to be there, they enjoy the life there”.

Significantly, interviewees referenced the newly established civic life at Potsdamer Platz in relation to Berliners, but also Germans and international visitors to the city. As one respondent described, “I think that it is very central, the image that a city has...[and hence]... I think that Potsdamer Platz is important for Berlin and for foreigners that come to Berlin. It’s so open and it’s close to everything...I like the atmosphere there and that a lot of people are walking, sitting and they are all seem so calm and relaxed”. Others emphasized the fact that “there are always lots of tourists there so you have the

feeling of always being in an open-minded, world class city because you hear all kinds of languages and people spending their free time there – young guys with their laptops surfing the internet, people relaxing in the restaurants – it’s a really nice atmosphere”.

Yet, this same atmosphere is at the heart of another criticism for architects and urban planners in particular, as part of a much larger debate about the development of the city within the context of ‘Critical Reconstruction’. This was an urban development model for the city adopted in 1991 by the director of the Senate Department for Urban Development (SDUD) in Berlin, Hans Stimman.⁹⁵ At Potsdamer Platz, Critical Reconstruction guided growth in specific ways; the outlines of pre-war streets, blocks and squares were reproduced, though not precisely duplicated. Height limits were imposed on much of the site, with exceptions granted for a limited number of taller buildings. More noticeably, though, with the exception of the Sony Center and its towering Deutsche Bahn building, façade construction was largely limited to the use of stone and ceramic exteriors rather than the glass and steel typically preferred among contemporary modernist architects. As Stimman explained, Critical Reconstruction was a way to repeal the damage of the twentieth century:

⁹⁵ Critical Reconstruction was a theory built upon the notion that urban development after the Cold War should establish Berlin as a ‘European city’. It first emerged as a concept during the International Building Exhibition (IBA) in 1987 as a response to the perceived shortcomings of post-war urban development strategies in the city. One of the foundations of the theory was its emphasis on an urban development milieu of residential, commercial and public sites that echoed traditional, conservative and Prussian pre-war planning practices. The practical outcome of the directives were the restoration of traditional streets, blocks and squares, the enforcement of building height limits and the implementation of restrictions that controlled the materials used for façade construction. Critical Reconstruction has not been without its detractors. Daniel Libeskind, the architect of Berlin’s modernist Jewish Museum noted that while the city was a “fascinating montage of conflicting histories, scales, forms and spaces...[Critical Reconstruction is] transforming the fascinating diversity of the city into banal uniformity”. Dutch Architect Rem Koolhaas was scathing in his objections, calling the practice “petit bourgeois, old-fashioned, reactionary, unrealistic, banal, provisional, and above all dilettantish”. For further reading and source information for these two quotes, see Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, p. 233 and Strom, p. 141 respectively.

Berlin was totally destroyed by the bombs [of the Second World War] and after the war it was totally destroyed by the planners... We must bring this city back so that when we look into the mirror, we will know that it is our face. If we look like Hong Kong or Tokyo, nobody will come. Berlin must look like Berlin.⁹⁶

Yet, critics such as Kathleen James-Chakraborty note that the implementation of Critical Reconstruction led to the dominance of nondescript façades of “static quality” rather than vibrant features that one could expect, and can in fact be found, at the Sony Center.⁹⁷

In comparison, interviewees found little fault in the architectural character of Potsdamer Platz, their opinions echoing either positive or neutral perspectives. Naturally, the subject of ‘Critical Reconstruction’ was not referenced. Yet, when referencing the design of the site, one respondent offered a fairly balanced observation about the overall layout when he noted that “I was pleased to see how it developed and I am still very satisfied with the result even though I don’t like the individual architecture at certain points...but the style of the buildings does bring more international flair to the city”. The Sony Complex was the beneficiary of a number of compliments because “with the suspended roof overhead it is a large space that nevertheless feels private...the acoustics make it seem more familiar”. It was also clear that interviewees were particularly pleased with the function of the site, the way that the architecture allows for mixed usage. Several respondents emphasized the economic, commercial and cultural areas of the site, from the towering Deutsche Bahn headquarters building, to the Arkaden Shopping Complex and the two cinemas that complement the Museum for Film and Television.

⁹⁶ Large, p. 588.

⁹⁷ Kathleen James-Chakraborty, *German Architecture for a Mass Audience*. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 132.

Summation

Compared to the critiques of Howard Watson and Bruno Flierl that reference the area of Potsdamer Platz as an ‘emotional vacuum’ that lacks an ‘urban public aspect’, or Kathleen James-Chakraborty, who criticizes “static facades”, interviewees for this analysis offered more enthusiastic and balanced opinions. Indeed, while early scepticism was widespread about Potsdamer Platz, the site as it currently stands today is viewed by the sample of interviewees as encompassing civic life within an agreeable architectural environment. A number of reasons provide an indication as to why this is the case. To begin with, it became clear that the initiatives of the developers to ‘advertise’ the development process of the site impacted how it has been perceived since. Several interviewees had attended one of the ‘Crane Operas’ or ‘Open Site Tours’, which shaped their perspective of how the site was being developed during the early stages of construction.⁹⁸ Numerous others had also visited the ‘Info Box’ when it was open, obtaining an impressive glimpse of what was being undertaken at a site that they had formerly known only as part of border fortifications or a vacant lot. Moreover, many interviewees regularly visited the contemporary site to shop, eat and relax amidst the thousands of other visitors.

Indeed, Potsdamer Platz has come to conceptually represent an economic site that embraces an area of daily life that can be tailored to the everyday needs of an individual within the context of conspicuous consumption. The diversity of shopping and recreational pursuits found at Potsdamer Platz are outstanding examples of this. Not only did the interviewees for this examination substantiate this, it is also clear from the

⁹⁸ At the October 1996 topping out ceremony, the new music director of the Staatsoper, Daniel Barenboim, directed the cranes to the finale of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. See Large, p. 590.

numbers of people who transit the site on a daily basis. It is significant that Potsdamer Platz has managed to dispel early scepticism and latent criticism to become an important economic site within the centre of Berlin, for the same cannot be said with as much certainty about other sites, such as the Berlin Main Station, for example.

Berlin Main Station

The origins of the present day Berlin Main Station lie in the expansion of German railways throughout the country in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1872, due to increasing demand for a route to the city of Hanover, a new line and head station were inaugurated in Berlin, the Lehrter Station. The Lehrter Station was designed by Alfred Lent, Bertold Scholz und Gottlieb Henri Lapierre and featured a façade characterized by rich classical and renaissance architectural styles.⁹⁹ Ten years later, Lehrter Station was linked with the expanding City Rail system, which greatly facilitated access for citizens of Greater Berlin and its environs. In 1884, as a result of its size and modern construction, Lehrter Station took over the routes of the nearby Hamburger Station and thus also became the central rail terminus for journeys to Hamburg, northwest Germany and Scandinavia. In the following years, traffic increased steadily at Lehrter Station and it became one of Berlin's most important termini.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ As Simon Ward explains, the rich ornamentation on the Lehrter Station corresponded to the evident utility offered by train termini in general; "As the railroad station became an economic and communications' center, it also began to develop its aesthetic aura". See Simon Ward, "Neues, Altes Tor zur welt": The New Central Station in the 'New' Berlin" in *Berlin: The Symphony Continues: Orchestrating Architectural, Social and Artistic Change in Germany's Capital*, Carol Anne Costabile-Heming, Rachel J. Halverson and Kristie A. Foell, eds. (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 77.

¹⁰⁰ On top of managing a great amount of passenger traffic, a number of historically significant arrivals and departures also took place at the Lehrter station: Chancellor Otto von Bismarck disembarked from there upon leaving office in 1890, revolting Kiel sailors arrived in November 1918, Benito Mussolini arrived there in September 1937 and Adolf Hitler also arrived in May 1938. See Ward, p. 78.



Image J “Lehrter Station 1911” obtained from <http://www.rmtbristolrail.org.uk/archives/station_lehrter_berlin1911.jpg>. The façade characterized by rich classical and renaissance architectural styles is clearly evident in this photo taken from the south side of the Spree River. The Hamburger Station is located a few hundred metres to the right of this photo.

The growth of the Lehrter Station paralleled a broad trend in Germany, Europe and internationally toward the expansion of railways. A range of commentators has emphasized the significance of this expansion. Berlin historian Alexandra Richie notes that “the train did for Germany ‘what geography did for Britain’”.¹⁰¹ As Former Federal Minister for Regional Planning, Building and Urban Planning Klaus Töpfer explains, “the emergence of the modern industrial city would not have been possible without the railways’ ‘creative force’”.¹⁰² This was particularly evident in Germany, where the industry was a major influence behind urban development as “the increasing needs of

¹⁰¹ Richie, p. 141.

¹⁰² Klaus Töpfer, Preface to *Renaissance of Railway Stations: The City in the 21st Century*, Bund Deutscher Architekten BDA, Deutsche Bahn AG, Förderverein Deutsches Architekturzentrum DAZ in cooperation with Meinhard von Gerkan, eds (Braunschweig: Friedr. Vieweg & Sohn Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 1996), 11.

goods and passenger transport led to the steady growth of cities and [hence, the resulting] location of their railway stations determined the main direction of urban expansion”.¹⁰³ Furthermore, as Wolfgang Schivelbusch notes, the architecture of nineteenth century rail termini also conceptually reflected ‘gateways’, “whereby people would engage in a spatial practice by entering from city space into railroad space”.¹⁰⁴ Meinhard von Gerkan goes one step further, noting the myriad comparisons that railway stations had during their early years to cathedrals, castles and palaces. As he explains, “the entire instrumentarium of architectural, engineering and sculptural means was used to stage eventful spaces, to demonstrate affluence and claim dominance over urban landscapes”.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, at Lehrter Station, not only was the building itself architecturally spectacular, the neighbourhood that surrounded it came to be seen as a centre of social and commercial activity.¹⁰⁶

However, given the decentralized nature of long distance rail traffic in Berlin, Lehrter Station was twice scheduled for redundancy by city planners. The First World War prematurely ended a redevelopment plan by Hermann Jansen and Martin Mächler dating from 1910 that would have established two large termini in the north and south of Berlin connected by a tunnel.¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, the outbreak of the Second World War

¹⁰³ Heinz Dürr, “Making Way for a New City” in *Renaissance of Railway Stations: The City in the 21st Century*, Bund Deutscher Architekten BDA, Deutsche Bahn AG, Förderverein Deutsches Architekturzentrum DAZ in cooperation with Meinhard von Gerkan, eds (Braunschweig: Friedr. Vieweg & Sohn Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 1996), 13.

¹⁰⁴ Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey. The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 175 in Ward, p. 77.

¹⁰⁵ von Gerkan, “Renaissance of Railroad Stations – Nuclei of a New Stage in Urban Development”, p. 27. Hans Stimman also describes rail stations as “cathedrals of technology”, referring to their prominence in the early twentieth century. See Hans Stimman, “A Future for Berlin, City of Railways” in *Renaissance of Railway Stations: The City in the 21st Century*, Bund Deutscher Architekten BDA, Deutsche Bahn AG, Förderverein Deutsches Architekturzentrum DAZ in cooperation with Meinhard von Gerkan, eds (Braunschweig: Friedr. Vieweg & Sohn Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 1996), 251.

¹⁰⁶ Dürr, p. 14.

¹⁰⁷ Ward, p. 81.

halted the strategies of Albert Speer for a similar axial plan for Berlin's rail system that would have bypassed Lehrter Station in favour of a particularly large southern terminus that would serve as a counter point to Hitler's Great Hall and be built "on a scale which dimensionally exceeded anything done before" and would certainly have been the largest train station in the world.¹⁰⁸ In the end, Lehrter Station was ultimately unable to escape thorough damage in the closing months of the Second World War, and it was left a ruin until its demolition between 1957 and 1959, which has been characterized by former Director of the Senate Department for Urban Development Hans Stimman as "an act of municipal self-mutilation".¹⁰⁹ Only the City Rail lines continued to run in the post-war period.

Thereafter, the surroundings of the station became increasingly marginal for the citizens of Berlin as the division of the city ensured that the area remained undeveloped and rubble strewn. The comprehensive severance of transport connections between East and West Berlin and the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 meant that in the years that followed, the remaining Lehrter City Rail Station only saw traffic destined for East Berlin's sole rail link to the west at *Friedrichstrasse*. In addition, the fate of the Lehrter Station can be correlated to a broader trend of a decline in the culture of railways in the post-war period, which Matthias Wissmann references with the term 'station milieu',

¹⁰⁸ Dieter Bartetzko, "A Journey into the Past. Railway Stations and the Third Reich" in *Renaissance of Railway Stations: The City in the 21st Century*, Bund Deutscher Architekten BDA, Deutsche Bahn AG, Förderverein Deutsches Architekturzentrum DAZ in cooperation with Meinhard von Gerkan, eds (Braunschweig: Friedr. Vieweg & Sohn Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 1996), 214. Speer's plans also called for a northern station in the district of Wedding. Together, these two termini were scheduled to be completed between 1945 and 1950, though the course of the war soon ended these projections. See MacDonogh, p. 352.

