Maybe it's this feeling, the internationality, the cosmopolitanism, that brings people here, as well as the market because of its proximity to Eastern Europe. Berlin changed its geographical location, from the margins to the center of Europe. That is important for young people.

—Interview with spokesperson for Partners for Berlin, 2000
Hauntings, Memory, Place

Berlin is unlike every other city because it is new. There is so much construction and change going on now, and it won't be the case ten years from now.

—Interview with marketing company spokesperson for Partners for Berlin, 2000

The “New Berlin” represents the promise of Germany’s future. The unified national capital now includes sleek corporate buildings, a federal government district, new regional transportation and communication links, a renovated historic district, gentrified neighborhoods, urban parks and riverfronts, and a growing suburban ring. This cosmopolitan city of the twenty-first century is also an international cultural center, ranked above London in a recent Condé Nast Traveler magazine for its numerous symphonic orchestras, opera houses, choirs, galleries and museums, theaters, alternative art scene, and buildings designed by internationally famous architects. “With 3.5 million inhabitants, Berlin has as many theaters as Paris and more symphony orchestras than London, both metropoles of some 10 million inhabitants and contenders for the title of Europe’s cultural capital.”

Just as the New Berlin has been given a radiant material form through buildings and districts designed by world-famous architects, so places and landscapes throughout the contemporary city embody new Berlins imagined in the past and historic Berlins imagined today. As the capital of five different historical Germanys, Berlin represents the “unstable optic identity” of the nation—for it is the city where, more than any other city, German nationalism and modernity have been staged and restaged, represented and contested. Berlin is a city that cannot be contained by marketing representations of time, of the “new.” It is a place with “heterogeneous references, ancient scars,” a city that “create[s] bumps on the smooth utopias” of its imagined futures. Even the marketing
images that now adorn city billboards to promote the New Berlin as a cosmopolitan beauty queen, surrounded by corporate power and wealth and bejeweled by cultural icons, are haunted by former hopes for the future of Weimar, National Socialist, and Cold War Berlins.⁵

While Berlin may be unusual in Europe because of the sheer scale of construction and renovation that has occurred since 1990, it remains distinctive because of the array of places that have been (re)established that convey both the desires and fears of returning to traumatic national pasts. The specters of the past are felt in the contemporary city when groups or individuals intentionally or unexpectedly evoke ghosts, such as when they plan and market another “new” Berlin, identify artifacts and ruins as culturally significant, “discover” and mark formerly deserted landscapes as historic, claim a national heritage and dig for past cities, establish museums and memorials, or visit places of memory through tours.⁷ Even postunification urban landscapes continue to be defined by presences from the recent past. Recently built corporate buildings and consumer spaces designed by internationally known architects, including O. M. Ungers, Philip Johnson, and Aldo Rossi, characterize Germany’s aspirations toward being a “normal” European nation-state⁶ and are squarely located at sites of former East–West Bloc confrontation: Potsdamer Platz, Friedrichstraße, and Checkpoint Charlie. The glimmering Daimler-Benz and Sony towers in the center of the city at Potsdamer Platz grew out of the former “death strip” between the two Berlin Walls—a no-man’s-land that existed as a result of the trauma of National Socialism.⁹

Historic Berlins are also part of the new city; some places that once existed in the distant past have been proposed for reconstruction after unification, such as the
Hohenzollern City Palace. A newly reconstructed city palace would satisfy nostalgic longings for royal (i.e., pre-Nazi) European pasts previously denied to the Cold War Germanys but would necessitate the erasure of other pasts, in particular the demolition of the East German Palace of the Republic, a former government and cultural center. Other new “historic” places proposed before unification, such as the German Historical Museum, were established under the former Kohl administration to ameliorate that national trauma, to “master” the past and promote a positive understanding of German identity. Now located in the historic district near the museum island, the postunification historical institution is housed in the Prussian armory building, or Zeughaus—the same place where the East German Museum for History was located only years earlier—with a new extension designed by I. M. Pei. At the same time that these places are being made to contain undesirable pasts, a cosmopolitan memory of the Holocaust has become hypervisible in the center of the city. An emerging memory district will soon be completed near the new federal district and corporate skyscrapers at Potsdamer Platz that will include the Jewish Museum (designed by Daniel Libeskind); the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (designed by Peter Eisenman); and the Topography of Terror International Documentation Center projected to be finished in 2008 (designed by Peter Zumthor). These new, yet historic and commemorative, places communicate
conflicting social desires—to remember and to forget violent national pasts that still linger in the present.

