From Burden to Opportunity: Remembering Nazi Crimes and Constructing German Collective Identity in Three Places of Memory

by

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Abstract/Résumé/Zusammenfassung

Der deutsche Erinnerungsdiskurs ist eine gesellschaftliche Reaktion auf die Zuschreibung der Schuld für die Verbrechen des Nationalsozialismus. Als Erinnerungssymbole sind Gedenkstätten Zeichen der Schuld. Die Zuschreibung von Schuld gefährdet einerseits Identität. Andererseits erweist sich die Bearbeitung der Schuldzuschreibung als produktiv für die Identitätskonstruktion, weil Erinnerungsformen entstanden sind, die die Abwehr` der Schuld und die Reetablierung der zugrunde liegenden mythischen Gemeinschaft ermöglichen. Der grundlegende Mechanismus ist die Stigmaumkehrung, durch die aus der Last der Vergangenheit eine Chance zur Bildung nationaler Identität wird. Die drei Fallbeispiele - KZ-Gedenkstätte Dachau; ‘Topographie des Terrors’; ‘das Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas' - zeigen, dass insbesondere zwei Teildiskurse – ‘Betroffenheitsdiskurs' und ‘Aufarbeitungsdiskurs' – identitäts-stiftend wirken, während der ‘Schlussstrichdiskurs' stigmabestätigend wirkt.

This study examines the German discourse on memory as a societal reaction to guilt for the crimes of National Socialism. Memorial sites are, as symbols of memory, signs of guilt. While attributing guilt threatens identity, it also proves useful for identity construction because it promotes dealing with this guilt. As a result, forms of memory have emerged which make it possible to fend off guilt and re-establish the foundational myths of society. The basic mechanism of such a construction of identity is removing stigma, so that the weight of the past becomes a possibility for the creation of national identity. The three examples discussed here – the Dachau concentration camp memorial, the “Topography of Terror” and the “Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe” – show that two of the memory discourse streams, those of “*Betroffenheit*” (being deeply and personally affected) and “*Aufarbeitung*” (working through), help create identity, while that of the “*Schlussstrich*” (breaking with the past) confirms the stigma.

Cette étude examine le discours allemand sur la mémoire, en tant qu'il représente la réaction de la société allemande au sentiment de culpabilité qu'elle éprouve pour les crimes du National Socialisme. Les sites commémoratifs sont, en tant que symboles de mémoire, des signes de culpabilité. Alors que l'imputation de la culpabilté met en danger l'identité, elle peut aussi s'avérer utile pour construire cette identité, puisqu'elle facilite la prise en considération de cette culpabilité. Le résultat en est l'émergence de formes de mémoire qui permettent de faire face à la culpabilité et de rétablir les mythes fondateurs de la société. Le mécanisme de base d'une telle construction de l'identité consiste en la suppression des stigmates du passé, de telle sorte que le poids même de ce passé rend possible la création d'une identité nationale. Trois exemples seront discutés: le Mémorial du camp de concentration de Dachau, la "Topographie des terreurs" et le "Mémorial des Juifs qui ont été assassinés en Europe". Ces exemples montrent que deux des trois courants du discours sur la mémoire, celui de la "Betroffenheit" (être affecté profondément et personnellement par le passé) et celui de l'"Aufarbeitung" (maîtriser le passé) contribuent à la création de l'identité, tandis que le troisième courant, celui du "Schlussstrich" (couper avec le passé) ne fait que confirmer les stigmates.

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I. The Construction of German Memory at the Millennium

In January, 2000 a decisive course was set for the future development of three of the most significant memorial projects in the German Federal Republic.[1] On the 27th of that month, the official "Memorial Day for the Victims of National Socialism", a new exhibit in the "bunker" at the former Dachau concentration camp was opened, a scant four years after a panel of experts selected to put together a new concept for the camp memorial had presented their recommendations. The new bunker exhibit will soon be followed by a completely reworked permanent exhibit in the memorial's museum. On the same day in Berlin, the cornerstone was laid for the planned "Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe". Starting in the late 1980s the "*Perspektive Berlin*" ("Perspectives Berlin") association and numerous leading politicians and intellectuals had come out in support of this memorial. In June, 1999 the German Federal Parliament had finally approved the memorial's construction near the Brandenburg Gate in the center of Berlin. In January, 2000, merely a few hundred meters away, the supporters of the "*Topographie des Terrors*" ("Topography of Terror") fought for the maintenance of their memorial project. Plans had been made to house that memorial site, in existence since 1987, in a new building. However, the project's costs were no longer covered because they had climbed to twice their projected level. After protracted discussions, in July, 2001 Berlin's Senate finally approved a new financial plan for the new building, which is slated for completion in 2004.

These three events demonstrate that at the threshold of the twenty-first century, the previous two decades of extended public debate on the societal status and significance of Holocaust memorials in the Federal Republic of Germany had reached a new watermark. For the time being, these debates have also reached a momentary

[1] Earlier versions of this paper were presented in September, 1999 at York University, Toronto, the University of Toronto and the University of Alberta/ Edmonton. I would like to thank the participants at those presentations for their comments and suggestions. I would like to extend particular thanks to Mark Webber and the staff of the Canadian Centre for German and European Studies (York), as well as Gamal Abdel-Shehid, James Retallack, Y. Michal Bodemann, Jan-Holger Kirsch and Claude Desmarais, who also edited the text. For the translation of this text I would like to extend special thanks to Polly Kienle.

conclusion, as the institutionalization of memorial sites (and in the case of the Dachau memorial, its renewal), previously very controversial within German society, has been sanctioned by political instances. Memorial sites as symbolic places of memory have come to occupy a central position in Germany‘s discourse of memory. In addition to elite discourses transmitted by the media and the method of dealing with this heritage in politics and law, “localized discourses” are the most important generators of binding symbolic interpretations of National Socialism in German society and its significance for collective national identity. Through the concrete confrontations of each local population with its historical site, implicit paths of interpretation have developed which are then taken up, popularized and realized politically in the public sphere of discourses.

Which forms of memorial practice can we observe in Germany? What do they have in common, what distinguishes them from one another? What effect do these have on the collective identity of the Germans? The following study, which is conceived of as an approach to these questions, will conduct a detailed analysis of the three memorial sites mentioned above. In the process, it will be demonstrated that the German discourse of memory can be understood as a reaction to being burdened with guilt for the crimes committed under National Socialism. I will sketch three patterns of reaction to this attribution of guilt: the discourses of being deeply and personally affected by the past (“*Betroffenheit*”); of breaking with the past (“*Schlussstrich*”); and of working through the past (“*Aufarbeitung*”).[2] Each in its own manner contributes to the construction of German identity.[3] However, before we undertake this analysis, it is necessary to clarify the theories and terms which will be of crucial importance for our argument.

[2] The analysis of different forms of memory (memorial literature, memorial days, monuments, parliamentary debates, debates between members of the elite publicized by the media, etc.) and different theoretical and methodological perspectives have given rise to numerous other interpretations and differentiations. As examples of the great number of publications on this topic see: A. Assmann/Frevert 1999; Bodemann 1996; Dubiel 1999; Hamm 1997; Huyssen 1986; Fritz-Bauer-Institut, 1996; Keilbach 1998; Kirsch 1999; LaCapra 1998; Naumann 1998; Reichel 1995; Till 1999; Wolfrum 1998; Young 1988; 1993; 2000.

[3] Thus, they contribute to the manner in which German *national* identity is formulated. It will become apparent in the following that this process also includes the construction of other collective identities – for example, local and (quasi-)religious ones –, which are

II. The Symbolic Form and the Ambivalence of Collective Identity

The first preliminary assumption builds on the anthropological observation that human beings are "reduced" creatures, possessing no naturally inborn instinctive gift which discloses to them the meaning of their environment. Instead, humans must imbue the world with meaning by forming the world through existing cultural patterns or, alternatively, the world presents itself to us as reality solely as a function of the patterns of meaning we create for ourselves. Thus, from the perspective of hermeneutic social science, our memories of the past must be regarded as social constructions. Through the processes of habitualization, institutionalization and legitimation, these attain the status of objective facticity (Berger/Luckmann 1966).

In this way, the significance which the Nazi crimes hold for the present is not a product of these crimes, but must be explained out of today's society. Moreover, when we speak of German collective identity, we thematize a specific aspect of social reality. We are concerned neither with biographical nor everyday patterns of meaning, nor solely with collectively shared referential meanings, but with the elements of significance attributed to a collective entity in and of itself. In terms of a sociology of knowledge which employs a hermeneutic methodology, such social collective entities are to be regarded as symbolic constructions (Soeffner 1997). By means of symbols, symbol chains, rituals and myths, a symbolic world comes into being which, despite its existence outside the individual, sacrifices nothing of its reality. It is capable of taking on the same objective facticity achieved by all other social constructions.