¹⁰⁹ Stimman, p. 251.

whereby railways became increasingly peripheral to transit culture in general.¹¹⁰ Commentator Christoph Hackelsberger agrees and has explored how the automobile industry contributed to rail's decline in such a way that "stations became 'non-places' to all those who were able to move about independently whenever it pleased them".¹¹¹

Moreover, as Heinz Dürr has examined, stations in general also lost their historically 'good' standing as centres of social activity alongside their functional transit roles. Instead, a reputation for attracting the socially underprivileged persons prevailed. The Lehrter Station cannot be singled out specifically for this phenomenon, but the nearby West Berlin station of *Zoologischer Garten* was famous for the preponderance of drugs and a notorious red light district.¹¹² Meinhard von Gerkan even claims that train travel became "an oppressive daily experience and [a] possible danger to life and limb"!¹¹³ Indeed, the peripheral transit position of Lehrter Station in West Berlin therefore corresponds with a broader loss of social importance. With the exception of a renovation for Berlins 750th Anniversary in 1987, the site thus remained rather insignificant.

Reunification was a catalyst for a reassessment of not only the Lehrter Station site and its position within the 'station milieu' that had developed, but also Berlin's entire

¹¹⁰ Matthias Wissmann, Preface to *Renaissance of Railway Stations: The City in the 21st Century*, Bund Deutscher Architekten BDA, Deutsche Bahn AG, Förderverein Deutsches Architekturzentrum DAZ in cooperation with Meinhard von Gerkan, eds (Braunschweig: Friedr. Vieweg & Sohn Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 1996), 9.

¹¹¹ Christoph Hackelsberger, "No Longer Star Attractions, but Rather Blind Traffic Spots. Post-war Railway Stations" in *Renaissance of Railway Stations: The City in the 21st Century*, Bund Deutscher Architekten BDA, Deutsche Bahn AG, Förderverein Deutsches Architekturzentrum DAZ in cooperation with Meinhard von Gerkan, eds (Braunschweig: Friedr. Vieweg & Sohn Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 1996), 219. Meinhard von Gerkan also mentions the effect of the automobile industry on rail and further broadens his perspective to the airline industry, while cynically noting the "suffocation from both moving and parking cars and the noise of planes and airport consumption". See von Gerkan, "Renaissance of Railroad Stations – Nuclei of a New Stage in Urban Development", p. 17.

¹¹² Dürr, p. 14.

¹¹³ von Gerkan, "Renaissance of Railroad Stations – Nuclei of a New Stage in Urban Development", p. 41.

transit infrastructure. In 1994, Heinz Dürr was named the new head of the restructured national rail company, Deutsche Bahn, and soon unveiled an innovative new rail policy based on an exhibition entitled “Renaissance of the Railroad Station”.¹¹⁴ The main aspects of this policy were the renewal of railway terminals and tracks, the upgrading of connections and the re-allocation of land holdings of the reorganized Deutsche Bahn. Properly implemented, Dürr was confident that the ‘renaissance of the railroad station’ could particularly “mean a renaissance of the urban environment in general”.¹¹⁵ Paralleling Deutsche Bahn’s strategy, city planners also used the opportunity to introduce a new model for Berlin’s urban rail network. Together, an ‘axis concept’ was adopted, in which plans called for a main station in the center of the city, with subsidiary stations located in the east (*Ostbahnhof*), the west (*Spandau*), the north (*Gesündbrunnen*) and the south (*Sudkreuz*).¹¹⁶ In turn, seamless interactivity between the national Deutsche Bahn services with that of Berlin’s City Rail, Underground, Bus and Tram networks would be developed. This ‘axis concept’ would serve to streamline and shorten travel itineraries and place rail travel in a competitive position with the automobile and airline industries.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ During the Cold War, the former national rail company founded in 1920, the *Deutsche Reichsbahn*, was divided into two companies, with the *Deutsche Bundesbahn* in West Berlin and with a modified *Deutsche Reichsbahn* structure in East Berlin. As Matthias Wissmann explains, this greatly exasperated rail and transit inefficiencies in the city. Hence, reunification prompted not only a rationalized national rail carrier (Deutsche Bahn) but also the amalgamation of former East and West Berlin’s transit companies (*Berliner Verkehrsbetriebe*, *BVG* or Berlin Transportation Company). See Wissmann, p. 9.

¹¹⁵ Heinz Dürr quoted in Ward, p. 82.

¹¹⁶ Although the term ‘mushroom concept’ is used by Deutsche Bahn and most commentators, for the sake of clarity here, the interchangeable term ‘axis concept’ is more descriptive of the new east-west-north-south development of Berlin’s rail network. A second plan was also considered for Berlin’s rail overhaul, which was called the “circular model”. This called for trains entering and leaving Berlin from the North or South to be directed onto the tracks of the Ring Bahn (the circular railway that surrounds the city). This would have involved new long-distance railway stations at Westkreuz and Ostkreuz. See Stimman, p. 252.

¹¹⁷ Richard Bernstein, “Just a Rail Hub? Or a New Sort of Compass for Europe?”, *The New York Times International Online*.

At the heart of the axis concept was the development of a main station for Berlin. There had never been one distinct central station in the city. In the prewar period, numerous head termini (like Lehrter Station) had dotted the city.¹¹⁸ In the postwar period, East and West Berlin had modified existing stations to serve as main head termini, *Ostbahnhof* and *Zoologischer Garten*, respectively. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Lehrter site was identified as an ideal location for a main station in Berlin because of its central geographical position that was located near to the future federal government district.¹¹⁹ Moreover, wartime destruction and Cold War isolation had also ensured that the site was largely undeveloped. In 1992, the firm von Gerkan, Marg & Partner (gmp), and architect Josef Paul Kleihues competed for the design of the new station after Deutsche Bahn had been granted permission to develop on the Lehrter Station site. In March 1993, the design of gmp was selected, which on the whole reflects what one sees on the site today. Chief architect Meinhard von Gerkan designed an extended filigree glass dome along elevated east to west rail lines intersected by two office buildings that bridged the center of the station, where the arrivals hall would be situated. Out of sight, yet just below the arrivals hall would be a series of north to south underground tracks that would complete the axis concept. Here, plans allowed for an extension of the Underground line U5 that ended in former East Berlin at Alexanderplatz. Other aspects taken into consideration were the necessity of an area for a Tram stop at the station as

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/09/international/europe/09berlin.html?_r=1&n=Top/Reference/Times%20Topics/People/B/Bernstein,%20Richard&oref=slogin>.

¹¹⁸ Alongside Berlin, many cities in Germany had (and some continue to have) ‘termini stations’, such as Leipzig, Frankfurt am Main, Munich and Stuttgart. Termini stations are characterized by the fact that trains enter and exit from the same direction. As von Gerkan notes, a multitude of extra tracks are necessary to accommodate this process, cutting into the urban fabric of cities and representing a visual and psychological barrier. In comparison, Cologne and Hamburg have ‘through-stations’, where trains enter from one direction and exit from another, eliminating the need for superfluous tracks. See von Gerkan, “Renaissance of Railroad Stations – Nuclei of a New Stage in Urban Development”, p. 23, 25.

¹¹⁹ Stimman, p. 252.

well as the incorporation of underground car park connected to an auto tunnel that would begin at Potsdamer Platz, and end just beyond the terminal building.

Construction officially began in October 1995 with the commencement of tunnel excavation. Over the following ten years, construction crews worked from the ground up, and the station incrementally took shape. Interest in the building process echoed that of Potsdamer Platz; each day, an estimated 10,000 people came to view the progress of construction and the information panels posted by Deutsche Bahn.¹²⁰ On 26 May 2006, the renamed Berlin Main Station was inaugurated, just two weeks before the opening of the World Cup in Germany. A large public celebration drew crowds numbering over 500,000 to view several bands, a fireworks show and a 'Light Symphony'.¹²¹ After a surge in traffic during the World Cup, volumes have stabilized with an average of 1100 trains and 300,000 people passing through the Main Station daily.¹²²

¹²⁰ Jabeen Bhatti, *Berlin's New Rail 'Palace' Nears Completion*. Deutsche Welle. <<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,1922768,00.html>>.

¹²¹ Email correspondence with Susan Lehmann, a representative of Deutsche Bahn, 19 December 2007.

¹²² Email correspondence with Susan Lehmann, a representative of Deutsche Bahn, 18 December 2007 and 19 December 2007, respectively.



Image K “Berlin Hauptbahnhof” (“Berlin Main Station”) obtained from <http://www.bahnimbild.de/fotothek/cmd/?aktuell=true&adam_language=en>. There are a number of boats in the Spree River and thousands of people can be seen on its banks watching the fireworks during the opening celebrations.

Deutsche Bahn CEO Hartmut Mehdorn has evinced pride when referencing Berlin Main Station. “We’re the envy of major cities across the world”, he has enthusiastically proclaimed; Berlin’s largest station is “a building for the next century. It’s going to get us up to speed in many different ways.”¹²³ He has also emphasized the importance of the site location adjacent the former no-man’s land between East and West Berlin, noting that “we wanted to be a little bit symbolic in this sense, after the reunification of Germany and the joining of East and West”.¹²⁴ City planning officials have been no less vocal in their support for the project. Ingeborg Junge-Reyer, a

¹²³ Deutsche Welle, *Europe’s Biggest Station to Open in Berlin in Time for World Cup*. Deutsche Welle. <<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2032338,00.html>>.

¹²⁴ Bernstein, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/09/international/europe/09berlin.html?_r=1&n=Top/Reference/Times%20Topics/People/B/Bernstein,%20Richard&oref=slogin>.

representative for the Senate Department for Urban Development has highlighted the stations “central location, its modern architecture and its extensive transportation opportunities [which] will help distinguish Berlin”.¹²⁵ Chief architect Meinhard von Gerkan predictably reiterates similar perspectives about the nature of the technologically proficient construction. He also concurs with how significant the location of the site is for the city, Germany and Europe. Indeed, “we [gmp] are very pleased that we managed to reach a symbiosis of construction, form and function. It's a perfect fusion of construction and architecture that might well be unprecedented. It isn't a building with a facade and a roof - it's more seamless. Every single detail is also a constructive factor”.¹²⁶

Among several interviewees, the importance of the Main Station for the reunified city and nation was indeed emphasized, citing the fact that the area was a blank space prior to development. One interviewee recalled “strange dead end stations in Berlin before the war [and] due to division, no lines going through the city at all”. Another pointed to how the Main Station could in fact be a strong representation for Berlin as the capital city. Indeed, despite early hesitation from each of these interviewees about how it would come out, the results were not viewed as being objectionable. Opinions for some were influenced by the events that were held to inaugurate the station. In attendance at the opening ceremonies of the site on 26 May 2006, one respondent expressed that it “was really the most amazing thing I have ever seen”. In fact, he liked it so much that he returns often to see it, even taking visitors to view it because he notes that he is “kind of proud of it”.

¹²⁵ Bhatti, *Berlin's New Rail 'Palace' Nears Completion*. <<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,1922768,00.html>>.

¹²⁶ Klaudia Prevezanos, *Gerkan: New Station a Perfect Symbiosis of Form and Function*. Deutsche Welle. <<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2032829,00.html>>.

Questions of Design, Accessibility and Complementary Infrastructure

In the face of such positive assessments, controversy developed between von Gerkan and Deutsche Bahn after changes were made in the construction process that altered the original plans for the site. When assessing von Gerkan's early plans for the Main Station in 1994, commentator Jörg Schlaich focused on the extended filigree glass dome along the elevated east to west rail lines, proclaiming that the roof will "hopefully be regarded as beautiful and appropriate. It is in line with the tradition of the large 19th century platform halls and will contribute to their renaissance, heeding the spatial programme and using the methods and materials of our modern times".¹²⁷ Indeed, von Gerkan has noted that his encompassing design, inclusive of the spacious entrance hall and the roof that extends from it "expresses a grand gateway gesture in that it functions as connecting passage between the Spreebogen area and the government district to the south and the town quarter of Moabit to the north".¹²⁸ Yet, von Gerkan's comments on the design of the Main Station do not necessarily match those of the finished structure. Hence, if "every single detail is also a constructive factor", as quoted above, then the Main Station in its current form remains contentious.

The foremost reason for this is because under pressure to have the station open for the World Cup, Deutsche Bahn unilaterally decided to shorten the central east-west domed roof of the Main Station by more than 130 meters. According to von Gerkan, this was a "stupid idea" as it "damages the proportions of the whole building".¹²⁹ Then, a

¹²⁷ Jörg Schlaich, "Delight in Construction: Platform Halls – Light, Wide, Bright" in *Renaissance of Railway Stations: The City in the 21st Century*, Bund Deutscher Architekten BDA, Deutsche Bahn AG, Förderverein Deutsches Architekturzentrum DAZ in cooperation with Meinhard von Gerkan, eds (Braunschweig: Friedr. Vieweg & Sohn Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 1996), 273.