Much has been written about Germany’s attempt to master the National Socialist past (Vergangenheitsbewältigung) and about the controversial politics of memory in Berlin.\textsuperscript{12} In these works the city, as well as place more generally, is treated as a stage on which the drama of history—represented as contested negotiations between key political figures, historians, philosophers, and artists—is performed.\textsuperscript{13} But places are never merely backdrops for action or containers for the past. They are fluid mosaics and moments of memory, matter, metaphor, scene, and experience that create and mediate social spaces and temporalities.\textsuperscript{14} Through place making, people mark social spaces as haunted sites where they can return, make contact with their loss, contain unwanted presences, or confront past injustices.

This book focuses on the practices and politics of place making, and how those practices mediate and construct social memory and identity by localizing personal emotions and defining social relations to the past. It explores how particular places of memory narrate national pasts and futures through the spaces and times of a city that is itself a place of social memory. Berlin is a place haunted with landscapes that simultaneously embody presences and absences, voids and ruins, intentional forgetting and painful remembering.\textsuperscript{15} If the Holocaust and its memory still stand as a test case for humanist and universal claims of Western civilization,\textsuperscript{16} one might argue that these place-making
processes in Berlin are central symbolic and material sites of the crisis of modernity, uniquely embodying the contradictions and tensions of social memory and national identity in the late twentieth century and the early twenty-first.

The places of memory I explore in this book were made to confront and contain the lingering legacies of a violent national history. But each embodies a different narrative of the past and imagined future. All were controversial: the Topography of Terror International Documentation Center, the Bavarian Quarter memorial, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, a proposed memorial called Bus Stop!, the Jewish Museum, and Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp Memorial Museum. Each was established or proposed before reunification, and each was subsequently relocated in the space-times of the New Berlin after 1990. While these memorial, museal, artistic, and educational sites may be interpreted in a number of ways, the controversial debates that accompanied their making point to the distinct ways that Germans continue to negotiate their contradictory feelings of being haunted by a dark national past in the present. The stories about them indicate how dominant understandings of place may simultaneously constrain, direct, and enable the mourning and commemorative practices of a nation.

When people feel personally and culturally haunted by the past, they may evoke ghosts by making places that commemorate, question, remember, mourn, and forget. According to Avery Gordon, the ghost is a social figure through which something lost can be made to appear before our eyes, a way of coming to know the traumas that accompany modern life, even though those traumas may be socially repressed.17 One way people make ghosts appear is by selectively remembering particular understandings of the past through place.18 As Steve Pile writes, "to haunt is to possess some place."19 Although places are understood to be materially real and temporally stable, that is, they give a spatial "fix" to time, their meanings are made and remade in the present. Places are not only continuously interpreted; they are haunted by past structures of meaning and material presences from other times and lives.20

Places of memory are created by individuals and social groups to give a shape to felt absences, fears, and desires that haunt contemporary society. Traditionally national places of memory were created and understood as glorifying the pasts of "a people."21 But such places are also made today to forget: they contain and house disturbing absences and ruptures, tales of violence. Places of memory both remember pasts and encrypt unnamed, yet powerfully felt, absences—absences that might be considered modernity's ghosts of the nation. People speak of historic sites as eyewitnesses to the past or describe landscapes as original artifacts and traces (Spuren) from another time; they believe that by visiting these places they can experience, and perhaps work through, their contradictory emotions associated with feeling haunted by the past, including fear, anger, guilt, shame, sadness, longing, and unease. By representing places in these ways, people create social spaces defined by contemporary needs and desires; they emplace their social dreams and hopes for the future.

When people make places of memory, they often give evoked ghosts a spatial form through landscape.23 Through the material authority of a landscape and the metaphor of archaeology, a particular understanding of the past is believed to be uncovered and
made visible. Simon Schama writes that some myths about landscape endure through the centuries, functioning like a “ghostly outline... beneath the superficial covering of the contemporary” and accessed by “digging down through layers of memories and representations toward the primary bedrock.”24 The archaeological metaphor is often used to give a spatial form to the past: it locates time in neatly defined vertical layers. Representing place as an archaeological site, an unchanging, materially embodied past, is a discursive-material practice: the past is organized and structured through place to create a chronotope, or time-space formation, through which contemporary narrations and performances of subjectivity and authority are inscribed.25 People believe that a deep underlying “essence,” an unchanging reality from the past, exists underneath the sedimented layers of history. But as they dig, the past becomes a ghostlike presence. The past is never settled, sedimented, neatly arranged in horizontal layers. Similarly, places do not have an essential set of qualities resulting from an internalized history, even though we may construct them to function in this way. Places are unique due to the lingering imprints of particular interactions that transpire: “nowhere else does this precise mixture occur.”26 But those same imprints and interactions will result in new (and often unexpected) spatial, social, and temporal effects.