If shared and societally-binding pools of knowledge are attributed to such a societal entity, then we are dealing with the field of collective identity (J. Assmann 1992). In this way, collective identity means two things: the (collectively shared) concept of society as a symbolic unity ("our collective identity"), and the (also collectively shared) concept of the individual's participation therein ("my collective identity"). These are not

closely interwoven with national identity or stand in competition with it. See Zifonun 2003 for a more detailed discussion.

the result of rational, but of symbolic, “performative” discourses which affect the construction, reproduction and transformation of symbolic collective identity. Thus, the process of imbuing something with meaning is fundamentally ambivalent, as it poses something as positive while at the same time relying on its negative sense. We imbue things with meaning as a reaction against senselessness, lack of meaning, and against breaks in patterns of meaning. In other words, we imbue something with meaning because this process permits us to resolve problems in meaning. Thus, “negativity” takes on a specific role within the process. It stimulates meaning and is the means by which the process of attributing meaning is commenced. This is also the case for symbolic forms of meaning; collective identities usually arise in reaction to a threat or the questioning of social worlds which were initially rooted in the sphere of the everyday. These identities are reproduced and transformed through the confrontation with crises experienced by the collectivity. The negative aspects are thus retained within them as problems to be solved, and are then made to harmonize with the new patterns of meaning and thus are overcome symbolically.

It is exactly such a process, as will be shown in the following, that marks the connection between the memory of National Socialism and the creation of present-day German identity. Because it constituted a break in the process of civilization (“*Zivilisationsbruch*” – Dan Diner) and the incarnation of absolute moral evil, National Socialism as it exists in German memory led to a disruption of national identity. Many authors have pointed to this phenomenon. For example, Juergen Habermas and others have insisted that German identity became obsolete in the wake of the Holocaust, and that it must be replaced by a postnational identity (Habermas 1990). Authors such as Arnulf Baring see in the successful construction of national identity an ideal, which nonetheless cannot be realized because the memory of National Socialism stands in its way (Baring 1997). However, these (highly normative) interpretations do not adequately explain the phenomenon of German national identity in relation to the Holocaust. In opposition to these views, this paper argues that the debate on Germany’s history has led to a productive confrontation with the German identity problem. This, in turn, following the paradoxical structure of symbolic meaning, has contributed to a reconstruction of national identity. In this process “the burden of the past” has been transformed into an opportunity to regain national identity. It must be determined which

modi of identity construction have been of importance along the way, or, in a more concrete sense, which symbolic meanings National Socialism and the Holocaust have acquired, which symbolic mechanisms have imbued them with meaning, and the shape of the relationship between the positive and the negative. In the following, these questions will be discussed on the basis of the three places of memory mentioned above.

III. The Memorial Site at the Former Dachau Concentration Camp

The memorial site at the former Dachau concentration camp is one of the oldest and most important of all German places of memory. It is located on the site formerly occupied by the Dachau concentration camp, established as one of the first of its kind on March 22nd, 1933. More than 200,000 inmates were registered at Dachau, and at least 32,000 of them died in the camp. At the time of its liberation by the US Army on April 29th, 1945, more than 30,000 inmates were still being held in the main camp.[4] The post-war history of the camp can be divided into five phases.[5]

i.) Phase I

During the first phase, the site of the former concentration camp was under American military administration. At this time, the site was used as a detainment camp for war criminals and was the location of the "Dachauer Trial" of the camp's former guards.[6] In the fall of 1945 an exhibit organized through the cooperative efforts of the US Military Administration and former inmates was opened in the former crematorium. In addition, the two groups held memorial ceremonies for the victims, which representatives of the city of Dachau also attended. During a memorial speech in November, 1946 the mayor

[4] On the Dachau concentration camp see Marcuse 2001.
[5] In addition to my field research, the following account relies above all on the indepth studies written by Detlef Hoffmann (1998) and Harold Marcuse (1990), while modifying Marcuse's periodization, which distinguished between four phases in the camp's development.
[6] See Marcuse 1990: 184ff.

of Dachau, Josef Schwalber, introduced the concept of “the one Dachau and the other“ (quoted in Steinbacher 1993: 17f.), which came to play an influential role in the future interpretation of the concentration camp’s significance. In autobiographical narratives of citizens of Dachau recorded at the time, the most common statement is that they had either known nothing of the concentration camp’s existence or had heard nothing more than rumors about the conditions there. Furthermore, they had lived in fear of the SS and had, as far as possible, supported the inmates through gifts of smuggled food (Marcuse 2001: 55ff.; Steinbacher 1993: 184f.).

ii.) Phase II

Soon after authority over the site had been transferred from the American Military Administration to the Bavarian government in October, 1947, local officials initiated a phase of “active forgetting”. In other words, instead of developing memorial symbols, they directed all efforts towards preventing the emergence of a culture of memorial practice.[7] In January, 1948 the Bavarian State Parliament urged unanimously that the site of the former concentration camp be included in those slated for use as “work camps for asocial elements“ (quoted in Marcuse 1990: 188). This decision was reached long before the date for closing the American detention camp for war criminals became apparent. In April of the same year, however, the State Parliament changed its mind and decided to establish a camp for refugees from Eastern Europe on the site of the former concentration camp, a use of the site which continued there until April, 1965.

These attempts to shed the camp’s legacy stood in contrast to efforts to signal that an effort was being made to remember. Along with various monuments at sites outside of the camp, the grounds on which the former crematorium stood and the crematorium itself became particularly important for the politics of memory. Accordingly, there was a strong public reaction to the opening of the new exhibit in the former crematorium in 1950. The Bavarian state government and its elected representatives in Dachau rejected the exhibit’s dramatic presentation and succeeded in forcing its closure in May, 1953. Because large numbers of visitors nonetheless continued to seek out the

[7] See Marcuse 1990: 188ff.; Hoffmann 1998: 42ff.

former concentration camp, measures were taken to seal off the entire area around the crematorium from public access. It was only thanks to a supplement in the Paris treaties of 1955 – which established the state sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Germany -, which guaranteed "the inviolability of the grave sites of the victims of the National Socialist regime" (Marcuse 1990:194) that these efforts, in the end, failed and the crematorium site could be saved. Proof that continuing attempts were made to prevent the establishment of a memorial culture can be seen in the fact that in the same year "every one of the signposts showing the way to the memorial site was removed" (Marcuse 1990:194).

iii.) Phase III

The same year, 1955, saw the first attempt to turn the former concentration camp in its entirety into a memorial site.[8] In May the "*Comité International de Dachau*" (CID), which had originally been founded by Dachau inmates during the last days of the camp's existence, was reinstituted and a first meeting was held in Dachau. Only when the CID dropped its opposition to the erection of a chapel on the camp grounds could it win the support of the Catholic Church for its museum project. In April, 1956, initial negotiations between the CID and the Bavarian state government were conducted, during which the latter refused to contribute any financial aid whatsoever to the effort. This led to a delay in the completion of the museum and of the memorial also called for by the CID. In contrast, the construction of a Catholic chapel, opened on April 5th, 1960, was realized with the help of donations from private individuals and industry.

a.) The "Agony of Christ" Chapel

This chapel (in German "*Todesangst-Christi-Kapelle*") is a tower-like building with a façade of large, rough-hewn stones which stands facing the camp's main thorough-fare. In the middle of the chapel's interior stands an altar, on its back wall a cross and an oversized crown of thorns hangs over the entrance. The architect conceived the chapel as a "symbol of liberation from emprisonment, through Christ. The metal crown of thorns

over the opening in the wall suggests this“ (Wiedemann, quoted in Hoffmann 1998: 79). But it is not only the liberation of the prisoners through Jesus‘ death that finds expression in this symbol. Indeed, the inmates‘ deaths are linked to His self-sacrifice in that they are seen as His successors, as expressed in the name of the chapel: ”The name ’Agony of Christ Chapel‘ connects the agony and the fear of death which many thousands of inmates in this camp experienced over many years with Christ’s agony and fear of death, and with the suffering of all those on earth who are persecuted and have been robbed of their rights“ (Baars 1995: 97). This Christian symbolism lends a particular meaning to the death of the camp inmates: “their” death becomes meaningful to “us”; “they” died so that “we” may live; “we” are freed of guilt through “their” death.

Such an interpretation is validated, for example, by a reading of the commentaries of the chapel’s initiator, Bishop Johannes Neuhäusler, made on the occasion of the chapel’s dedication. Referring to the fact that this event took place on a Friday, Neuhäusler observed: “In the same hour in which our Lord suffered His death-struggle and overcame our death through His death, we should in the presence of this chapel meditate in prayer on the memory of the suffering and death of so many people“ (Neuhäusler 1991: 69; also Hoffmann 1998: 77). The universalist code used by the Catholic Church thus offers release from guilt through the memory of the deaths of the camp’s inmates, who are conceived of as Jesus Christ’s successors, an interpretation which is also supported by the Bishop’s comparison of Dachau with Golgotha, the place where Jesus was crucified (Neuhäusler 1991: 59; 77f.).[9] Memory and liberation are thus made accessible to all those who wish to remember, so that all may join the congregation of the liberated.