¹²⁸ von Gerkan, "Renaissance of Railroad Stations – Nuclei of a New Stage in Urban Development", p. 54.

¹²⁹ Bernstein, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/09/international/europe/09berlin.html?_r=1&n=Top/Reference/Times%20Topics/People/B/Bernstein,%20Richard&oref=slogin>.

specifically crafted roof construction for the underground rail lines was abandoned in favour of flat tiles, a move that “razes the spatial structure and disfigures” the site.¹³⁰ The former issue has not yet been fully resolved; the latter settled by the Berlin courts, which ruled in von Gerkan’s favour by stipulating that the roofing design of gmp must be implemented. Discussion about the shortening of the dome has received widespread coverage that has contributed to its visibility among Berliners. Indeed, several interviewees for this analysis specifically referenced how the east-west dome was shortened. In doing so, “the structure thus ends very abruptly” and gives the impression that “a huge space ship has landed in the center” of the city, according to one respondent.

A second critique concerns accessibility of the Main Station in the city, of which several facets became apparent. In 1994, the von Gerkan posited that “the attraction of rail depends on speed, smooth and frequent connections [as well as] convenience”.¹³¹ He even noted in 1997 that broadly speaking, the “level of mobility and with it the volume and density of traffic [at railway stations] can be used as a direct indicator of progress, civilization and standard of living”.¹³² Yet, after an investment of over €700 million into the sites construction, almost double the original cost estimate of €400 million, there remain only limited options to rapidly access the site from certain districts of the city.¹³³ Some interviewees therefore questioned the cost of constructing the Main Station because “it is a nice building...but did we need such a nice building?” Indeed, according to some interviewees, the money earmarked for the building would have been better spent on

¹³⁰ Audra Shanley, “Judge Orders Rail Company To Reinstate Berlin Terminal’s Derailed Design”, *Architectural Record Online*. <<http://archrecord.construction.com/news/daily/archives/070125berlin.asp>>.

¹³¹ von Gerkan, “Renaissance of Railroad Stations – Nuclei of a New Stage in Urban Development”, p. 17.

¹³² Meinhard von Gerkan in *Architecture for Transportation*. (Hamburg: Birkhäuser, 1997), 14 in Ward, p. 83.

¹³³ von Gerkan quoted by Prevezanos, *Gerkan: New Station a Perfect Symbiosis of Form and Function*. <<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2032829,00.html>>.

investing in local and regional access to the Main Station. As one respondent explained, to do so would mean that “you don’t have to go to the middle of nowhere to catch a train”. This perspective particularly emanates from regions of the city that had enjoyed the convenience of several main stops for national trains along the east-west axis in the immediate years after 1989 that have since experienced a decline in services. This is perhaps best exemplified at the former hub stations of *Zoologischer Garten* and *Ostbahnhof*, whose nearby residents voiced their resentment when Deutsche Bahn announced the rerouting of numerous trains from the east-west tracks to the new north-south tracks.¹³⁴ Speaking about the *Zoologischer Garten* station, Manuela Damianakis, a spokesperson for Berlin's planning office explained that “there is something mythic about the station, because it was at the very heart of West Berlin life for so many years”.¹³⁵

This move to centralize services at the Main Station by Deutsche Bahn effectively downgraded both termini to regional stops. Now, while this measure certainly cut travel times nationally with the opening of the Main Station, it has also taken away from accessibility that had been present for years for the citizens of the densely populated areas around these stations and negatively influenced their perspective of the site. Deutsche Bahn had planned for an efficient integration of their national network with Berlin’s City Rail, Underground, Bus and Tram options. Yet, much to the chagrin of commuters, only Bus and east-west City Rail connections have been put in place. In the time since the station opened, no north-south City Rail lines have become operational, nor has the station been linked to the Underground or Tram networks. In fact, this remains the case

¹³⁴ Richard F. Tolmach, “Berlin Megastation to Boost Growth”. *California Rail News*. <http://www.calrailnews.com/crn/0906/0906_45.pdf>.

¹³⁵ Kyle James, *Derailing an Icon of West Berlin*. *Deutsche Welle*. <<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,1648119,00.html>>.

even after a reorganization of Berlin's entire transit structure costing €10 billion.¹³⁶ One respondent in particular was caustic about the accessibility of the site, calling the lack of connecting infrastructure "idiotic and greatly problematic". Another was somewhat more optimistic with his critique, remaining confident that the "terrible situation [concerning connections]...will be addressed within some years".

Meanwhile, the location and complementary infrastructure of the Main Station has also become a source of contention. The physical positioning of the building has been viewed by gmp, Deutsche Bahn and city planners as not only symbolic but also practical. After all, the very nature of division is what allowed for such an expanse of undeveloped space in such a central location. Yet, the lack of neighbouring development means that the site as it now stands offers little for the visitor other than that concerned with travel. This remains the case, even after eminent commentators, von Gerkan among them, have noted that "everyone would now accept that 'transportation spaces' are not only seen as functional channels for the delivery of technical goods but above all 'living spaces'".¹³⁷ Klaus Töpfer agrees, noting that "urban planning should harmonize social and spatial organization and should fulfill the task of creating a suitable, adequate distribution of functions in the urban area", a concept that was at the heart of plans for the area surrounding the Main Station.¹³⁸ Yet, interviewees noted concern about the location of the Main Station, as it was derisively identified as having been "built it in the middle of nowhere" and hence does not (perhaps yet) correspond to what can be perceived as a harmonized 'living space'. Indeed, for one respondent, it was for this reason that "of all

¹³⁶ Deutsche Welle, *Europe's Biggest Station to Open in Berlin in Time for World Cup*. <<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2032338,00.html>>.

¹³⁷ Meinhard von Gerkan in Ward, p. 83.

¹³⁸ Töpfer, p. 11.

the buildings that have been built in the past years...[the Main Station]...is the most controversial for me”.

Opposite the Main Station, crowds gather on warm summer evenings along the Spree River as well as in front of the nearby Reichstag and Brandenburg Gate. Once the cold days roll in and the tourists thin out, though, the Main Station appears solitary. This was not supposed to be the case as there have been urban development plans for its surroundings since 1994, following a design competition won by German architect Oswald Mathias Ungers. Indeed, Ungers called for a number of key features to augment the large plazas that front the Main Station to the north and south including office complexes, residential buildings, a hotel, restaurants and bars.¹³⁹ However, to date little progress has been made, and hence the Main Station that was portrayed to 10,000 visitors a day throughout its construction is missing key facets that were to make it a destination for more than transiting travellers.

However, a number of interviewees also noted that the lack of development was a temporary situation and were willing to take a ‘wait and see’ approach. One respondent explained that in her mind, the construction was not yet complete, citing “a lot of space that is not used at the moment”. Others hoped for the best as “it will be something with more meaning when there is a culture around which has really been established”. Indeed, one interviewee that had expressed scepticism about the project during its early stages predicted that if the plans for the development of the site go forward, “we will have a new center in Berlin...and maybe we will find out that they again made the right planning

¹³⁹ Implementing the Ungers proposal for the accompanying infrastructure has been the subject of somewhat odd contention. For example, modifications in 1997 by the Deutsche Bahn Board of Directors removed a planned hotel from the southern side of the site so that sightlines between the government district and the Main Station would not be compromised! See Ward, p. 83.

decisions". In comparison to Potsdamer Platz, where there was a strong emphasis on rapidly developing the expanse of the site, the stages of development at the Berlin Main Station instead focused on the core building. This has certainly meant that a signature structure now stands, but this emphasis has prevented the site from becoming a destination for much more than transit. Nevertheless, should the surrounding infrastructure take form in the next years, then the optimism noted by a number of interviewees will turn out to be justified. For, as the example of Potsdamer Platz has shown, scepticism about a given development can be turned on its head if what is made available on a daily basis can be tailored to the everyday needs of an individual.

Summation

It is clear that the criticism brought forth by architects, academics and observers about the Berlin Main Station is reflected in the concerns of the interviewees for this analysis much more closely than what has been examined at Potsdamer Platz. The Main Station has been widely censured for changes that altered the original design of the building, the lack of citywide accessibility and for the choice of location with no complementary surrounding infrastructure to date. Interviewees for this analysis largely concurred with the larger critical discourse surrounding the Main Station, but also expressed patience and optimism about further development of the site. As can be seen from the example of Potsdamer Platz, an economic site that conceptually embraces the everyday needs of the individual can become a dominant civic destination. For Deutsche Bahn, the perception of their showpiece station in the years to come among Berliners and all those who visit will thus be informed by the ability to adequately address the factors of criticism that have dominated discourse to date.

Conclusion

With the fall of the Berlin Wall, Berlin inherited an economic base that lacked international competitiveness and dynamism. With the decision to once again name Berlin as the capital of Germany, anticipation about the possibility of rejuvenating the economic prospects of the city grew, but proved to be somewhat ephemeral. Yet two projects, Potsdamer Platz and the Berlin Main Station, can be viewed as being commercially viable and generally well received. Located on or adjacent to property that used to be part of the East German no-man's land, the historical importance and centrality of these sites has proven significant. Nevertheless, controversy among city planners, architects, academics and observers has been evident throughout their development process and has been reflected among interviewees for this analysis.

Regarding Potsdamer Platz, scepticism was widespread during the early stages of the sites development, and contemporary critics lament the absence of a genuine civic life and the imposition of building codes that prevented the widespread use of modern architectural design methods. However, interviewees for this analysis have largely shown support for what is offered at Potsdamer Platz, where a range of commercial and recreational offerings embrace the everyday needs of an individual. Meanwhile, the Main Station has been criticised for changes that altered the original design of the building, the lack of citywide accessibility and for the choice of location with no complementary surrounding infrastructure to date. While interviewees were much more critical about the location and resulting connection to local transit options, there was nevertheless optimism that these issues would be addressed in the years to come. Potsdamer Platz and the Main Station, as prominent economic sites in New Berlin, both represent what has become or

promises to be destinations tailored to the everyday needs of individuals – the diversity of commercial and recreational pursuits at Potsdamer Platz and the potential for centrality and mobility at the Main Station are outstanding examples of this. While these two sites may not physically reflect Berlin's historic façade, they nevertheless seek to conceptually capture the vitality of pre-war Berlin after decades of economic stagnation during and following the Second World War.

The emergence of these two sites in Berlin have reflected the city's economic spatial re-conceptualization and also paralleled an energized political climate caught between the Reichstag and the Palace of the Republic. Similarly, for over three decades, the city has also been in the midst of re-conceptualizing its approach to its cultural memory sites, and given the historic correlation between political and economic power in Berlin, it is hence therefore prudent to discuss this topic next, emphasizing two of the most high profile sites in central Berlin, the Holocaust Memorial and the Topography of Terror.

III. Narratives of Commemoration and Remembrance: The Holocaust Memorial and the Topography of Terror

When assessing the narratives that have surrounded the development of cultural memory sites like the Holocaust Memorial and the Topography of Terror, the historical significance of Berlin's political and economic evolution is of paramount importance. It can be argued that the emergence of central German political structures and financial strength during the last decades of the nineteenth century contributed, at least in part, to the course of the First and Second World Wars, the Holocaust as well as the ensuing stalemate of the Cold War. With division, competing dynamics of cultural memory were evident in East and West Berlin, centering upon different notions of commemoration and remembrance of the crimes of the Third Reich. After reunification and the adoption of Berlin as the capital of Germany, these competing narratives were once again altered and transformed by a process that has come to be known as a 'democratization of memory'. Despite transparency, process and dialogue, this 'democratization of memory' did not translate into simplified developmental paths for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe or the Topography of Terror.

Although first publicized in 1988, it was not until 2005 that the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, hereafter referred to as the Holocaust Memorial, was inaugurated. During the interim period, the site's location and aesthetics were persistently in question and the encompassing discourse was charged with emotion. Yet, since the opening of the Holocaust Memorial, it is precisely these aspects that have defined it as a key cultural memory site in Berlin. The Topography of Terror, meanwhile, was at the centre of a discussion about whether it should be developed as a museological and documentative exhibit or a memorial site. Despite the fact that these questions were

largely solved after reunification, a permanent facility still has yet to be constructed, almost thirty years after the site was identified as historically significant. Instead, a provisional exhibit originally constructed in 1987 remains standing, contributing to a lack of contemporary visibility and becoming the focus of some critics who characterize it as outdated and poorly maintained. The following analysis will contextualize the public discussions surrounding the Holocaust Memorial and the Topography of Terror, in order to demonstrate how the spatial development of these sites have informed a broader sense of conceptual cultural memory awareness in the New Berlin.