The fact that the chapel was dedicated as part of the Eucharistic World Congress in Munich strengthens the interpretation which the chapel lends to the concentration camp site. The Eucharist is the “great offering of praise and thanks; a way of giving thanks for God’s act of reconciliation“ (Hilberath 1995: 949), through which the Christian congregation secures its own identity and its dedication to God. Thus, the particular significance of suffering and sacrifice in the Christian ethics of salvation is emphasized at Dachau and extended to the camp’s inmates. Those who died there are transformed

[8] See Hoffmann 1998: 68ff.; Marcuse 1990: 194ff.
[9] Hoffmann also makes this comparison (1998: 74; 79).

into offerings of repentance for the “turning-away from God“ that occurred in Dachau, which the camp symbolizes in the present-day (Neuhäusler 1991: 77). This ritualized memory takes on the form of an admission of guilt which then leads to a release from that guilt. Through the acceptance of guilt, the “manifold sufferings“ are reshaped into an “opportunity [...] to transform the curse of guilt into the blessing of the cross“ (Neuhäusler 1991: 79).

b.) The CID’s Memorial

As soon as it had reconstituted itself in 1955, the CID called for the construction of a memorial to the victims of the Dachau concentration camp. In September of the following year, the cornerstone for such a memorial was laid in order to exert pressure on the authorities and to force them to support the project. After two design contests from which no successful entries emerged, Nandor Glid’s entry was at last selected and his memorial realized. Unveiled Sept. 8th, 1968, the memorial depicts:

> people caught in barbed wire [...] Emaciated people with stick-thin extremities and large heads gradually blend into the barbed wire, also executed in bronze, to the extent that the two become indistinguish-able. The barbed wire can often not be separated from the thin arms and bodies. Only hands – accusing? beseeching? – the fingers spread and oversized heads separate themselves out of the confusion as individual motifs. The accusation is directed at a violent death in and through imprisonment. (Hoffmann 1998: 68f.)

The memorial is framed by two inscriptions. To the right a plaque has been mounted on which can be read in French, English, German and Russian: “May the example of those who were exterminated here between 1933-1945 because they resisted Nazism help to unite the living for the defence of peace and freedom and in respect for their fellow men.” From there, a path leads downwards to the memorial and on the left to a wall on which the words “never again” are inscribed in the same four languages. According to Hoffmann, the memorial’s grounds create a “secular version of the divine plan”

(Hoffmann 1998: 74), in which the inmates' deaths take on meaning for the living through the interpretation of these deaths as an obligation binding the living to create a better society. In this interpretation, the dead sacrificed their lives for this better future. Here the Christian interpretation of the chapel is taken up, but is lent a humanist twist where by virtue of the death of the inmates a purified, better future becomes possible for the living.

iv.) Phase IV

After six years of planning and preparation, the camp museum was opened in the former administrative building on May 9th, 1965. After additional Protestant and Jewish memorials had been constructed (in 1967) and dedicated in 1968, the transformation of the former concentration camp into a memorial site was at last realized. Although at this point the politics of memory on the camps grounds entered a period of stagnation, this did not necessarily signify the end of the struggle to control the manner in which the concentration camp was remembered. The memorial site was especially controversial among the populace of Dachau, who reacted above all by rejecting the concentration camp's designation as a place of sacrifice.

This opposition was clearly stated by Dachau's long-term mayor, Lorenz Reitmeier (1966 to 1996), and by the chair of a local historical association, Hans-Günter Richardi. Their interpretation of the camp and of the Holocaust was based on three fundamental distinctions. First, they made a clear distinction between the perpetrators and the city of Dachau. They claimed that the inhabitants of Dachau had protested against the camp and opposed SS ideology (Reitmeier 1983; Richardi: 1998: 132ff.). Second, Reitmeier saw the city of Dachau and the Dachau concentration camp as two completely unrelated worlds. If any contact at all "with the camp located in a remote outlying area" (Reitmeier 1983: 1) existed, for Reitmeier this consisted of "help offered to the camp inmates" (Reitmeier 1983: 1). For his part, Richardi emphasized that the camp "as such" should not even have been permitted to share city's name: "He [Richardi] points out that when the camp was constructed the land belonged to the community of Prittlbach, not to Dachau. 'By rights' he [Richardi] says, 'the concentration camp should have been called Prittlbach'" (Ryback 1992: 52). The third distinction, the most important

in Reitmeier's eyes, is that between the "historical Dachau" with its 1,200 year old history and its past as a scenic turn-of-the-century artists' colony, and the Dachau of the Nazi period. Reitmeier emphasized the "historical Dachau" as the most important of the two, which he contrasted to "the one Dachau" (Ryback 1992: 47f.; Young 1993: 69f.). Reitmeier thus adopted the phrase coined by his predecessor Schwalber ("the one Dachau and the other") in the period directly after the war.

In making such distinctions, a twofold understanding of Dachau as a victim is established. First, and as a direct consequence of these distinctions, the city of Dachau is conceived of as a victim of National Socialism. Second, Dachau is seen to have fallen victim to being falsely identified as a perpetrator, thereby stigmatizing the city. Reitmeier was of the opinion that in other parts of Germany, but above all in other countries, due to the ignorance of the city's "true" distance from the site as constructed in the "Dachau distinctions", Dachau had falsely been equated with the concentration camp and the violent crimes of the SS. In Dachau itself, this equivalence was rejected and constituted the point of departure for the many different tales of victimization told among the populace. Perhaps the most frequent story of victimization was spread in a series of newspaper articles. It concerns the Dachau license plate prefix DAH. According to this story, vehicles with the Dachau prefix are "demolished, defaced and dented" (Siegener Zeitung, October 31st, 1981).[10] Corroborating this, "Lorenz Reitmeier estimates that one of every two residents of Dachau [in one way or another, D.Z.] has been a 'victim' of this town's reputation. He [Reitmeier] advises the victims to endure the abuse with patience and dignity" (Ryback 1992: 52).

v.) Phase V

During the 1980s a debate arose about the need for a completely new concept for the memorial site at the former concentration camp. On the one hand, Dachau city authorities pushed for the incorporation of local history and resistance against the Nazis into the museum's permanent exhibit. On the other, the site's director and the CID were

[10] Marcuse (2001: 537) has succeeded in tracing this narrative back to 1955, when State Representative Junker spread it in connection with the efforts to close down the site of the former crematorium.

put under pressure by newly-founded local history initiatives to conduct a thorough overhaul of the exhibit and to give the museum a pedagogical orientation. Despite these pressures, the representatives of the memorial insisted that the permanent exhibit not be altered because, as they put it, it represented the inheritance of the inmates and “a document of the collective statement made by the survivors” (Distel 1994: 2). The pressure on the memorial site increased and, as content errors in the exhibit and the antiquated presentation of its materials continued to draw criticism, the memorial’s representatives saw themselves forced to agree to the establishment of a panel of experts commissioned by the Bavarian state government. This panel presented its recommendations for a new concept for the entire memorial site in May, 1996 (Fachbeirat 1996). On the basis of these recommendations, a great number of changes have since been made, foremost among them the exhibit’s orientation along the lines of the victims’ road of suffering and their fate. The entrance to the memorial site is to be altered so that future visitors, just like the inmates of earlier days, gain access to the memorial site through the “Jourhaus”. Subsequently, visitors are to be guided through the site by a route which at first takes them through the permanent exhibit, along the same path which the inmates were required to follow upon their arrival at Dachau. The permanent exhibit itself traces this path, and in so doing documents the conditions under which victims suffered. The central element of the newly-conceived permanent exhibit is its focus on the Dachau concentration camp and its inmates. The new, additional exhibit in the former camp prison (called the “bunker”) also follows this concept. The visitors follow the path first taken by the victims and so become their successors, a practice which we have already encountered in the case of the CID memorial. In this case, however, the visions of salvation characteristic to this form of memorial practice are not explicitly evoked. For all its emphasis on the importance of “cognitive learning”, the new concept for the permanent exhibit and the entire site in fact once again causes the visitor to assume the victims’ perspective.

The developments at the memorial site were accompanied by a change in the political views of Dachau’s population. This found expression in the election of a new mayor in 1996, who campaigned on a platform of strong support for a new politics of memory for the city. In numerous speeches, and in the preface to the “Guide to the Contemporary History of Dachau” as well, Mayor Piller has continued to give expression

to Dachau's version of this newly awakened interest in the victims of National Socialism. It is Piller's contention that the citizens of Dachau have been falsely "accused of constructing the concentration camp". This has "led to extensive feelings of injury in the city", with the result that people have tried to create a "better image" by turning away from the "history of the concentration camp", instead emphasizing "other aspects of Dachau's past" (Piller 1998: 7). However, this phase of Dachau's politics of memory is now over. From this point on, so Piller, the decision to "face the darkest chapter in the city's history" in the form of "commemoration of the victims of Dachau" is to guide the politics of memory. The city of Dachau will take up the task of "shouldering [...] the inheritance of the inmates [...] For when this of all cities acknowledges a responsibility towards the victims", so the assumption runs, "this act [will] find especial recognition and the message will be heard loud and clear" (Piller 1998: 8). Thus, the message of the victims, who thanks to the city of Dachau live on in memory after their death, receives attention. But Dachau, as well, finds an audience for its message. The city's name takes on a new, different dimension. Instead of being the city of the perpetrators, it becomes the city of victims, instead of the scene of the crime and of so many deaths, it now appears as a place of memory. Instead of continuing to be seen as the perpetrators' successors still in denial, the city's inhabitants become the victims' successors.