Cold War Holocaust Commemoration...and Remembrance

Efforts to memorialize the Holocaust have been historically characterized by ambiguity within Germany. Following the end of the Second World War, division ensured that two distinctly East and West German structures of public remembrance, and to a lesser degree public commemoration, emerged. As historian Jeffrey Herf notes, “no major national political figure in either of the two Germanys questioned the factual occurrences of such crimes. Instead they argued about what caused the mass murder, where commonly accepted facts should fit into public narratives, [and] which of Nazism’s victims should receive primacy in public memory”.¹⁴⁰

In West Germany, it was not until the 1960s that the Holocaust assumed a role within public discourse. Financial restitution was paid to Jews who had survived, the Federal Government established official relations with Israel in 1965, and the Holocaust was given a place in national political memory.¹⁴¹ Yet, as the center of western political

¹⁴⁰ Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 373.

¹⁴¹ Herf, p. 3.

authority was centered in Bonn, West Berlin was on the periphery of discussions about Holocaust remembrance and commemoration. In East Germany, meanwhile, the destruction of European Jewry was also on the margin of narratives that addressed the period of National Socialism. There was no financial compensation paid to Jewish victims, relations with Israel were conspicuously absent and those who attempted to address the Jewish question within the political structure were purged from the party apparatus.¹⁴² East Berlin may therefore have been at the center of these decisions as the capital of the GDR, but given the SED's approach to the issue, it did not become a corresponding center of remembrance and commemoration.

In both East and West Berlin, Cold War geopolitics in many ways dictated these positions ideologically. Politicians in both states, after all, were well aware of the crimes of their citizens during the Nazi era. Although they may have addressed this at a superficial level, ultimately there was expediency in leaving many problematic memories behind. On the one hand, this led to the utilization of these respective Holocaust narratives as a form of national legitimization in East and West Germany. However, this also allowed for the fundamental responsibility for the crimes of the Second World War, so strongly denied within national ideologies, to be passed between the two states.¹⁴³

This process of denial has since been referred to as the "politics of memory", and clearly reflects the influence that specific social and political events had in the formation of contrasting public memory in East and West Germany as well as Berlin.¹⁴⁴ This opposition flourished until the fall of the Berlin Wall. Within a year, the country had

¹⁴² Herf, p. 3.

¹⁴³ Bill Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich*. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 214.

¹⁴⁴ Till, p. 162.

reunified and much of the political rhetoric upheld for forty years dissipated. In its place emerged notions of unified nationalism and what Siobahn Kattago refers to as the “democratization of memory”.¹⁴⁵ In one respect, this latter term alludes to the challenging process of reconstructing and reinterpreting the significance of the Holocaust for Germans and in this case, also Berliners. For while there was already a network of existing sites of remembrance throughout the city, more often than not they had been influenced by the Cold War rhetoric of division.¹⁴⁶ Yet, central national memorials commemorating the victims of the Third Reich were not evident in East or West Berlin, let alone Bonn.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, national sites identifying the nature of National Socialist perpetration were also absent.

The Democratization of Memory

The emergence of this ‘democratization of memory’ was an important development and the relationship between this trend and aspects of public memory in Berlin is significant.¹⁴⁸ Citizens were indeed confronted with shifting historical

¹⁴⁵ Siobhan Kattago, *Ambiguous Memory: The Nazi Past and German National Identity*. (Westport: Praeger, 2001), 26.

¹⁴⁶ One example of the problems associated with Cold War remembrance of the Holocaust has been outlined by James E. Young. The Buchenwald Concentration Camp was a “truly national East German memorial to the Nazi period”, playing a “nearly mythological role in the German Democratic Republic’s self-conceptualization”. Shortly after reunification, Young explains, Buchenwald closed and underwent a physical and ideological renovation, just one sign of the normalization of Germany’s Holocaust remembrance. James E. Young, “Holocaust Museums in Germany, Poland, Israel and the United States” in *Contemporary Responses to the Holocaust*, Konrad Kweit and Jeurgen Mattheaus, eds. (Westport: Praeger, 2004), 256.

¹⁴⁷ While a range of memorials were indeed constructed in both sides of the city after the Second World War, such as the Herbert Baum Group Memorial in East Berlin and the Bendlerblock in West Berlin. Yet, central national memorials commemorating the victims of the Third Reich, while pursued elsewhere in East Germany (Buchenwald Concentration Camp) and West Germany (Dauchau Concentration Camp), were not present in either East or West Berlin.

¹⁴⁸ Although the concepts of individual and collective identity will not be pursued within this paper, it is important to make note of their significance to the creation of individual and public memory. For the purposes of this paper, individual identity connotes the unique combination of social relations and experiences that inform who one is as an individual. As social beings, our identities are in turn informed by established collective narratives. That is, different aspects of our lives are shared with those who surround

perceptions within society and politics after 1989. Politically, the disparate ideologies of the Cold War were left officially, although obviously not entirely, behind. Societally, Germans were challenged on a daily basis with understanding the customs and habits of those who had lived on the opposite side of the Iron Curtain. As citizens of the ‘frontline city’ of the Cold War, Berliners were certainly more exposed than others to these irregularities. Indeed, individual and public remembrance of the First and Second World Wars, the Holocaust, as well as division during the Cold War have emerged in reunited Berlin as central aspects of a larger collective national identity. Between 1989 and 2001, for instance, roughly 600 placards, monuments and memorials were erected in the city to commemorate tragic aspects of twentieth century German history.¹⁴⁹

Holocaust commemoration has become a theme of particular resonance among Berliners faced with the pervasive task of “coming to terms with the past”.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, the commemoration of the Holocaust in the principal city of perpetrators significantly influences the appearance and position of Berlin internationally, particularly in its new role as capital of Germany. Yet, the needs of the present were intertwined in early debates about the shape, form and structure of the reunited city. In turn, individual and public memory of the Holocaust was also necessarily affected by these factors. Emerging from the Cold War, “memories long repressed or excluded from public debate [were] posed as

us. Individual and public memory is intricately linked to one’s identity; as one’s contemporary social relations and experiences inform our understanding and interpretation of past events. Since individuals and social groups have the agency to promote, reformulate or silence memories, this informs an ever-changing interpretation of the past. For a specific discussion of identity in reunified Germany, see Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999). Also, the selected works of James E. Young utilized for this paper along with Siobahn Kattago’s piece provide an excellent bridge between aspects of identity and memory.

¹⁴⁹ Elke Grenzer, “The Topographies of Memory in Berlin: The Neue Wache and the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe”. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 11, no 1 (2002), 94.

¹⁵⁰ James M. Skidmore, “Memorial to a Haunting Past: Berlin’s Holocaust Memorial”. *Queen’s Quarterly* 108, no 4 (2001), 511.

counter-memories to the dominant, accepted memory.”¹⁵¹ That there were in fact two dominant and accepted memories spurned discussion and heated debate that shaped ambiguous and variable interpretations of the Holocaust.

This is perhaps best exemplified by the comments of historian Martin Broszat, who critically noted that “monuments may not remember events so much as they bury them altogether beneath layers of national myth”.¹⁵² Such national myths, characterized by the “politics of memory” practiced within East and West Germany during the Cold War, began to surface again in Germany after 1989, a highly contested and controversial process that particularly resonated in Berlin. The notion of insignificance brought forward by Broszat can be correlated to a wider debate beyond the Holocaust Memorial and the Topography of Terror that centered on traditional memorialization versus counter-memorialization. The historical process of remembrance conventionally utilized by nations focuses on ideals, triumphs and the monumentalism that depicts this - traditional memorialization.

In Berlin, one does not have to look far to find these kinds of monuments: the eighteenth century Brandenburg Gate, the nineteenth century Victory Column, the Soviet War Memorial in former East Berlin’s Treptower Park or the remains of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in former West Berlin. These monuments simultaneously represent cohesion and reverence by taking often intricately complex developments and simplifying them into singular themes.¹⁵³ This indeed depicts a ‘useable’ public memory,

¹⁵¹ Kattago, p. 26.

¹⁵² James E. Young, “Memory, Counter-memory and the End of the Monument” in *Image and Remembrance: Representation and The Holocaust*, Shelley Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz, eds (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 1.

¹⁵³ Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, 168. MIGHT BE worthwhile mentioning that despite the intentions of architects, the public often has a different engagement

representative of a particular time and circumstance. However, as Broszat emphasized, such monuments may also prevent an observer from confronting or engaging with the past by masking intricacy with monumentalism. As will become evident below, the rising profiles of the Holocaust Memorial and the Topography of Terror have been both stimulated and paralyzed by the ambiguity of this discussion.

The centrality of Berlin in public discourse about memory is also significant when assessing the development of the Holocaust Memorial and the Topography of Terror. Connotatively of course, memory remains an intangible and associative human process. Yet, there are several aspects of both individual and public memory that can provide a constructive contextual framework for this analysis. James E. Young has noted that individual memory reflects both tactile and temporal dimensions that inform personal narratives.¹⁵⁴ While tactile memory can be defined as a reflection of personal experience, temporal memory suggests an informed remembrance of past or historical events; one may not have been present for the fall of the Berlin Wall, for example, yet one's memory of it can be informed by what has been read, heard or seen in hindsight. In either case, emphasis must be placed on the fact that every individual will experience events differently and hence bring a unique interpretation to a given narrative.¹⁵⁵

Siobahn Kattago contributes further to this discussion by linking individual memory with public memory. Broadly speaking, public memory is an intrinsic, yet often indistinct, characteristic of any nation. It is derived from the interaction among individual narratives within any given society. Inherently, this is a process of dynamic and fluid

with these sites: one need only consider the fact that the Gedächtniskirche was universally loathed until it was almost destroyed.

¹⁵⁴ Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, p. ix.

¹⁵⁵ Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, p. ix.

reformulation, naturally fashioned by individuals, social groups and political exigencies.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, public memory is necessarily grounded by the needs of the present; that is, from a contemporary perspective, the relevance of the past reflects the requirements of different social groups within a particular moment in history. It is therefore with these factors in mind that this discourse of memory in the ‘New Berlin’ can proceed, taking into consideration the Holocaust Memorial and the Topography of Terror.

The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (Holocaust Memorial)

The importance of a national site of Holocaust remembrance was clearly evident for West German journalist Lea Rosh and historian Eberhard Jäckel when they first proposed the Holocaust Memorial in 1988. Within a year, they had established “Perspective Berlin”, a grass-roots organization that began lobbying the West German and West Berlin government to support the project. Momentum intensified after the collapse of the East German regime and the subsequent decision to relocate the federal government to Berlin, when increasing public support for a central Holocaust memorial emerged in Berlin.¹⁵⁷ In April 1994, an international competition was jointly launched by

¹⁵⁶ Kattago, p. 171.

¹⁵⁷ Before a discussion of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, it should be noted that in 1993, Chancellor Helmut Kohl had in fact commissioned a “worthy common memorial for the victims of both world wars, tyranny, racial persecution, resistance, expulsion, division and communism”. The location of this memorial was the *Neue Wache*, a nineteenth century building by Karl Friedrich Schinkel. Inside, a *pieta* by Kathe Kollwitz symbolically depicted a mother shielding a child. Kohl’s attempt at creating such a centralized and encompassing memorial, however, did not go over well. Two major points of contention arose: representatives from victim groups were appalled that both victims and their murderers would be memorialized within the same memorial. Moreover, Jewish representatives felt that the *pieta*, a quintessential Christian symbol, inherently excluded Jews from the commemoration process. For more, see Anna Krylova, “The Politics of Memory in the Bonn and Berlin Republics” in *Memory and the Impact of Political Transformation in Public Space*, Lisa Maya Knauer and Daniel J. Walkowitz, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). In addition, although not a central aspect of this paper, it is of importance to highlight the protests that were made about a central memorial dedicated only to Jews by representatives of Roma, Sinti, Gypsy, asocial and homosexual groups. The exclusion of these groups from the planned

the Berlin Senate and Federal Government in an effort to find an appropriate design for the memorial. Guidelines for the competition outlined Germany's obligation "not to avoid the truth or give in to forgetfulness, to honour the murdered Jews of Europe, to remember them in sorrow and shame, to accept the burden of German history [and] to give the signal for a new chapter in human cohabitation in which injustice to minorities will no longer be possible".¹⁵⁸

At the conclusion of the competition in March 1995, over five hundred proposals were rejected in favour of two semi-finalists.¹⁵⁹ The first was designed by Christine Jacob-Marks, Hella Rolfes, Hans Scheib and Reinhold Stangl. The 'Jacob-Marks Model' featured a 100 meter concrete plate that would have the names of all known Jewish victims of the Holocaust inscribed on its exterior. The 'Ungers Model' by Simon Ungers, Christiane Moss and Christina Alt called for a similarly large structure comprising 85 by 85 meter steel girders inscribed with the names of different European concentration and extermination camps. The public response to these two memorials foreshadowed the intense debate that began to emerge regarding the form, function and significance of the Holocaust Memorial. Indeed, there was a vocal outcry against these two models that centered on how each seemed to characterize monumentality and extravagance. Rather than reverently representing the victims of Nazism by their absence, these monuments appeared to glorify their deaths, an unwelcome analogy for many Germans.

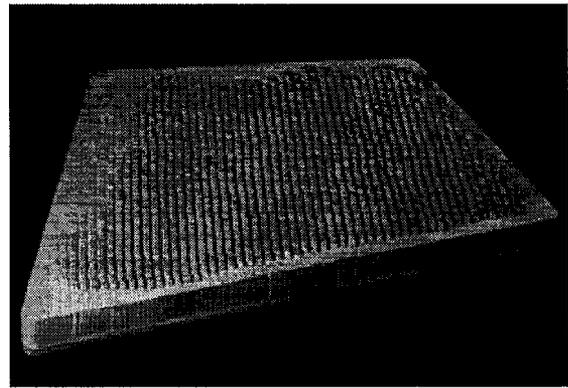
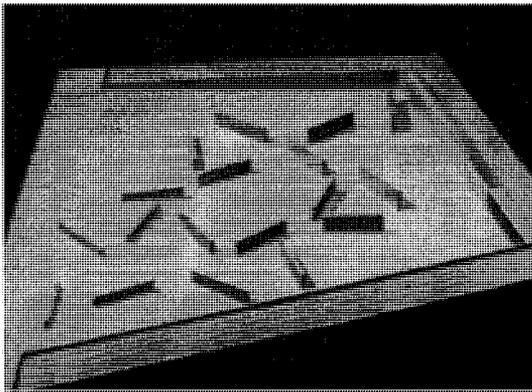
In the face of such criticism, a second competition was announced in June 1997 following a series of colloquia involving a diverse range of politicians, historians,

memorial was "little short of an insult" and Günter Grass rather hastily remarked that to exclude such victims "represented a continuation of Hitler's racial policies" as noted by Niven, p. 220.

¹⁵⁸ Till, p. 161.

¹⁵⁹ Skidmore, p. 514.

architects and artists. This time, twenty-five architects were invited to submit proposals and in November 1997, another set of semi-finalists was announced. This time, Gesine Weinmiller's 'Shattered Star' (Image 'L', below) faced a design by architect Peter Eisenman and sculptor Richard Serra, 'Eisenman I' (Image 'M', below). While Weinmiller had decided to present a less imposing site in light of the difficulties experienced during the first round, Eisenman and Serra opted for a more monumental design.



Images L and M "Shattered Star" and "Eisenman I", respectively, obtained from <http://www.hgb-leipzig.de/mahnmal/denk01.html>. As can be seen, Weinmiller's proposal was much less imposing than that of Eisenman and Serra.

After further deliberation, 'Eisenman I' was selected, which encompassed an undulating field of 4,000 stelae, a majority of which would exceed 3 meters in height. However, acceptance was based on the condition that the dimensions of the design had to be curtailed, an imposition deemed unacceptable by Serra, who decided to withdraw from the project as a result. Eisenman continued on, though, introducing a revised proposal entitled 'Eisenman II' which featured 2,711 stelae, of which only a small portion would

reach above three meters.¹⁶⁰ A further design, 'Eisenman III' also incorporated an information centre designed by Berliner Dagmar von Wilcken. The information centre was deemed essential, for it would allow for contextual background to the function and significance of the Holocaust Memorial. Commenting on the final proposal, Eisenman evinced satisfaction that "80 to 90 percent of the original concept remains intact".¹⁶¹

In April 2003, construction began at a site between the renovated Reichstag and the newly developed Potsdamer Platz in central Berlin. Two years later, on 10 May 2005, the inauguration of the Holocaust Memorial was held, within days of the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War (Figure 'C', below). The culmination of over seventeen years of planning, design and construction of Germany's first national site of Holocaust remembrance was of great significance for Berlin and the nation. For, it was constructed in a city and nation burdened by its historical role in the perpetration of the Holocaust and the subsequent division that had to date also prevented a unified public recognition of this past.

¹⁶⁰ Stelae are rectangular shaped pillars. They are constructed of self-compacting concrete and are grey in colour.

¹⁶¹ This excerpt is from a commentary on a speech made by Eisenman at the Gallery of Ontario, 7 February 2001 as quoted by Skidmore, p. 515.



Image N "Holocaust Memorial: Berlin, Germany" obtained from <<http://www.gsstudies.uga.edu/images/gooze-holocaust-mem.gif>>. The undulating stelae rise from the ground, some reaching three metres in height. In the background (to the south-west lies a number of federal state offices and the Potsdamer Platz development).

The chronology just outlined, however, veils the complexity and emotion that was evident throughout the planning, design and construction of the Holocaust Memorial. There are three dynamic themes that can be identified as significant for the purposes of this analysis: the location of the memorial within the historical center of the Berlin; the way in which the aesthetics of the site would appropriately commemorate the Holocaust; along with the awareness or relationship to ones memory of the Holocaust that would develop while visiting the memorial. Underlying each of these themes, debate was fuelled by questions of centrality, monumentality and the very question of how the memorial would reflect encompassing discourse. Memory is at the heart of these aspects, and through an analysis of these three themes, one acquires a better understanding of what the Holocaust Memorial may connote for contemporary Berliners.

Location, Aesthetics and Links to Encompassing Discourse

Despite the different design concepts that arose during the competition, one thing remained central to the planning process: the placement of the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin's historic centre. Originally, Rosh and Jäckel sought to place the Holocaust Memorial on a piece of land known as the Prinz Albrecht Terrain in central Berlin, the former location of Germany's Secret State Police (Gestapo), *Schutzstaffel* (SS) and SS Security Service (SD) under the National Socialists. However, after intense debate, the spot continued to be developed as the Topography of Terror, a discussion that will be examined more thoroughly in the second half of this chapter. The organization committee for the Holocaust Memorial sought another plot of land, one that would be of "great symbolic value" and that would connote centrality.¹⁶² The Berlin authorities offered a the aforementioned within the no-man's land between the Reichstag and Potsdamer Platz site. Its link to Nazism was evident; nearby had stood the former offices of Joseph Goebbels, Adolf Hitler's Chancellery and the bunkers where both died.

There were some who questioned the proximity of the Holocaust Memorial to the present and past sites of political and economic importance in the centre of the city. Among interviewees for this paper, scepticism about the location of the Holocaust Memorial was clearly evident. One respondent explained that because of the centrality of the Holocaust Memorial "I thought it was more important that some political buildings should be erected there or that some important companies have their headquarters on the site". Another was also sceptical because "it really is such an outstanding place in the city center and I thought that as a result...I saw a danger that it might be viewed as something artificial or taken out of the context by those who visit". As historian Anna Krylova

¹⁶² Till, p. 174.

describes, dissent also came from a number of quarters that highlighted the value of ‘authentic’ German and European sites of memory, such as concentration or death camps.¹⁶³ The Holocaust Memorial could, it was feared, act as a magnet, “pulling in memory [and] taking the thrust away from local and regional sites of authenticity”.¹⁶⁴ The concern lay with the potential for the public to look upon this ‘central’ memorial as just that – the one, principal site of memory that encompassed the narrative of the Holocaust. A trip to Auschwitz or Buchenwald would consequently become unnecessary. One of the interviewees echoed this position, remarking that “I am not always sure if it is in the right place because from my point of view, between the Brandenburg Gate and Potsdamer Platz, you now have a hole. We had other places in the city to build it – and we should have done this”.

Yet, throughout the entire development and construction process, Eisenman maintained that connotatively, the centrality of the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin was of absolute importance. He asserted that to emphasize the significance of the memorial as an integral part of the city would be a powerful way to demonstrate a commitment to memorializing the Holocaust and the central role that Berlin played in its perpetration. After all, there had yet been a coherent national response to Holocaust commemoration in the city even after being named capital after reunification. To this end, Eisenman explained that the location in Berlin would “serve to place the Holocaust at the center of national memory”.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, the significance of a memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe so close to the machinery responsible for their demise is considerable. As Elke Grenzer explains, such a memorial is therefore a fitting way for a “country of

¹⁶³ Krylova, p. 118.

¹⁶⁴ Niven, p. 217.

¹⁶⁵ Niven, p. 232.

perpetrators” to remember the Holocaust, in a city that has taken on a centralized role as an “adjudicator of memory”.¹⁶⁶

These themes also resonated with interviewees. As the development of the site progressed and finally opened in 2005, those who had noted earlier scepticism about the site’s location reversed their position. One observed that “now that it’s finished, I think it suits Berlin very well, exactly at that spot. It shows that this is our center and we provide space for that very difficult part of our history and reminds us that we have this part and we are not saying that it is behind us”. Another respondent related the symbolism of the Holocaust Memorial being located in the heart of Berlin to the Jews that had been taken “from the heart of Germany”. Meanwhile, it was also emphasized that the site “is alive. It’s alive because of its centrality. People use it in their everyday lives; they walk through it when they cross this square and when you go through it, you absolutely cannot deny that it is a powerful symbol”. In other words, the place of the Holocaust Memorial in the center of historic Berlin is significant not just to the projection of a historical reckoning but to the everyday lives of Berliners, who, in their interaction with the site, have begun to make the injustices of the Holocaust part of their own sense of self; its location ensures it has taken on historical as well as contemporary meaning. This is a relationship that also takes on significance when considering the aesthetics of the site. For, while discussions about a location for the Holocaust Memorial were problematic, the question of the size, shape and form brought an entirely new set of contentions to the surface.

The challenge facing architects of the Holocaust Memorial was twofold: proposing a design that incorporated the scale of the crime while also recognizing the ambiguous understanding of the Holocaust that was evident within Germany. Throughout

¹⁶⁶ Grenzer, p 104.

the selection of projects outlined above, one trend that consistently surfaced was that of monumentality, both in terms of the design style and the criticisms they engendered. It was the monumentality of the 'Jacob-Marks' and 'Ungers' models that ostensibly precluded their construction. Thus, Martin Broszat's criticism that "monuments may not remember events so much as they bury them altogether beneath layers of national myth" can be seen as being reflected in the discourse surrounding the design choice.¹⁶⁷ In the end, Eisenman's model emerged as one that was perceived as balancing the necessity of scale while also addressing the ambiguity inherent within public memory.

When preparing proposals for the Holocaust Memorial, designers were also faced with a difficult task due to contemporary circumstances: on the one hand, one had to consider Berlin's revived political and economic position within Germany and Europe; on the other, there was the historical burden as the city of perpetrators prepared to commemorate a state sponsored program of separation, degradation and removal from European society.¹⁶⁸ Designers must have been aware of one of Rosh's most famous quotes, in which she proclaimed "the crime was gigantic, the monument should be immense".¹⁶⁹ This guiding principle in combination with the designated central location, however, created the risk that the site would become too monumental and impose an overly singular narrative.

Moreover, sixty years after the end of the Second World War, the monumental connotations evident in Nazi design still haunt the German architectural discipline.¹⁷⁰ As

¹⁶⁷ Young, "Memory, Counter-memory and the End of the Monument", p. 1.

¹⁶⁸ Fulbrook, p. 148.

¹⁶⁹ Grenzer, p. 104.

¹⁷⁰ A quote from Adolf Hitler, 21-22 October 1941 provides a glimpse at the grandeur planned for the Thousand Year Reich: "All who enter the Reich Chancellery must have the feeling that they are visiting the masters of the world. Even the route to it – through the Triumphal Arch, along the wide avenues...should take their breath away. Only thus shall we succeed in eclipsing our only rival, Rome. The great Hall's size

James E. Young has noted, there is a deep distrust of the imposition of memorial forms in light of such exploitation.¹⁷¹ Designers are therefore faced with finding an appropriately meaningful way to encapsulate the intricacy, complexity and enormity of the Holocaust. Curiously, as was evident throughout the two competitions for the Holocaust Memorial, this often led down the path toward monumentalism – at once both an uncomfortable form of representation and a seemingly appropriate one given the scope of the crime. During the competition for the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, each of the two finalists chosen in 1995 and 1997 became associated with this traditional type of memorialization. In fact, responding to Eisenman’s selection, a number of prominent intellectuals including Günter Grass released an opinion piece that concluded, “we do not see how an abstract installation of oppressively gigantic proportions can [elicit] mourning and remembrance that can [in turn] create a...meaningful explanation”.¹⁷² These concerns over monumentality address the importance of aesthetics for Berliners and Germans alike, some of whom expected that the memorial would draw upon aspects of symbolism in order to reflect the ambiguity of contemporary German remembrance of the Holocaust.

In response were calls for a memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe that challenged notions of monumentality, cohesion and reverence. After all, neither the Holocaust nor its remembrance after the Second World War can be identified as unambiguous in Berlin. One of the interviewees for this analysis explained that “I actually prefer decentralized aspects of remembrance– I think it is more important for people to go around and be reminded about the Jewish life all over the city several times

shall reduce St. Peter’s and its square to insignificance”. Excerpted from Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, p. 126.

¹⁷¹ Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, p. 27.