In light of this section's reconstruction of the interpretations of the past associated with the former Dachau concentration camp, a preliminary summary is presented here. In the postwar period the former concentration camp became the focus of various interpretations applied to it by various groups. Often, these not only competed with one another for recognition, but developed in reaction to one another, for example in the case of the interpretations put forth by Mayor Reitmaier or by the CID. Individual interpretations are, of course, virtually inconceivable without their respective historical adversaries. Thus attempts at interpretation were always questioned by alternative interpretations, which in turn resulted in reactions from the first party, a process which can be observed in the case of the memorial site's renovation. Nonetheless, the discursive fronts in this process were not frozen shut. Instead, they readjusted

themselves continually in reaction to the issues which required historical interpretation and to the potential for interpretation immanent in the subdiscourses of each case.[11]

IV. The Topography of Terror

The "Topography of Terror" memorial site is located on the so-called 'Prince Albrecht terrain', home to the former headquarters of the SS, the Gestapo and the Reich Security Main Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*) in the center of Berlin.[12] These buildings were the target of heavy Allied bombing from April, 1944 until the war's end. After the war these buildings which had housed National Socialist institutions were demolished. When the Berlin Wall was constructed along the boundary of the terrain, placing the area at the periphery of West-Berlin's downtown area, all previously considered plans for a practical future use of the area were dropped. It was subsequently handed over for provisional use to a company dealing in construction salvage and became an 'autodrome' where prospective drivers could practice for their license tests. Only at the end of the 1970s did the terrain become the object of public attention, when the historically significant Gropius building located on the terrain was renovated and transformed into an exhibition site. As a part of the first large-scale exhibition on Prussian history the site's use during the 'Third Reich' was thematized.

At about the same time the significance of this "historic location" was emphasized by representatives of the Berlin International Building Exhibition (*Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin* – IBA). This became the main argument against including the site in the city planning department's future development projects.

[11] Nonetheless, by no means have all the measures in the field of the politics of memory and the attempts at interpretation related to the former camp been depicted here. In addition to the German Lutheran and Jewish houses of worship already mentioned, the newly established "Youth Guest House", the cemeteries of Dachau, the former branch camps (*Außenlager*) and sites along the route taken by the Dachau death march, along with the interpretations they have inspired, have not been considered. However, because no other types of memorial could be identified using the classification system presented below, I have refrained from discussing these examples here.

[12] See the analysis in Rürup 1989; 1997; as well Hass 2002.

i.) The "Provisional Arrangement": The Topography of Terror in the 1980s

Their interest awakened by the Gropius-Bau exhibit and the IBA, numerous organizations and initiatives shifted their attention to this site, calling for the establishment of a "memorial site for the victims of fascism". When, in 1982 plans were laid for memorial ceremonies to mark the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Hitler's 'seizure of power' ('*Machtergreifung*') in 1933, Berlin's House of Representatives answered the call and announced a design competition for the site. Two criteria were imposed upon contest entries: first, they were to include a memorial site for the victims of the Holocaust; second, a neighborhood park was to be incorporated into the design. At the same time, the Berlin Senate, the city district of Kreuzberg and the various citizens' groups could not agree on what might constitute a memorial site. While this was being debated, numerous groups which had previously acted independently of one another came together to form an association calling for the establishment of an "active museum" on the terrain. The "Active Museum Association", along with others, strongly criticized the way in which the contest was being conducted. The projects that the jury recommended were never carried out, not least of all because of the continuing criticism of the competition and its results. Instead, new plans were developed in order to at least prepare the terrains, in a provisional manner, for the ceremonies for Berlin's 750th anniversary in 1987. A new citizens' interest group ("Citizens Concerned with the History and Future of the Gestapo Terrain" – *"Initiative für den Umgang mit dem Gestapo-Gelände*") was founded, once again as the result of a fusion between groups who feared that the Senate was not very serious about creating an "appropriate" memorial site. However, even within this group, members could not agree on what was "appropriate". Finally, in July, 1987 the "Topography of Terror" exhibit, the work of a group of historians commissioned by the Berlin Senate, was opened. This group had developed the exhibit in cooperation with citizens' lobby groups, so that it reflected the results of years of debate and dispute concerning the site.

Initially intended as a “provisional arrangement” for the city’s 750th anniversary, in the end the exhibit and the structure housing it were retained until July, 1997.[13] The one-storey wood and glass building housing the exhibit was long and narrow. It was constructed over cellar rooms dating from the war, and which had been discovered during excavations conducted on the terrain. The exhibit was based on a simple concept. In essence, it was made up of large black-and-white photographs, among them numerous portraits; large panels with text which told the story of the neighborhood, the site and the Nazi institutions it had housed; and diagrams and enlarged original documents. The texts employed a dry language which stuck to the facts. It was thought that the historical facts would “speak for themselves”. The exhibit’s creators designated it as an “historical documentation”, by which they meant that it was “scholarly” and “objective”, “interpreting” neither the site nor its history.

The exhibit conceived of the history of the terrain as a linear narrative. The history of the period leading up to the ‘Third Reich’ was depicted through the example of the site and the city neighborhood in which it was located, all of which formed the background for the subsequent presentation of the history of the ‘Third Reich’. In the next section of the exhibit the institutions located on the terrain during National Socialism and the crimes of the SS and the Gestapo formed the points of reference for the depiction of the Nazi regime. From there, the exhibit went on to signal the beginning of a new era as depicted through the state of the terrain’s various buildings in the years 1944 to 1945. Instead of presenting the post-war period as a single phase, the exhibit differentiated between “History Made Invisible” and “The Return of the Repressed” in two sections bearing these names. Whereas the period up until the early 1980s was presented as repressing the historical truth, and as an attempt to “draw a line” under German society’s obligation to confront the Nazi crimes in its past, the 1980s were characterized as the decade of the rediscovery of the terrain, the beginning of a truly new era in which the historical past was “worked through”.

The terrain itself was made accessible to the public as well. Plaques with information about the site’s history were placed on the grounds and two observation towers were erected on the hill formed by the rubble from the demolished buildings. The “Topography of Terror” interpreted the terrain as an “authentic” site and claimed, with

[13] The exhibit can at present be seen on the terrain in a slightly modified open air form.

reference to the place, and with the help of the objective, scholarly exhibit, to be able to depict the historical "truth" from which lessons could be drawn for the present and the future.

The terrain was termed a "place of learning", a "place of the perpetrators" and an "open wound". The "open wound" metaphor referred to the churned-up earth of the terrain, and to the fact that after the war it was not reintegrated into the city's new spatial order, remaining instead a vacant lot. It was meant to illustrate how history had left a wound on the body of the city and of the German nation. The terrain was declared to be a place of the perpetrators because it had served as the command centre of the SS state, thus contrasting it with the "victims' places", in particular with the concentration camps.[14]

ii.) The New Building

After German reunification, plans for a new building on the terrain were finally drawn up. The citizens' interest groups were still fighting for the realization of a museum with an unconventional concept. An "active museum" would counteract the dangers of monumentalism and of freezing the exhibited objects in a museum stasis by allowing its visitors to take an active role during their visit. Furthermore, the designation of facilities for media projects and for activities such as workshops was called for, to be housed in numerous small, decentralized buildings. Nonetheless, the Berlin Senate was successful in pushing through its own, somewhat different concept. The new building, the completion of which had been continuously delayed due to technical and financial difficulties and drawn-out disputes concerning the memorial site and the building, was to be a long, narrow cement construction. The architects have portrayed the new building as a "pure structure", "merely a background for the exhibits" and "functional". A permanent exhibit featuring a concept faithful to that of the old exhibit is to be located at the center of the building. No artefacts will be employed, the claim to "authenticity" will be made anew. In addition, the two-storey building will house facilities for temporary

[14] Despite the "in-house prison" ("*Hausgefängnis*") maintained by the Gestapo on the site, an interpretation which designates the terrain as a "victims' place" has never gained general currency.

exhibitions, group projects, a library and the site's administration. The citizens' interest groups were initially very critical of the building because its architecture, in contrast to that of the "provisional building", would dominate the terrain with its massive structure and would allow only a relatively conventional museum concept.

V. The Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe

In 1989 the "Perspectives Berlin" association wrote an open letter, stating that it was a "shameful state of affairs" that "on German soil, in the land of the perpetrators, [there exists] no memorial reminding us of the victims" of National Socialism. The association called for the establishment of just such a site "on the former GESTAPO terrain, the seat of the Reich Security Main Office, the murderous center of the Reich's capitol". Furthermore, they also stated that they considered it "the duty of all Germans in East and West to erect this memorial" (quoted in TAZ, January 30th, 1989). According to this view, Germany is the "land of the perpetrators" which has a duty to remember its victims. This is noteworthy to the extent that in most cases the duty to remember applies to the members of one's own group, whereas here Germans and Jews are defined as two separate entities, one of which is seen to be made up solely of perpetrators, the other solely of victims. In this call for action a process suggests itself which Reinhart Koselleck, years later within the context of the debate on the "Holocaust Memorial", would come to call "role reversal" (Koselleck 1999a). The success of such a process was to be ensured through the establishment of this new place of memory; the terrain is defined as a perpetrators' place ("Gestapo terrain") which through a process of redefinition is to become a victims' place ("memorial reminding us of the victims"). Through the process by which the perpetrators' place is transformed into a victims' place, the descendants of the perpetrators are able to take on the role of the victims' descendants.