¹⁷² Krylova, p. 119.

a day or week instead of driving to the Holocaust Memorial perhaps twice a year”. Another commented that the Holocaust Memorial should be something that “occupies your perception” rather than existing as a “site of normality”. Similar notions about counter memorials were thus advocated, implying that observers would have the opportunity to be placed into an active or immersive role when visiting that could in turn elicit critical insight and analysis.¹⁷³

Eisenman’s design for the Holocaust Memorial appealed to the selection committee for its ability to balance the scope of the crime with the ambiguity of Holocaust remembrance in Germany. Even in its altered form, the size of the memorial was felt to appropriately address the severity of the National Socialist period. The site that was offered by the city of Berlin is 20,000 square meters in size, on which Eisenman’s redesigned plan called for 2,711 stelae up to 4 meters in height. While this represented a reduction in dimensions from his original proposal, the magnitude and positioning of the memorial remains undeniable. One does not accidentally stumble upon this site; its size and form (in addition to its central location) assert that it is an indelible and significant structure. Interviewees for this analysis largely agreed, emphasizing how the aesthetics of the Holocaust Memorial allow it to be a site of “encompassing architecture”, a place where people can reflect upon “the role of Berlin in the Holocaust

¹⁷³ For the competition in 1995, the proposal submitted by Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock sought to draw this kind of engagement with their proposal. Entitled ‘Bus Stop’, the design called for an open-air bus terminal on a central spot that would shuttle visitors to ‘authentic’ sites of memory throughout Europe, whether they be concentration camps, extermination camps or other locations of destruction. The significance of this type of counter memorial can be found in the involvement that passengers would have throughout their journey; the ability to critically engage in different forms of education, contemplation and thereby memory formation. Evidently, however, this and other counter memorials did not fit the criteria of the selection committee and ‘Bus Stop’ placed eleventh in the 1995 competition.

and how it remains a part of the city”. One respondent explained her satisfaction with Eisenman’s design, noting that:

When I went in there, I felt really depressed and I had this feeling that everything was so close...small...I felt small, like the walls came in on me and I felt like if I stay here for while, I could think that there was no way out and I think that’s what was intended. So, if the purpose of that memorial is that the visitor really goes into the center, really walks that place, was to get slight feeling of how they felt, I think it works.

Even those interviewees who initially expressed scepticism about the aesthetics of the Holocaust Memorial downplayed these concerns in favour of emphasizing the importance of the site. As one respondent noted, “Now that it is there and it is finished, I see the how the appearance of the memorial is important and I have become used to it. It somehow grew on me”. This was echoed by another interviewee, noting that “I must say that the first time I was there, I was positively surprised about the emotional impact, the symbolism of the memorial. While it is very unspectacular when you go around there, if you go through it, the concept works”. Hence, although the external composition of the memorial from its earlier design concepts through to its present state may have led Berliners and visitors alike to expect an aspect of monumentality and ineffectiveness, Eisenman has consciously introduced the concept of ambiguity through a design that elicits an unanticipated and disorienting visitor experience upon entering.

The considerations of location and aesthetics have directly influenced a third characteristic of the Holocaust Memorial: the encompassing dialogue that developed from the very process of planning, design and construction of the site. This dialogue has been further stimulated through the design’s association with the ambiguous nature of

Holocaust remembrance. These factors, in turn, reflect a rather specific awareness or relationship to memory that emerges from one's personal or second-hand interaction with the memorial. This individual understanding naturally informs a wider collective public memory of the Holocaust in Berlin. So, what attributes has Eisenman integrated into the Holocaust Memorial that evoke this interaction between individual and public memory?

Perhaps the most evident characteristic can be found within the aesthetic of the structure itself - the field of 2,711 stelae, each of which were purposely placed at different ground levels and tilted angles on the 20,000 square meter site. Combined with the fact that in some parts of the memorial, the stelae reach up to 4 meters in height, the intention is that visitors become disorientated due to the lack of visual clues and consequently experience a feeling of insecurity, a sensation alluded to by interviewees in the analysis above. The implication is that this confusion conspicuously induces a sensation ostensibly felt by the millions of Jews persecuted and then killed by the Nazis during the Holocaust. Visitors are placed in a situation where they are asked to perceptively interpret the physical site surrounding them. By emphasizing the importance of this kind of emotional response, Eisenman intended to create a memorial that generates living memory through its aestheticism, eliciting interaction with one's memory that can subsequently inform identity.¹⁷⁴

The emotional connection between personal memory and identity intimately affects the process of creating public memory. As such, the ability of the Holocaust Memorial to inform these inherent characteristics addresses the very rationale for its development, construction and existence. Eisenman has referred to the entire project as one that promotes the decontextualization of the Holocaust, a monument that invites

¹⁷⁴ Peter Filkins, "War and Remembrance". *The American Scholar* 74, no 4 (2005): 8.

dialogue from the visitor. To this end, he noted that the memorial “stands there, silent. The one who has to talk is you”.¹⁷⁵ The desire to situate a visitor within this discourse has particular resonance for Berliners, and connotes more than just a consideration of the historical nature of Nazism and the Holocaust. Indeed, this reflection also raises contemporary issues that continue to trouble the city, ranging from xenophobia, anti-Semitism and anti-foreigner violence.¹⁷⁶ In this way, the Holocaust Memorial is potentially an indispensable way for Berliners to represent the past while informing the present.

This process of public memory formation was at the forefront of the movement in support of a memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe. As Elke Grenzer notes about Berlin, “the use of the past as a foundation for transforming its future course must not only renovate, but transgress the city’s shameful relationship to its past.”¹⁷⁷ Indeed, Germans nationwide face this burden in addition to denizens of Berlin. Alongside efforts to regenerate the city as a centre of German political and economic activity, this act of atonement has become a fundamental reference point for Berliners. As an overt symbol of this burden, the Holocaust Memorial has become a vital element in the contemporary landscape of remembrance. As historical geographer Karen Till elucidates, while the “missing Jewish part of the German culture [long] remained a palpable and gaping wound in the German psyche”, the Holocaust Memorial engages a given visitor and promotes a

¹⁷⁵ Sarah Quigley, “Holocaust Memorial: Architect Peter Eisenmann, Berlin 2005”.
<http://www.war-memorial.net/news_details.asp?ID=63>.

¹⁷⁶ Quigley, <http://www.war-memorial.net/news_details.asp?ID=63>.

¹⁷⁷ Grenzer, p. 94.

better understanding of the descent of the nation under Hitler from 1933 to 1945 and the six million Jewish victims that died as a result of the dictatorship.¹⁷⁸

Yet, it would be mistaken to assume that the public memory of the Holocaust or collective identity are tangible or homogeneous constructs; quite the contrary, particularly for reunited Berlin, these notions continue to reflect ambiguity and uncertainty. Interviewees for this analysis, for instance, widely supported the idea of a Holocaust Memorial, but also questioned the effectiveness of Eisenman's design. As one respondent explained, "I think that it's necessary to have such a memorial and it's certainly architecturally very impressive. However, the way it was built, it's not necessarily impressive considering its goal of remembering murdered Jews... I just didn't think about that when I was there". Another was concerned about the very decision to build the memorial so long after the events of the Holocaust, as "I just think that this memorial was built 50 years too late...it's embarrassing that it took until now to build it". Once again, it is the notion of monumentality and memory that continue to inform interviewee opinion.

Yet, James Young has also noted a corresponding facet that may indeed qualify this ambiguity and uncertainty:

The best German memorial to the Fascist era and its victims may not be a single memorial at all – but simply the never-to-be-resolved debate over which kind of memory to preserve, how to do it, in whose name and to what end.¹⁷⁹

Young emphasizes the process over the result and asserts that the process of public memory construction does not end with the completion of a memorial. He goes on to note that "memorials recast their image as generations go by", which leads to a continuing

¹⁷⁸ Till, p. 165.

¹⁷⁹ Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, p. 21.

dialogue that vivifies memory.¹⁸⁰ From this point of view, the malleability of public memory becomes essential to remembrance, in this case of the murdered Jews of Europe.

If notions of individual and public memory are ambiguous and indefinite facets in Berlin, particular versions of the Holocaust may be at various times and for different reasons promoted, reformulated or silenced. The seemingly evident connotations implied by the Holocaust Memorial today are variable and the way in which they inform public memory will continue to be transformed as time passes. For example, the fabric of public memory in Berlin has already greatly changed since 1989; the project envisioned by Lea Rosh and Eberhard Jäckel in 1988 was eminently different from the Holocaust Memorial officially inaugurated in 2005. Rather than the ambiguous and conflicting ideologies that characterized the Cold War, Berliners have since lived within a framework of radically transforming political, economic and cultural memory dynamics. In addition to the continuing dialogue that surrounds the Holocaust Memorial, this in turn ensures that the memorial has and will continue to be invested with variable connotations within public memory.

Summation

The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe has become the first state sponsored commemoration of the Holocaust that serves to inform public memory. Its intention was necessarily encompassing: to face the reality of the central role of Berlin and Germany in the perpetration of the Holocaust, to honour the memory of the murdered Jews of Europe and to foster a contemporary dialogue that informs a continuing public

¹⁸⁰ Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, p. 3.

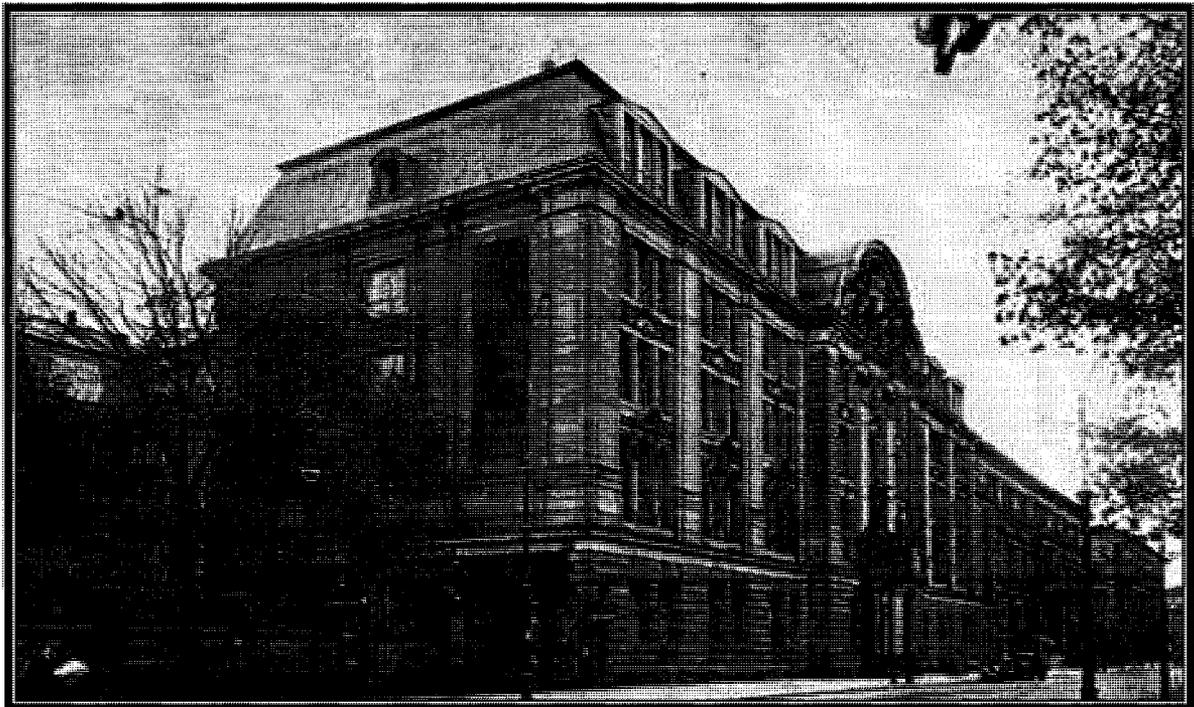
memory of this event. Additionally, the memorial was intended to incorporate the scope of the crime while acknowledging the ambiguity of over forty years of division.

The proposal by American architect Peter Eisenman was considered the most successful articulation of these distinct requirements. Indeed, through its location, its aesthetics and its link to encompassing discourse, his design contributes to the construction and continuing development of individual and public memory of the Holocaust in Germany. The location within the capital of reunited Berlin symbolically represents the importance of a national and pan-European remembrance. The aesthetics of the site reflect the ambiguous nature of Holocaust discourse that remains evident throughout Germany. Finally, a visit to the memorial ostensibly places one within a dialogue that contributes to the maintenance of a living memory of this event. Yet, each of these three aspects has also been the subject of considerable debate among critics and interviewees for this analysis, contributing to the ambiguity of the discourse. Nevertheless, although it may be too soon to determine the long-term impact of the Holocaust Memorial on changing aspects of memory and memorialization, this discourse has nevertheless effectively stimulated the likely interminable debate about Holocaust remembrance in Berlin and Germany. The Topography of Terror has likewise been at the centre of these discussions, and hence will form the second part of this examination.