The "Perspectives Berlin" association had attempted in vain to push through its plans for the construction of a Holocaust memorial on the Prince Albrecht terrain, albeit without coordinating its efforts with other initiatives. In 1990 these plans were rejected by a commission of experts. But in 1993 the "Perspectives Berlin" association finally

succeeded in gaining the support of the German federal government and the state of Berlin for a memorial project at another location.[15] In the following year a competition for the best design was announced and in 1995, after drawn-out debates, Christine Jackob-Marks‘ design for a memorial on the site of the former “Ministers‘ Garden” near the Brandenburg Gate was selected.[16] This design can be understood as a symbolic counter-concept to the “Topography of Terror” exhibit. Accordingly, the entire 20,000 m2 grounds are to be covered by a “plate of black concrete accessible to the public“ (Endlich 1995: 118). In terms of its form, the design was described as follows: “It is not flat, rather [it] slopes upwards, attaining at the southeastern corner of the property a height of eleven meters“ (Endlich 1995: 118). The plans foresaw engraving the names of all the Jewish victims of National Socialism into the surface of the plate. Thus, the design recalled both a grave-stone and an entire cemetery and was intended “as an environment with a dramatic concept which above all seeks to evoke emotions and by naming all the victims‘ names brings visitors to identify with them“ (Endlich 1995a: 118). This is a reference to a process by which Germans can come to identify with their victims, thereby “enabling them to slip into the role of the victim in order, from that moment on, to be able to participate in the communal mourning“ (Koselleck 1999a: 100).

However, after the Chancellor at the time (Helmut Kohl), had spoken out against this design, three colloquia were held in Berlin between January and April of 1997, during which the entire memorial project was reconsidered. Directly afterwards, a number of artists were invited to participate in a “narrow selection process” (Heimrod/Schlusche/ Seferens 1999: 837ff.). Four proposals were selected from among the pool of entries, among them among them one by Peter Eisenman and Richard Serra. After several reworkings, Eisenman presented his proposal to the public in 1998. Following the Federal Parliamentary elections in September of that year, the new federal government, in agreement with the Berlin Senate, decided to leave the final

[15] See Endlich 1995: 116ff.; Cullen 1999; Kramer 1995.

[16] The erection of the memorial has become the object of an “elite discourse transmitted by the media”. Michael Cullen (1999: 17) counted 1,500 newspaper and magazine articles on this topic up until November, 1998. In addition to the volume which he has edited, two other works documenting the debate and the selection process

decision on the memorial in the hands of the Federal Parliament. In June of 1999 that body finally opted for Peter Eisenman's design ("Eisenman II"), which had been expanded to include an information center. This design foresees the erection of a field of a total of 2,700 cement pillars on the site. The distribution of the pillars of differing heights and the rise and fall of the ground level provides the memorial with a total structure which recalls waves of water. Between the rows of pillars run narrow gravel paths by means of which visitors move through the complex. The memorial is to be enclosed by broken rows of trees which allow the memorial to be seen from the street. The memorial is to be complemented by a four-room underground "information center" which in places is to extend into the cement. The rooms are to serve different functions: "One [is to be] a 'Quiet Room' in which informational texts are also available, then the 'Room of Fate', in which exemplary victims' fates are documented, then the 'Room of Names' containing all the names of the victims known to date and the 'Room of Places' which provides information on the 'spread of murder'" (RNZ, July 8-9th, 2000).

VI. The Stigma of Guilt: Types of Memorial Practice and Collective Identities

How can we channel our interpretation, which thus far has traced historical developments, into an analytical structure? Which modes of memorial practice can be distinguished in the discourse of memory conducted in response to these commemorative sites? In the following, I would like to focus my interpretation on the concept of stigmatization, and will describe types of memorial practice distinguishable by how, within each case, the practice of remembrance constructs identity. In this process I elaborate on each type of memorial practice by means of an example provided by one or two memorial sites.

i.) The Discourse of Being Deeply and Personally Affected

(Heimrod/Schlusche/Seferens 1999; Jeismann 1999). Numerous scholarly studies, among them that of Jan-Holger Kirsch (2003), have also dealt with the memorial.

I term the first interpretation of the past "the discourse of being deeply and personally affected by it" ("*Betroffenheitsdiskurs*"), and will develop my analysis on the basis of the Dachau memorial site. In this interpretation, those remembering feel touched and shocked by the suffering of the victims. They identify with the victims and seek proximity to them. The stigmatization[17] of the victims within the society of the 'Third Reich', i.e. the fact that the quality of abnormality was attributed to them on the basis of their alleged inborn social guilt and the resulting manner in which they were scorned and persecuted by their society (Lipp 1993: 16), is publicly depicted and perpetuated in the religious rites conducted in the chapel and in the symbolic order of the memorial. In this continuation of the stigmatization, those stigmatized achieve what Wolfgang Lipp has termed "charismatic radiance" (Lipp 1993: 17), such as that brought about through "self-stigmatization". Self-stigmatization is, along with internalization and neutralization, one of the strategies people employ to defend themselves against stigmatization. Here, guilt is neither projected inwards nor rejected, but rather accepted and put on public display so that a subsequent transformation of "guilt into 'blessing'" (Lipp 1993: 22) can occur. That is to say, a reversal of the meaning of the stigma is induced, which in its final result leads to charisma and the construction of a new value system. Those stigmatized no longer appear to be guilty. Instead, they appear strong, morally pure, and honorable. In the end they appear as the creators of a new culture. All of these effects can be regarded as the typical results of a symbolic reversal of meaning through self-stigmatization. Self-stigmatization (and in our case, the representation and the perpetuation of stigmatization) requires a primary stigmatization brought about through the attributions of an agent. In the case of the discourse of being deeply and personally affected by the past, this role is played by the National Socialists. In other words, the extension of the stigmatization of the victims of the Holocaust into the present keeps the latter (and those who follow their path in memorial practice) closely associated and dependent upon the 'Third Reich'. Although one can only speak of self-stigmatization in the case of the survivors, the mechanisms described above nonetheless take effect, for they are brought into play by people who, through memorial practice, identify with the victims. As the successors to the victims, and as the agents maintaining their

[17] The following thoughts have been adapted from Wolfgang Lipp's model of charisma (Lipp 1993).

stigmatization, those remembering hope as a collective to receive absolution and to partake of the social values which, in a reversal of the meaning of the stigma, are attributed to the victims. These may find their expression in the wish for a world of brotherly love (as in the case of the Catholic Church), or for a free and just society (as in the case of the CID).

What is remembered in this interpretation is the persecution and the murder of the concentration camp's inmates. These are conceived of as crimes, and as an offense against society's moral code. Through this memorial practice, although these crimes cannot be undone, they are nonetheless imbued with deeper significance and with relevance for the community of survivors. Thus, the memorial site symbolizes society's attribution of guilt to the victims and how it scorned them, their sacrifice and suffering, but also symbolizes absolution and a new beginning. The focus on the victims is accompanied by the fact that the perpetrators are almost totally ignored and leads to the concentration camp being defined as a "place of the victims".

One of the results of this discourse for those remembering is that they remain in the shadow of the victims, which in the case of the Catholic Church can be equated with their subjugation under God. The Catholic interpretation lays the groundwork for a potentially universalist identity. It is a religious understanding of the site, for it refers to an order beyond the bounds of this world, created by God, but it contains an interpretory aspect relevant to this world and its politics. In competing with other interpretations, the chapel influences how the rest of the site is interpreted as a whole. And it offers a solution both to the German identity problem and for German guilt, which can be dissipated by means of religion. According to this interpretation, Dachau demonstrates "what is contained within man, what sins he is capable of" (Neuhäusler 1991: 78). But "the particularly grave guilt of the Germans", "our overproportional guilt" (Neuhäusler 1991: 78) also finds expression there. All sinners can, potentially, be liberated if they accept their guilt, through self-stigmatization in the footsteps of the camp's inmates and of the (Christian) Messiah: the perpetrators, the Germans and humanity. In contrast, the interpretation offered by the CID clearly excludes some from its offer, for it names both implicitly and explicitly those responsible for the stigmatization and clearly specifies the victim group. The CID's understanding leaves no doubt about the fate of the victims and

their identity. It is not an expression of a universalist conception of terror and catastrophe, but instead is closely linked to the suffering of the inmates.

The community of the persecuted formed both in the Catholic and in the CID discourse is thus not conceived of as hermetically sealed; it can be extended by various means. New communities come into being in succession to the persecuted.
Along with the Catholic Church's universalist congregation and the CID's political-humanist community, of late the citizens of Dachau and the German nation have come to deserve mention. For instance, Mayor Piller has adopted the discourse of being deeply and personally affected by the past for use in reference to Dachau. Piller has developed a model of memorial practice according to which the citizens of Dachau commemorate the victims together with the survivors, guarding their legacy, reconciling with the survivors and receiving recognition as citizens of Dachau (e.g. Piller 1999). As in other places, politicians in Dachau too have come to recognize the national significance of their local memorial site. They now, in contrast to the practice still adhered to in the 1980s, willingly take part in events at memorial sites dealing with the National Socialist era,[18] and recognize and speak of the positive effect these memorial sites have on German identity. Within this discourse, those formerly persecuted achieve the status of agents of forgiveness and recognition.

This discourse takes on a somewhat different form in the case of the "Holocaust Memorial". Jackob-Marks' design, as Koselleck has pointed out, goes beyond the "identification with the victims" and the "role reversal" sketched above: "The graveplate set on a slant implies [...], within the Christian tradition, the *promise of resurrection*. After *we Germans* have beat to death, shot or gassed five to six million Jews, then reduced them to ash, air and water, we now take it upon ourselves to offer these very Jews a symbolic resurrection" (Koselleck 1999b: 88; my emphasis, D.Z.). In this way, this memorial design differs in a significant manner from the memorial symbols found at Dachau, for example in the Catholic chapel, in terms of the level at which it constructs identity, the type of that identity, and the role of those stigmatized. Whereas in Dachau a universalist form of identity in the mode of religious successorship finds expression, in the case of the "Holocaust Memorial" the historically defined identity of the Germans is

[18] Among the politicians who have visited the Dachau memorial site is the Bavarian Minister-President Edmund Stoiber, in 1995.

established as a community of the blessed, capable of feats of absolution. The self-designated “land of the perpetrators” identifies with the Jewish victims, mourns their loss and offers them resurrection, making itself appear superior to the victims in the process. Those who were stigmatized appear here not as charismatic figures in whose footsteps one follows. A community encompassing both the descendants of the perpetrators and the victims is not what is created. Indeed, it is more the case that the victims seem to be in need of absolution and dependent upon the merciful deeds of the descendants of the perpetrators.

The memorial designed by Peter Eisenman selected by the Federal Parliament manages without attributing to the perpetrators superiority over the victims. In addition, the design conceptualizes the practice of commemoration of the murdered Jews as successorship to the victims. This results from the memorial itself, which, in one respect, intends to make it possible for the visitors to relive the camp experience of the victims: “The visitor will experience in a powerful fashion the confinement and inability to escape, the feeling of the mass and at the same time that of lost individuality, the play between opening and threatening closure“ (FAZ, June 26th, 1999). Furthermore, the memorial picks up on visitors‘ experiences with visits to other memorial sites and is intended to awaken these in its future visitors. This is to be achieved by means of similar physical experiences, which the visitor will have because the memorial‘s dimensions are comparable to those of concentration camp memorial sites, as well as due to the combination of a gravel-covered, monotonous exterior and a museum interior. Characteristic of the visitor’s experience at memorial sites like Dachau is that one must walk long distances over difficult terrain and desolate gravel surfaces, resulting in physical exertion. This experience, designed to seem similar to that at other memorials, is intended to lead to the transfer of an aura of death from the “authentic sites” to the “inauthentic” memorial, thus transforming the latter for the visitor into an identical “field of the dead“ (FAZ, June 26th, 1999).

Like the forms of memorial practice in Dachau and with the Jackob-Marks’ design outlined above, this last design also relies on visitors following in the footsteps of the victims. The stigmatization of the victims under National Socialism is taken up at a symbolic level. Other than at Dachau, no particular values are attributed to the victims, and the visitor is not admitted to a community founded on the victim’s suffering. In this

respect, it bears a superficial resemblance to Jackob-Marks' design. However, this design, in contrast to that of Jackob-Marks, distinguishes itself through a symbolic reduction to the visitor's ability to sympathize with the victims' suffering and to mourn them. Precisely because it abstains both from symbols attributing a deeper significance to the victim and from requiring the visitors to feel superior to the victims, memorial practice at the site can centre around something else: not those being memorialized, but rather the memorial practice of the community which created the memorial (and of the visitor to the memorial), which is represented as an extraordinary achievement. With the aid of this memorial, Germany proves itself to be a community capable of mourning, which as a collective subject "after it has completed its mourning work [becomes] free once again and without constraints" (Freud; quoted in Kirsch 2001: 345). Thus, the memorial enables the "land of the perpetrators" to liberate itself from the burden of guilt through this mourning, and to transform the "shameful state of affairs" diagnosed by the "Perspectives Berlin" group – marked by the absence of such a memorial – into pride at the accomplishment of the memorial. At the same time, the memorial does not suggest that the Germans could ever "resurrect" the victims and reduce or undo their sufferings, as was the case with Jackob-Marks' design. Instead, memorial practice becomes the power by which the nation can heal itself. This design accomplishes the "role reversal" that was implicit in the first call for a memorial made by "Perspectives Berlin". This insight corresponds with Michael Naumann's designation of the memorial he supported as "a symbol of *our mourning*" (quoted in Kirsch 2001: 341) while serving as Federal Minister for Cultural Affairs.

In her contribution to the debate on the project, Aleida Assmann interpreted the planned memorial as a form of "acknowledgement on the part of the Germans of a monstrous guilt " (quoted in Broder 1997: 71). Many commentators have, with reference to Hermann Lübbe, criticized what they see as the memorial's expression of a German "pride in sin". However, the interpretation presented here has demonstrated that neither the nation's guilt, nor its sins, are of primary concern in the memorial project. Aleida Assmann was right to point out that, normally, "*what the perpetrators remember* can find support neither in public rituals and symbols nor by giving the past meaning through political gestures. A collective habitus of refusing to speak of the events and of repressing them coalesces from within the society" (A. Assmann 1999: 47; my

emphasis, D.Z.). The memorial project puts a stop to this habitus by constituting perpetrators' memories which do not rely on "the refusal to speak" and "repression". However, nor does the memorial project, as was claimed during the debate, emphasize the crime, the perpetrators and guilt. Instead, it is the memorial practice itself which becomes the project's central objective. The practice of memory produces a pride in commemoration, a pride that the remembrance has been accomplished, and a pride in the capacity to remember the victims. This becomes possible through the memorial and through attention to the victims and their suffering, because it engenders feelings of sadness and of being deeply and personally affected, which leaves the perpetrators and their guilt in the background. Or, as the German daily newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine* put it after the Federal Parliament had decided to realize the "Eisenman II" project: "One can be proud of the result, as of the length and intensity of the discussion " (FAZ, June 26th, 1999).

ii.) The Discourse of Breaking with the Past

The second interpretation can be termed the discourse of "breaking with the past" (Schlussstrich – literally "to draw a final line" under something unpleasant and be done with it) and will be depicted by returning to the example of the Dachau concentration camp. The historical point of origin for this interpretation was the liberation of the camp, which called forth a stigmatization of local society and caused it to attempt to directly reject the accusation of guilt. This process can be traced to a newspaper article from July, 1945, used by Harold Marcuse in his interpretation of this process (Marcuse 2001: 55ff.). In early May, 1945, in other words, a few days after the concentration camp's liberation, the article's author, Patricia Lochridge, interviewed citizens of Dachau who had just been summoned by the American military administration to participate in a "viewing tour" through the camp in which she also had participated. When Lochridge asked the men and women about the "German people's responsibility for camps like Dachau" (Lochridge 1945: 96), they responded with direct denial as sketched out above. However, this direct defensiveness did not convince Lockridge, who left open the question posed by the title of her article, "Are Germans Human?" This question expressed with rare explicitness doubt concerning the identity of the German people,

the natural correlate of every act of stigmatization. According to Goffman, we believe that "the person with a stigma is not quite human“ (Goffman 1963: 5). This is precisely Lochridge’s conclusion in her assessment of the Germans, for whom the citizens of Dachau appear to be typical (Lochridge 1945: 96). This is true both in view of the guilt she attributes to them (and for which the camp is symbolic), and in terms of the fact that she could not revise her view because, it seems, the citizens of Dachau did not present her with such an opportunity.

How does one explain that in this case the stigmatization, that is, the attribution of guilt for the crimes committed in the Dachau concentration camp, could not be rejected? Why was there no successful “counter-stigmatization”, i.e. a reversal of the attribution of guilt with the result that those doing the stigmatizing appear as the truly guilty parties (both because of the stigmatization they cause at the time and because of the “punishment” of the Dachau citizens that was to follow). Other than in the case of the discourse of being deeply and personally affected, the response was not self-stigmatization, but denial and (direct) self-defense against the attribution of guilt, which is a strategy “with a more or less limited perspective of success” (Lipp 1993: 21). We encounter this unwillingness to accept having been branded as guilty again in later years, for instance when Mayor Reitmeier equated the citizens of Dachau with the Sinti, claiming that they shared victim status, while at the same time refusing the Sinti permission to construct a community center in Dachau, which from Reitmeier’s perspective would have represented another “millstone” around Dachau’s neck (FAZ, January 5th, 1985). From the local Dachau perspective, the heaviest burden appears to be the discourse of being deeply and personally affected, which materialized at the camp memorial site. This is regarded as the general attribution of guilt to “the people of Dachau”, since, at least from Dachau’s perspective, if the concentration camp is labelled a “place of the victims”, Dachau becomes a city of perpetrators, thereby deconstructing the city’s self-definition as “the one and the other” Dachau; indeed, even reversing it. This explains the, at times, bitter rejection of this discourse and of the memorial site among the citizens of Dachau, who claim for themselves the status of victim which is denied them by the memorial site in its function as a stigma indicating guilt.