The Topography of Terror

Contrasting the Holocaust Memorial as a site of commemoration, the contemporary significance of the Topography of Terror dates back to the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany throughout the 1930s. The establishment and consolidation of Nazi state security structures in Berlin began in 1933, when the Secret State Police (Gestapo),

then under Hermann Göring, moved onto what was known as the Prinz Albrecht Terrain. This was followed in 1934 by Heinrich Himmler's *Schutzstaffel* (SS) and Reinhard Heydrich's Security Service (SD). The latter two organizations were restructured into the Reich Main Security Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt* or RSHA) under Heydrich in 1939. As James Young, Brian Ladd and Siobahn Kattago have well established, "while the theoretical principles of the Final Solution may have been decided at the Wannsee Villa...Nearly all the major decisions and plans regarding the fate of Germany's 'enemies' – racial, political and social – were made here".¹⁸¹ In a macabre attempt to put theory into practice, the RSHA also housed a Gestapo jail on site, where 'intensified interrogation' was employed against political opponents of the regime, a bureaucratic way to describe the use of torture.¹⁸²



¹⁸¹ Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, p. 82.

¹⁸² Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, p. 157.

Image O “The former School of Industrial Arts and Crafts at Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse 8, around 1932” obtained from <<http://www.topographie.de/en/ort.htm>>. This is the building where the Gestapo and later the RSHA were headquartered. The SS and SD were based out of adjacent buildings.

The buildings of the Prinz Albrecht Terrain were badly damaged during the Second World War and largely abandoned in the years that followed. With the growing division of the city, the site fell directly south of the border area between the Soviet and American occupation zones, thus becoming a peripheral location despite its centrality near the historical centre of Berlin. By the early 1960’s, all but one of the buildings on the Prinz Albrecht grounds had been demolished and the Berlin Wall ensured that the site would be marginalized for years to come.¹⁸³ As James Young emphasizes, as a result, “the past role of this site in Nazi crimes was overwhelmed by its present role in the East-West conflict: memory itself had been divided and conquered by the new powers of the land”.¹⁸⁴ For the next twenty years, the site was utilized as a dumping spot for the rubble of West German construction firms in addition to hosting a training school for those obtaining their driver’s licence.

In 1978, the Prinz Albrecht Terrain was publicized by architectural historian Dieter Hoffman-Axthelm as a site that would never again host ‘normal’ activities.¹⁸⁵ Indeed, with the restoration of the adjacent former Applied Arts Academy and subsequent opening of the Martin Gropius Bau in 1981, visitors were reminded upon entering that “You are standing on the grounds of the former torture chambers of the Gestapo”.¹⁸⁶ As a result of the increasing awareness of the site and the efforts of Hoffman-Axthelm and historian Reinhard Rürup, West Berlin mayor (and future FRG President) Richard von

¹⁸³ The Applied Arts Academy was a renaissance structure designed by Martin Gropius and Heino Schmieden and opened in 1881.

¹⁸⁴ Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, p. 85.

¹⁸⁵ Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, p. 87.

¹⁸⁶ Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, p. 159.

Weizsäcker announced plans for an architectural competition for the development of the location. However, in the competition brief there was a failure to clearly delineate whether the site would become a museum, documentation center, memorial or some combination of the three. Hence, when the judging panel selected a memorial design by architects Jürgen Wenzel and Nikolaus Lang, a vocal lack of consensus among both public and official observers ensured that the plans were never realized.¹⁸⁷

In May 1985, a group headed by Rürup called the ‘Active Museum of Fascism and Resistance in Berlin’ organized a ceremonial dig on the site to “symbolically excavate their nation’s buried past”.¹⁸⁸ To their surprise, remnants of the basement and kitchen areas of the Secret State Police building were uncovered. A year later, the walls of several jail cells were also discovered. In the run-up to the celebrations for Berlin’s 750th Anniversary in 1987, Rürup and the ‘Active Museum’ group lobbied for an exhibit on the site of perpetration, which would endeavour to raise questions and inform viewers about National Socialism.¹⁸⁹ Hence, the Topography of Terror was established in temporary quarters utilising a museological and documentative approach in presenting the history of the Prinz Albrecht Terrain. It became so popular that public pressure in West Berlin, West Germany and abroad ensured its continuation in a provisional form.

Yet, the issue of what type of memory structure would be permanently situated on the Prinz Albrecht Terrain complicated efforts to develop the site. With the establishment of “Perspective Berlin” under the aegis of Lea Rosh and Eberhard Jäckel, the Prinz Albrecht Terrain was identified as a potential site for Berlin’s Holocaust Memorial. Thus,

¹⁸⁷ The design by Wenzel and Lang called for covering the entire site interspersed with trees and cast iron plates emblazoned with reproductions of SS, SD and Gestapo documents, whereby visitors would “stumble over their own history”. See Kattago, p. 141.

¹⁸⁸ Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, p. 88.

¹⁸⁹ Kattago, p. 143

Rosh and Jäckel promoted a memorial function at the site that privileged the victims rather than the museological and documentative approach advocated by Rürup and the 'Active Museum' group, which emphasized the role of the perpetrators of Nazi crimes. As Thomas Lutz, the current head of the Memorial Museums Department of the Topography of Terror Foundation explained, the focus was never intended to be on the victims; "the focus is the question of who is responsible for these crimes. Of course, we know we work in this field of commemoration - but we also know that we do this job not because Reinhard Heydrich was such a good sportsman, but because he was a mass murderer".¹⁹⁰ This position stemmed from a suspicion about the form that the site would take, or more precisely whether it would entail a more traditional monumental appearance. Brian Ladd highlights an earlier report about the Prinz Albrecht Terrain that delineates this perspective whereby the location:

of terror and of forgetting must become a place of awareness and confrontation that certainly cannot be achieved with a 'monument' in the nineteenth-century tradition. Characteristic of a monument is the reduction of a complex development to a single aspect that the monument's sponsors have identified as the most important. Such a monument is thus the result of a selection; it prevents the observer's own confrontation with the complex historical event.¹⁹¹

Taking both perspectives into consideration, the Berlin Senate recommended in 1990 that the Topography of Terror be further developed as a museological and

¹⁹⁰ Interview with Lutz, 23 May 2007.

¹⁹¹ Excerpted from Thomas Biller, Barbara Lauinger and Wolfgang Schäche, eds, "Entstehung und Entwicklung des Untersuchungsgebietes," in *Bauausstellung Berlin, Dokumentation zum Gelände des ehemaligen Prinz-Albrecht-Palais und seine Umgebung*. (Berlin: Bauausstellung Berlin, 1983), 33 in Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, p. 167.

documentative site examining the perpetration of Nazi crimes.¹⁹² In 1992, the Prinz Albrecht Terrain property was handed over to the Topography of Terror Foundation by the city of Berlin. The provisional exhibition continued in a similar form that it had opened, with visitor numbers reaching 1.5 million by 1997.¹⁹³



Image P “‘Topography of Terror’ open-air exhibition, 1998” obtained from < <http://www.topographie.de/en/index.htm>>. This exhibit was established where ‘Active Museum’ volunteers had unearthed foundation remains of the buildings that lined Prinz Albrecht Terrain. In the background to the left is the Martin Gropius Bau and out of sight to the right is one of the few remaining sections of the Berlin Wall.

In line with the Berlin Senate’s decision on the character of the exhibition and the number of visitors to the site, a design competition was launched in 1992 for a permanent museological and documentative installation. The following year, Swiss architect Peter

¹⁹² Kattago, p. 144. Within the markedly altered climate of post-Wall Berlin, this was a much less complicated decision than that faced by West Berlin bureaucrats in the previous years. After all, the removal of the majority of the Berlin Wall left large swaths of property in the central Berlin, and a more suitable site was soon found for the Holocaust Memorial.

¹⁹³ Jola Merten, “1,5 Mio. sahen Topographie des Terrors”. *Berliner Morgenpost*, 3 July 1997 in Jennifer A. Jordan, *Structures of Memory: Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 51.

Zumthor's design was selected from among twelve entrants. Zumthor's plans called for a long, narrow building based on the original ground plan of the Gestapo headquarters. It was meant to be a distinctively unobtrusive building so as to maintain the focus of the visitor on the site rather than the edifice itself. As Günter Grass explained, the unkempt state of the lot was an important aspect to retain as "a part of the history of [Nazi] crimes is naturally the period of forty years and more during which memories were suppressed, because the manner of suppression helps to explain the causes of the crimes".¹⁹⁴ However, as Hubertus Adam notes, the physical shape of the site was slow to take shape as "aside from the symbolic corner-stone laying ceremony which took place on May 8, 1995...nothing much happened at first".¹⁹⁵

Indeed, by the year 2000, with roughly €15 million already spent on the structure, construction was brought to a halt.¹⁹⁶ Only three stairwell corridors had been built and these lay fallow for a further four years until it was announced that Zumthor's project would not be completed. As Andreas Nachama, executive director of the Topography of Terror Foundation, explained, "it was a problem of budget. But there were also permanent technical problems...the building, as it was designed in the early 1990s, no longer fits a completely new environment in Berlin".¹⁹⁷ Yet, within this 'new climate' in reunified Berlin, where the Reichstag, Potsdamer Platz, and the Holocaust Memorial have largely solidified their position among the citizenry of the city, the uncertain situation surrounding the future of the Topography of Terror is troubling for a number of reasons.

¹⁹⁴ Günter Grass in Akademie der Künste, *Diskussion zum Umgang mit dem 'Gestapo-Gelände' – Dokumentation* (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 1986), 22 in Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, p. 166.

¹⁹⁵ Hubertus Adam, "Topography of Terror" in *Bauwelt Berlin Annual*, Martina Düttmann and Felix Zwoc, eds (Basel: Birkhaeuser Publishers, 1999/2000), 78.

¹⁹⁶ Katya Kumkova-Wolpert, *City of Berlin Drops Plans for Gestapo Museum. Deutsche Welle*. <<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,1231263,00.html>>.

¹⁹⁷ Kumkova-Wolpert, <<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,1231263,00.html>>.

To begin with, the trajectory of development on the site parallels the difficulties that have been evident throughout the debate surrounding the Palace of the Republic and the Holocaust Memorial. For, although a new design by Ursula Wilms has been chosen and construction began in November 2007, the expected completion date will not come before 2010 at the earliest. As Thomas Lutz explains, the new plan:

is not as sophisticated as Zumthor's but it's possible to build it. And we are at the moment in a very concrete, very exact way to figure out, in which way we can continue and we are in a good mood that we can open our exhibition in May 2010...So the situation is much better.¹⁹⁸

Yet, while the optimism expressed by Lutz may be well placed given the new funding circumstances, the once prominent profile of the Topography of Terror has suffered because of the years of indecision.

The history of the Topography of Terror is intimately tied to the grassroots activism of citizens most publicly demonstrated by the 'Active Museum of Fascism and Resistance in Berlin' group. Yet, the lack of contemporary visibility of the site became very clear after assessing the interviews conducted for this examination. Among the thirteen respondents, only three expressed detailed knowledge about the site, while five others were only somewhat familiar with it. Four subjects could not identify the site at all, while another cited the impetus behind the exhibit to be primarily referencing the history of the adjacent Berlin Wall and had no knowledge of the sites Third Reich significance. As one respondent explained, he had visited several years previously and noted that his lack of recent knowledge related to the indeterminate state of the site; "They were

¹⁹⁸ Interview with Lutz, 23 May 2007.

discussing since fifteen years about something there and the concepts change all the time. So, I don't even know what the latest concept is!"

In addition, the provisional exhibition at the site has come under scrutiny by observers such as historian Götz Aly, who are puzzled that the documentation presented is in such poor condition and outdated. As he explains, the displays that make up the Topography of Terror “give an impression of mustiness and hostility to innovation...Anyone who occasionally takes foreign guests [there] cannot fail to be embarrassed by [its] present state”.¹⁹⁹ Aly also notes that there is an “obsessive attention” paid to the pre-Nazi history of how the site and the neighbourhood surrounding it developed.²⁰⁰ As a result, while eighteen sections of the exhibit are dedicated to historical information, blueprints and images, the fate of the German Jews is dealt with in only two segments, while the fate of the European Jews is examined in just five sections.²⁰¹ Furthermore, Aly also criticises the academic credibility throughout the different sections of the exhibit as well as the offerings in the catalogues and books made available in the Information Center. It is a situation reflecting “stunning mindlessness” when sourcing almost entirely dates back to 1987 and when “Hardly one of the books cited is still available in book stores”.²⁰² One of the interviewees for this analysis focused his comments on how outdated the exhibition is. In actuality his perspective reflects not only the need for change at the site, but also why it may not be that well known among contemporary Berliners as “the interests of visitors have changed and hence [the Topography of Terror Foundation] have the responsibility to refresh the entire thing”.

¹⁹⁹ Götz Aly, *The Woes of Berlin's Memorials*. [signandsight.com](http://www.signandsight.com).

<<http://www.signandsight.com/features/67.html>>.

²⁰⁰ Aly, <<http://www.signandsight.com/features/67.html>>.

²⁰¹ Aly, <<http://www.signandsight.com/features/67.html>>.

²⁰² Aly, <<http://www.signandsight.com/features/67.html>>.