Timothy W. Ryback observes that Reitmeier made great efforts to “destigmatize Dachau’s reputation“ (Ryback 1992: 56) by summoning up visions of the “other

Dachau", albeit unsuccessfully. These efforts aimed to relativize and redefine the meaning of the past through historical argument. Thus, whereas the present memorial site appears as a symbol for the (rejected) attribution of guilt, and thus for Dachau's current status as a victim and as a burden to the city, a memorial site designed in the spirit of Reitmeier's interpretation of the past would express resistance and Dachau's historical victimization. According to such an interpretation, it is not the past, but the memorial practice which presents the problem, of which initially the concentration camp grounds and later the camp memorial site are symbolic representations. The memorial site was anchored as an institution, both through its location, on the grounds of the former concentration camp where buildings were still intact, and through the CID's responsibility for it, which was guaranteed by law. Therefore, those seeking to challenge the site's symbolic value sought alternative locations and forms of expression, such as the town hall lobby for events and the local press as an organ of communication. In comparison to the symbolic power of the place occupied by the memorial site, these attempts proved to be ineffective. Nor did this interpretation meet the needs of Dachau's citizens, who with the help of such an interpretation of the past developed a partially stubborn, partially self-pitying form of self-assertion.

Such a view continued to dominate Dachau's public sphere for many years, as the discourse of being deeply and personally affected with its universalist constellation initially offered no space for articulation of an identity specific to the city of Dachau, something to which Mayor Piller much later first gave expression and which clearly was very important to many people in the city. Thus, for many years the city of Dachau was unable to construct a stable identity through adherence to the discourse of breaking with the past, as this failed to bring about a decrease in the attributions of guilt, did nothing to improve the city‘s reputation and lastly, did not make the memorial site which the city of Dachau regarded as its enemy disappear. Instead of reversing the stigmatization and building a new identity, the city confirmed its stigmatized status and retained its "chronically weak identity". The city generally and falsely attributed this condition to the stigma itself, and not to the form of the defense mechanism employed locally over an extended period of time.

iii.) The Discourse of Working through the Past

The “Topography of Terror” can be thought of as a place at which a dispute concerning the meaning of the Holocaust for German identity took place. During the course of this process a specific interpretation, which I will call the discourse of working through the past (“*Aufarbeitungsdiskurs*”), was formed, institutionalized and gained currency. The structure of both the exhibit and of the discourse in which it is embedded create a single national narrative divided into two sections (Bhabha 1990). This kind of national history locates its origin, commonly mythically transfigured, in prehistory, which in the case of the “Topography of Terror” consists of the Wilhelminian era and the Weimar Republic. This history underwent, according to the exhibit, a radical transformation brought about by the ‘Third Reich’. Guilt and the responsibility for the crimes of Nazi Germany led, during the post-war period, to the “repression” which constitutes the preliminary end to a first form of national “history”. The post-war period also marks the point where a second narrative is formed, which takes us through the 1980s and the “return of the repressed” to the opening of the “Topography of Terror” as the completion of the national narrative. In this manner, the new method of working through the past instituted in the early 1980s is understood as the necessary consequence of the active repression of the past in the post-war period. This narrative’s conclusion, although shaped by the nation’s active confrontation with its history, does not play a role in the exhibit itself, as it is the confrontation with history which achieves this conclusion. This is not only physically palpable for the visitors, who by virtue of their visit to the exhibit are part of this momentary final constellation, but also unceasingly extends what has been achieved thus far into the present.

A visit to the memorial site becomes the realization of the national search for identity, a process deemed capable of integrating the crimes committed under National Socialism. The national subject “completes” this new national identity in a performative act. Similarly, the non-German visitor achieves the status of being a witness to this process. To the extent that he or she observes the Germans working through their past, he or she attests to and confirms this process of the formation of a new nation. The

mirroring function thus fulfilled by non-German visitors manifests itself in their entries in the memorial site's guest book, where one finds favorably disposed comments on the apparent transformation of German society. In the incarnation provided by the "Topography of Terror" discourse of working through the past, the terrain becomes a symbol for guilt, i.e. a stigma. The act of stigmatization, that is, the attribution of the social guilt Germany experienced for the crimes committed under National Socialism, is transformed by the memorial into self-stigmatization.

In the discourse of working through the past, those doing the remembering have occupied an objective and objectifying position from which to learn, and have distanced themselves from the victims. They construct a concept of self as a part of a "society of the perpetrators", thereby constituting a collective capable of memorial practice. From the position of identification with the perpetrators, the acceptance of guilt and self-stigmatization, those remembering take on the "responsibility" not only for the past, but also for the future. The terrain is designated as an "open wound" and thus takes on the role of a symbol of guilt and shame, but also of learning and responsibility. The self-stigmatization conducted by the memorial site leads to a reversal of this very symbolic meaning. The guilt and responsibility for the crimes are conceived of as problems of the past, which one acknowledges as one's own through memorial practice. This acknowledgement is at the core of how the exhibit deals with this issue, which takes on the form of a learning process in which guilt is worked through on the very site where the crimes were committed. This results in the visitor deriving pride in this memorial work, a process which is considered to be the crucial motor for the establishment of new political values. Among these, in addition to the awareness of individual responsibility (towards the victims of National Socialism and persecuted minorities, for instance) are societal values such as respect for others, civil courage, and service to the community.

Self-stigmatization, repeated and made permanent in the memorial work facilitated by the site, transforms the burden of memory into an opportunity to create new political values and, on this basis, to found a new national identity. Framed by this discourse as part of the political order in the new Germany, the stigma left by the Holocaust as a whole is transformed with the help of the "Topography of Terror" into a central collective symbol for the Federal Republic. In this symbol, the guilt of the past and today's feeling of responsibility are merged to form basic elements of a democratic

"constitutional patriotism". In this manner, the memorial site limits the symbolic ambivalence of the terrain to interpretations which harmonize with the discourse of working through the past, thus averting the dangerously ambivalent identity which is contained in the open question of whether the Germans are guilty or not. The "Topography of Terror" works at cultivating and maintaining Germany's open wound, not at healing it. From the perspective of this interpretation of Germany's relationship to its national past, the wound must remain open in order to meet the need for a German identity based on its entire history. According to the interpretation offered by this discourse of working through the past, the open wound is not only a "symbolic wound of the body-politic of the German nation-state", as Karen E. Till writes (Till 1996: 196), but also an opportunity to reterritorialize German identity, thereby regaining a lost identity. Thus, this discourse indicates not only that German identity has been wounded, but also how it can perhaps be healed. In this way, the Holocaust is reinterpreted, moving from being understood as a break in German identity to becoming its healing wound.

VII. Concluding Thoughts

These case studies have provided insight into three modes of identity construction, which have been designated as the discourses of working through the past ("*Aufarbeitungsdiskurs*"), breaking with the past ("*Schlussstrichdiskurs*"), and being deeply and personally affected by the past ("*Betroffenheitsdiskurs*"). At the core of each of these discourses is the debate on the German stigma of guilt. Memorial site terrains and the concentration camp sites serve, within this context, as symbolic representations of the crimes committed under National Socialism. They are interpreted as symbols of guilt. Symbols, as we have already noted, always refer to a break or disturbance, containing both problems to be addressed as well as their solutions. From this perspective, stigmata, i.e. symbols of guilt, appear to be the primary symbols with which a culture can progress and consolidate the identity of its members. According to Wolfgang Lipp, stigmata, as signs of social guilt, attribute to their bearers a deviance from society's set normative values, which endangers society's identity. At the same time, stigmata can nevertheless alter their function as signs that injure identity, in order

to become factors in the production of identity. Because they bear a symbolic quality, it is possible for stigmata to “reverse” their meanings. The symbolic mechanism of stigma reversal causes a reevaluation of negative signs of guilt, transforming them into positive signs of “blessing”. The act of remembering National Socialism can thus, precisely because it poses a threat, also be particularly productive for the construction of a national identity. It is productive because, in the shape of the discourses of working through the past and of being deeply and personally affected, symbolic forms of memorial practice have been developed which make it possible to “fight off” guilt while at the same time “accepting” Germany’s history and reestablishing the myth on which the nation is founded. In arguing this point, I take a position that runs contrary to those who, due to the memory of National Socialism, conceive the German nation solely in the form of a “negative nationalism” or a “negative patriotism” (e.g. Dann 1993; Isensee 1992).