However, the criticism Aly offers seems to contradict a rise in traffic to the Topography of Terror highlighted by former Managing Director Gabriele Camphausen during a speech in 2000. It was her opinion that “the location has become very attractive, and I think the open-air exhibition has a lot to do with that”.²⁰³ Yet, the source of rising traffic to the Topography of Terror, though not specifically quantified, is not primarily identified among the citizenry of Berlin by observers or the foundation. As Camphausen continued, because of the site’s central location, “We have more visitors from foreign countries. We benefit from the tourism boom...[and are situated on]...‘the’ tourism route”.²⁰⁴ As Karen Till explains, this is not necessarily unhealthy as “places of memory, even when they work as tourist attractions, can challenge traditional understandings of their social performances and in the process create new kinds of social spaces and relationships to the past”.²⁰⁵

The opinions (or indeed, the lack thereof) expressed by the interviewees helps to contextualize the criticism of commentators like Götz Aly. For, if the citizens of Berlin that participated in this process are unfamiliar with the Topography of Terror, does responsibility for this lie outside of their control? This question was put before Thomas Lutz, the head of the Memorial Museums Department of the Topography of Terror Foundation. Lutz was very straightforward when he said “I think that [the Topography of Terror] was fairly well known in both parts of Berlin and I think that many people think that it is good that we have it here...[but] at the moment, I don’t think that it can be seen as having a high profile everywhere in the city”.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Till, p. 224.

²⁰⁴ Till, p. 224.

²⁰⁵ Till, p. 223.

²⁰⁶ Interview with Lutz, 23 May 2007.

This admission is a reflection of transparency on behalf of the Topography of Terror Foundation, but in turn, this acknowledgement should be an impetus for more emphasis to be placed on the site among Berliners. One of the interviewees that spoke more comprehensively about the Topography of Terror explained that it reflected “the will to cope, to explain history...to present it, and not to try to hide it. It’s also about a representation of transparency, saying we know what we did”. Considering the importance of this site and the extent of visibility that remembrance of the Nazi time has in Berlin, it is therefore necessary that more citizens are made aware of the opportunity embodied in the Topography of Terror for just this type of reflection. Yet, as Jennifer A. Jordan notes, “To date, [the Topography of Terror] remains an open wound in the cityscape”.²⁰⁷ The necessity of retaining this ‘wound’ in Berlin must be balanced with the imperative of completing the new documentation center, for it would surely lead to expansion and modernization that the Topography of Terror needs to remain relevant in the future.

Summation

In its early formative years, the Topography of Terror was at the centre of a discussion about whether the Prinz Albrecht Terrain should be developed as a museological and documentative exhibit or a memorial site. This became intertwined with debate about its character in light of the traditional nature of memorialization in Germany that had historically focused on ideals, triumphs and monumentalism. Despite these questions being largely solved after reunification, the construction of a permanent facility has been repeatedly delayed. As a result, the once prominent profile of the

²⁰⁷ Jordan, p. 52.

Topography of Terror in Berlin has suffered because of these years of indecision. An indication of this was evident among interviewees for this analysis, few of whom were able to speak thoroughly about the site. The delay has also contributed to what Götz Aly describes as a temporary exhibit in markedly poor condition that is widely outdated. This is poised to change with a new documentation centre and a continuing rise in visitors to the site. Yet, the visibility of the Topography of Terror among interviewees for this analysis remains a concern given what it may imply about the visibility of the site among Berliners at large. Therefore, it is imperative that alongside completing the documentation center, effort is placed into modernizing other aspects of the exhibit and raising its profile within the city.

Conclusion

When assessing the narratives that have surrounded the development of cultural memory sites like the Holocaust Memorial and the Topography of Terror, the competing dynamics of cultural memory that were evident in East and West Berlin after 1945 intimately informed the Cold War notions of commemoration and remembrance. With reunification and the adoption of Berlin as the capital of Germany, these competing narratives were once again altered and transformed by a process that has come to be known as a 'democratization of memory'. Yet, this 'democratization of memory' did not translate into simplified developmental paths for the Holocaust Memorial or the Topography of Terror. Indeed, the ensuing debate surrounding both locations is reflective of a broader discourse about the position of cultural memory sites in the city. As the capital of reunited Germany, Berlin not only has the responsibility to acknowledge a unique urban history, but also to encompass aspects of national memorialization. Perhaps

the process of memorialization is no more evident worldwide than in Berlin, which is emerging as a distinctive centre of spatial and conceptual memory.

Given this complex discourse, it was not until 2005 that the Holocaust Memorial was inaugurated. During the interim period, the site's location and aesthetics were persistently in question and encompassing discourse was charged with emotion. The proposal by American architect Peter Eisenman was considered the most successful articulation of these factors. Indeed, since the opening of the Holocaust Memorial, it is precisely the aspects of location, aesthetics and links to encompassing discourse that have defined it as a key cultural memory site in Berlin, a factor expressed by interviewees for this analysis. The location within the capital of reunited Berlin symbolically represents the importance of a national and pan-European remembrance. The aesthetics of the site reflect the ambiguous nature of Holocaust discourse that remains evident throughout Germany. Finally, a visit to the memorial ostensibly places one within a dialogue that contributes to the maintenance of a living memory of this event.

The Topography of Terror, meanwhile, was at the centre of a discussion about whether it should be developed as a museological and documentative exhibit or a memorial site. This discussion was also furthered by the question of its character in light of the traditional nature of memorialization in Germany that had historically focused on ideals, triumphs and monumentalism. Despite these questions being largely solved after reunification, a permanent facility still has yet to be constructed, almost thirty years after the site was identified as historically significant. Instead, a provisional exhibit originally constructed in 1987 remains standing, contributing to a lack of contemporary visibility, evidenced by the responses of interviewees for this analysis who had minimal knowledge

of the contemporary site. In addition, the ambiguous state of the Topography of Terror since being first assessed for a permanent exhibit in 1990 has become the focus of some critics who characterize it as outdated and poorly maintained.

Although it may be too soon to determine the long-term impact of the Holocaust Memorial on conceptual awareness and changing aspects of memory and memorialization in New Berlin, it has nevertheless effectively stimulated the likely interminable debate about Holocaust remembrance in Berlin and Germany. The same can also be said of the Topography of Terror, but because of the ambiguity surrounding the site almost thirty years after it was identified as historically noteworthy, this process has not been a prominent issue for Berliners. The significance of the Topography of Terror, after all, equals that of the Holocaust Memorial, for they are both central sites that seek to adequately address the Nazi period for Berliners, Germans and international guests. The successful completion of the permanent facility of the Topography of Terror therefore has the potential to usher in a new wave of remembrance, something of paramount importance in the city of perpetrators.

Conclusion

As this examination of New Berlin's spatial development since the end of the Cold War has shown, causal links certainly exist between how the city is being shaped and in turn perceived by its citizens. Moreover, recent physical and conceptual development in the city has certainly influenced the interpretation of the past, present and future metropolis. This contention is supported not only by a range of authors and commentators who have contributed to the discourse of spatial development in Berlin, but also by a selection of citizens interviewed for this analysis. As Brian Ladd explains in his seminal piece The Ghosts of Berlin, buildings and places give form to a city's history and identity through an intricate and constantly evolving socialization process.²⁰⁸

The facets of politics, economics and cultural memory provide an integral context in relation to the marked changes that urban planning has prompted in Berlin during the last century. After successively serving as the capital of Prussian and unified imperial Germany, the fragile Weimar Republic, the Nazi dictatorship, and a discredited communist government, the political significance of Berlin for contemporary German society is certainly unambiguous. The Reichstag and the Palace of the Republic are both representative political sites in the historic centre of the city. These two projects have both been strongly influenced by history and interpreted through expressions of transparency and symbolism. The strength of the comparison between the Reichstag and the Palace of the Republic is evident. The restoration of the former has led to a persuasive argument that New Berlin reliably approaches the notions of history, symbolism and transparency. Yet, the perceived accomplishment of Norman Foster's renovation is

²⁰⁸ Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, p. 1.

countered by the impasse that characterized debate about the fate of the Palace of the Republic and the potential reconstruction of the City Palace. Here, divergent interpretations of history, symbolism and transparency remain unresolved even as the site is in an advanced state of demolition. For citizens of Berlin, this informs an ongoing socialization discourse related to how the city's political landscape is being spatially formed.

In turn, the importance of the city's financial and industrial sectors dating from the late nineteenth century continues to be an issue given the artificial nature of postwar economies in both East and West Berlin that led to the irregular growth and fluctuating conditions after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The emergence of Potsdamer Platz and the Main Station within former no-man's land in Berlin encompass showpieces of the city's economic spatial re-conceptualization. Aspects of scepticism, debatable civic life and architectural integrity at Potsdamer Platz have remained contentious topics while architectural alterations, the lack of citywide accessibility and the choice of location with no complementary surrounding infrastructure have muted approval of the Main Station. Yet, as can be seen from the example of Potsdamer Platz, an economic site that embraces the everyday needs of an individual can become a dominant civic destination. For Deutsche Bahn, the perception of their showpiece station in the years to come among Berliners will thus be informed by the ability to adequately address these needs. For, it is the daily use and subsequent engrained socialization that will further contribute to the increasing acceptance of both Potsdamer Platz and the Main Station for citizens of New Berlin.

Cultural memory in the city is perhaps the most contentious issue that Berliners have been confronted with since 1945, for it was not only members of the Nazi party but also many 'ordinary' citizens who shared responsibility for aggression and annihilation that typified Nazi rule in Germany throughout the 1930s and 1940s. The remembrance of this state sponsored campaign thus has paramount connotation in the renamed capital of Germany. The visibility of the Holocaust Memorial in New Berlin certainly contrasts the current situation at the Topography of Terror. The scepticism surrounding the development of the former has largely dissipated since opening in 2005 because of its ostensible approach to location, aesthetics and links to encompassing discourse. Yet, the Topography of Terror, while intimately connected to commemoration and remembrance discourse, has not been able to secure a permanent facility that would allow it to fully address the remembrance of perpetration that was centralized in Nazi Berlin. As James Young notes, "the best German memorial to the Fascist era and its victims may not be a single memorial at all – but simply the never-to-be-resolved debate over which kind of memory to preserve, how to do it, in whose name and to what end".²⁰⁹ Yet, one can see from the development of the Holocaust Memorial that the continuing relevance of such significant sites depends not only on continuing discourse, but also on the establishment of a facility to adequately deal with the host of large and historically tainted issues that face the New Berlin.

The examination of these six political, economic and cultural memory sites in the New Berlin have revealed how the development process and their palpable presence in the city have informed conceptual awareness. Moreover, this analysis has indicated that the spatial development of the central area in the city resonates rather strongly for citizens.

²⁰⁹ Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, p. 21.

In particular, the Reichstag was cited as being of import to how the city projects itself as capital of reunified Germany, Potsdamer Platz referenced as an outstanding example of a site that meets the everyday needs of an individual and the Holocaust Memorial for the way in which the completed memorial adequately addresses the obligation to remember one particular group oppressed by the former Nazi regime. In contrast, the debate concerning the Palace of the Republic and the future of the Castle Square site has been embroiled in ambiguity largely due to the direct and durable association with the East German regime, while the Main Station continues to be criticized for its lack of citywide accessibility and accompanying infrastructure and the Topography of Terror has lost some of its early attractiveness as a documentative site due to years of uncertainty about a permanent exhibit and the resulting deterioration of the exhibit.

Certainly, that such contrasts exist is not a problem in and of itself. In terms of political, economic and cultural memory development, there seems to be different expectations or indicators of success in terms of the spatial and conceptual development of the city. However, this is unsurprising given Berlin's position as a twenty-first century metropolis attempting to straddle facets of the past, the present and the future. Indeed, the city remains a vibrant conurbation boasting hundreds of political, economic and cultural memory sites of historical and contemporary significance. Yet, as Brian Ladd notes, the vibrancy of a city is based on the socialization that its citizens undergo on a daily basis. As urban planning decisions are by nature designed around the needs of citizenry, it is therefore important to specifically emphasize how Berliners assess the spatial development that occurs around them, whether that elicits positive or negative comments. While the sample of interviewees that complemented secondary research for this

examination may have been small, the findings herein indicate that there are vocal and interested parties to be found throughout the city. Hence, it is evident that further analysis on this subject could certainly impart a broader scholarly understanding of the ever-evolving relationship between reunited Berlin and Berliners.

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New approval

Renewal of original approval

Original date of approval:

Date of approval

2 April 2007

Researchers

Jan-Mark van der Leest

Status

M.A. candidate

Department

European and Russian Studies

Supervisor

Professor Jennifer Evans and Professor Joan DeBardeleben

Title of project

Spatial Development and Identity in Reunified Berlin

Ethics approval expires on: **2 April 2008**

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Leslie J. MacDonald-Hicks

Research Ethics Committee Coordinator

For the Chair of the Carleton University Research Ethics Committee

Prof. Antonio Gualtieri