By way of conclusion and to summarize the findings for these case studies, the three discourses can be characterized as follows. In the discourse of being deeply and personally affected (“*Betroffenheitsdiskurs*”), the attribution of guilt to the victims of National Socialism is accepted and maintained through the identification of those remembering with the victims. Because the victims are given a deeper symbolic meaning, their stigma is transformed into a sign of “blessing”, making the memorial sites and places of memory symbols for attributing guilt, for contempt, sacrifice and suffering, but also of absolution and of a new beginning. In this way, these places become a form of memorial practice which reinterprets suffering and death as a ritual sacrifice for a better future, and by means of which the victims are absolved of their stigma. The communities of memory and collective identities thus created differ in their relationship to the victims. Religious or humanistically-oriented communities with a universalist approach identify the victims as a part of their own group. They take up the ecstatic self-stigmatization of the victim and position themselves as their successors. In so doing, they participate in the values which the victims have come to represent and which are attributed to the victims, so that such communities form their identity under the protection of the victims. In the context of the construction of local and national communities, those remembering see themselves as being in mourning, while at the same time they maintain a differentiation between themselves and the victims, who are

regarded as belonging to another group. As a part of their mourning practice, such communities incorporate the promise of resurrection for the victims. In the process they present themselves as a blessed community with good intentions, and attribute higher meaning to this act of commemoration through their pride in the memorial practice.

Through the denial of guilt and the rejection of responsibility for the crimes of the past, the discourse of breaking with the past ("*Schlussstrichdiskurs*") aims to minimize the significance of the past for German collective identity and, at its core, seeks to forget the crimes committed under National Socialism. This unwanted history is meant to be replaced through the remembrance of other epochs, through which this discourse's supporters hope to "uplift" the nation. However, this form of a "sharp break" with the past is coupled with other, "softer" forms which accept the attribution of guilt and seek to reverse that guilt.[19] In such discourses, memorial practice takes on the form of "coping with the past" ("*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*")[20], a process which is conceived of as continual. By means of an appropriate approach to the 'Third Reich', the community will one day be cleansed of its past, able to lay aside this memory, and have at its disposal a historically "unbroken" collective identity.[21] Thus, in this case, breaking with the past does not mean that all mention of the Holocaust should be suppressed, but instead that a form of interpretation regarded as both dominant and dangerous should be discarded as, from this perspective, it privileges some groups while putting one's own at a disadvantage. The practice of "breaking with the past through coping with it" aims at historically relativizing and redefining the significance of Germany's problem with its recent past. Associated with the attempt to forget and to cover up the past are forms of memorial practice which emphasize Germany's status as a victim and emphasize the memory of German resistance under National Socialism. However, this interpretation's weakness lies in the fact that its rejection of the attribution of guilt confirms the original

[19] I have adopted this differentiation between a "sharp" and a "soft" break with the past from Marion Hamm (1997), although she employs them in another fashion. The "soft" break in Hamm's text resembles what I have called the "discourse of working through the past". Hamm refers to Barthes' conception of myth in her demonstration of how national identity was consolidated through the ceremonies on May 8th, 1995 (the 50th anniversary of Germany's capitulation in World War 2) through a reversal of the elements contained in "socially critical" forms of memorial practice.

[20] On the various ways in which the term "*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*"("coping with the past") has been used, Reichel 1995; Weber 1992; Welzer 1996.

stigmatization of the victims, leading to an image of German suffering marked by self-pity, which is hardly appropriate to rejecting guilt. Such a position does not take advantage of the "positive potential" of the attribution of guilt, in the process causing the community to appear to be unable to mourn and to learn from its past. Instead of combining past and present in order to generate meaning in the present, the discourse of breaking with the past pursues a logic which clearly separates the world of today from that of yesterday.

In the discourse of working through the past ("*Aufarbeitungsdiskurs*"), those remembering see themselves as part of the collective of perpetrators. At the center of this memorial practice is the acceptance of responsibility for the crimes committed under National Socialism. By relying on the authenticity of the memorial site's location, and on the scholarly and sober public representation of this guilt – which strains to achieve objectivity –, the places of memory are meant to play the role of symbols for guilt and shame. This provocative self-stigmatization as successors to the perpetrators not only emphasizes German guilt, but also that the community has been damaged through this guilt. Instead of covering up this damage, it is ostentatively turned outward and interpreted as an obligation to learn from the past and take responsibility for it. This leads to a reversal of the meaning of the places of memory. The burden of memory is transformed into an opportunity to create new political values and a collective identity. This mode of identity construction can be deemed innovative to the extent that it focuses in a reflexive fashion on the issue of the recent German past, making this concern a lasting one which requires that German guilt be a permanent focus of attention. Thus, guilt as a motivating factor for memorial practice does not get pushed into the background, but rather remains on stage, without, however, disturbing the further course of the play of German national identity. Much like the discourse of being deeply and personally affected, and in contrast to the discourse of breaking with the past, this discourse is not based on an essential differentiation between past and present. Instead, the discourse of working through the past pursues a logic of confronting the issues of the past, which closely intertwines a positive self-image and negative disturbance.

[21] This discourse could also be termed the "discourse of coping" ("*Bewältigungsdiskurs*").

The fact that this study has distinguished between discourses of being deeply and personally affected by the past, of breaking with the past, and of working through the past bears significance beyond the memorial sites discussed here. The German federal government's active involvement in the cases of the "Topography of Terror", the "Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe", and the Dachau concentration camp memorial site demonstrates that in the political sphere it has become common knowledge that the discourses of being deeply and personally affected and of working through the past, far from casting doubt on the existence of a national identity, in fact are suitable means of effectively accentuating and representing national identity with far-reaching effects. This has not always been the case for the Federal Republic of Germany. It is often said that the 'Kohl era' tended to prefer to "draw the line", no matter whether it was the case of the historians' dispute (*Historikerstreit*), the Berlin *Neue Wache* or the 'Bitburg affair' (Augstein 1989; Till 1999; Bergmann 1995). In reaction to this "politics of forgetting", in the 1980s and 90s a new political field termed the politics of memory came into being within which, as part of a continuously changing mixture of deep personal concern and the need to work though the past, the issue of Germany's past was confronted. This study has shown that this problem cannot be solved and that it should not be solved lest it loses its power to shape and generate German identity. By means of the politics of memory, Germany's problem with its past is made less virulent and is directed into more productive paths, thus becoming a positive force.

In this way, within the last twenty years, processes through which the past is confronted have taken center stage and have become a medium for the collective generation of meaning. The discourses of being deeply and personally affected by the past and of working through the past, thus do not rely on a logic of separating or distinguishing the German present in a positive sense from the negative event of the Holocaust. Edgar Wolfrum appears to have had something along these lines in mind when he spoke of a "contrastive reference to the National Socialist past we have overcome " (Wolfrum 1998: 5), a stance he claimed characterized the Federal Republic of Germany. Michael Schwab-Trapp has argued that "only through the first attempt to distinguish themselves from National Socialism did both of its successor states [anchor] the legitimacy of their respective political orders " (Schwab-Trapp 2001: 233). This is certainly the case for the 1950s and 60s in the Federal Republic, as well as for the

German Democratic Republic (GDR). In the 1950s, according to Detlef Siegfried, National Socialism served “as a ‘negative utopia’, as a ‘fundamental crime’, against the backdrop of which each state’s history distinguished itself as a story of success and compensation” (Siegfried 2000: 109f.). Then, in the 1960s, writes Siegfried, “[i]n particular for parts of the younger generation a distancing from National Socialism [was] a basic axiom of their self-definition“ (Siegfried 2000: 110). Thus, during both decades, a radical differentiation started to develop on the part of the present in reaction to the past. Very much in the sense of the discourse of breaking with the past, in these forms of self-assurance the past disappeared behind the present. Nonetheless, these are not to be regarded as attempts to establish forms of memorial practice. Since the 1980s things have changed in this respect; since that point it has been a matter of posing the present itself as a problem, then linking it to the past by means of symbols, thereby establishing forms of memorial practice. The discourses of being deeply and personally affected by the past and of working through it strive to achieve just that, albeit in different ways.

The institutionalization of memorial practice within the political sphere, however, seems to have had a paradoxical effect. Now that there is more memorial practice, the most recent developments suggest that its meaning within the realm of politics has decreased. The memory of the crimes committed under National Socialism still affected almost every political debate up until the 1990s. Since that time, their significance seems to be limited to debates within the field of the politics of memory. If in 1991 the German past still presented an argument against the country’s participation in the Gulf War, in the weighing of the pros and cons of German military action in the Balkan War the acknowledgement of Germany’s responsibility for crimes in World War Two served as an indication of Germany’s particular responsibility to become engaged there (Schwab-Trapp 2001). This argument, borrowed from the discourse of working through the past, is today no longer present in the political discourse. The discussion of German military action in Afghanistan was pursued without recourse to references to the ‘Third Reich’ (Reinecke 2001; Heins 2002). The past has apparently retreated into the politics of memory. As long as the discourses of being deeply and personally affected by the past and of working through it are able to deal with the issue of the past within the realm

of the politics of memory, the issue of Germany's problem with its identity will not be posed in other political fields.

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