Places of memory give a shape to that which is metaphysically absent through material and imagined settings that appear to be relatively permanent and stable in time. According to Walter Benjamin, memory is the “scene” (Schauplatz) of the past as well as “the medium of what has been experienced the way the earthen realm is the medium in which dead cities lie buried.”27 As the scene of the past, social memory and its outcomes are fluid and changing with the needs of the present. A scene implies making

Topography of Terror, 2002.
particular actions, actors, and events visible by situating them, giving them a context. *Schauplatz* in the German also refers to the place from which one can see and be seen, a location imbued with power relations. For Benjamin, memory is not just information that individuals recall or stories being retold in the present. It is not layered time situated in the landscape. Rather, memory is the self-reflexive act of contextualizing and continuously digging for the past through place. It is a process of continually remaking and re-membering the past in the present rather than a process of discovering objective historical "facts."

And yet there is always a tension when marking absence and loss, longing and desire. Representation is impossible without the play of the trace, of absence and presence, of stories told and not told. In Berlin, it was precisely the question of what ghosts should be invoked, what pasts should be remembered and forgotten, and through what forms, that led to heated public debates over what and where these places of memory *should be*. People made memorials, created historical exhibitions, dug up the past, and went on tours to represent, confront, and ignore a violent national past and to define and forge possible national futures. They made places as open wounds in the city to remind them of their hauntings and to feel uncomfortable. And while these places of memory gained authority as landscape markers from the past, they were nonetheless powerful as places of memory because they were also traces of the future. Traces from the past are constructed as "figures strained toward the future across a fabled present, figures we inscribe because they can outlast us, beyond the present of their inscription." The promise of a resurrected past through symbols and material objects gives us hope. For some, it is a promise of redemption.

As a geographer and ethnographer, I am intrigued by the ways people construct places to narrate time and embody the past and future. I am interested in the stories people tell about the places they make. As Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard surmise, without those stories, places are empty. "Through stories about places, they become inhabitable. Living is narrativizing." In this book, I use different narratives and representational forms to tell stories about places of memory and to retell the stories about place making that Berliners, Germans, and Americans described while I conducted research (through interviews, informal conversations, and printed documents). My research approach—what I call a geo-ethnography—draws from qualitative and feminist traditions in ethnography, and from critical and humanities traditions in geography. It is an approach that focuses on why people make places to create meaning about who and where they are in the world, and how, in the process of place making, they communicate feelings of belonging and attachment.

Central to the ways that people create meaning about themselves and their pasts is how they expect places to work emotionally, socially, culturally, and politically. How do people make places to delimit and represent time (past, present, and future)? How, in turn, do those places define social relations? Often a dominant set of culturally place-based practices—what Linda McDowell calls "regimes of place"—comes to define how people think about a place's location, social function, landscape form and aesthetics, about international commemorative display, and even personal experiential qualities.
But those regimes of place may be questioned during times of social and political transition. When practices at one locale are challenged, understandings of how places are supposed to work elsewhere (locally, in the city, nationally, or even internationally) may be disputed. During times of social change, people may wish to return to the past and search for a mythic self through place making as a means of confronting inherited legacies of national violence that haunt and influence their everyday lives. Their place-making activities and stories teach an important lesson, one that Shakespeare and Freud knew all too well: we must learn to take our ghosts seriously.

**Hauntings: Of Places and Returns**

I remember when I decided to become an educator in this field the fear I had when I began to look through archival materials. I kept searching through the documents, and especially the photos. It is an awful feeling not knowing whom you might find. I remember studying each photo, looking for the image of my father or uncle.

*—Interview with German seminar leader and tour guide for the Memorial Museum of German Resistance, 1992*

What does it mean to say that the spaces of the nation are haunted or that ghosts are evoked through the process of place making? How do social hauntologies and personal hauntings intersect? Often unexpectedly, many of us feel the presence of ghosts in our
everyday lives. Ghosts are real and imagined, intensely personal and emotive, and haunt our social spaces when we are open to their presence.\textsuperscript{37} Not only do individuals feel haunted by the past; they sometimes feel the need to be haunted.

Being haunted involves the desire and repetitive practice of returning to a past time and self that never was. People create homes for their ghosts through telling stories about places and returning to the places that haunt them.\textsuperscript{38} Returning to places that haunt our imaginations folds and warps imagined times and selves (past, present, and future), yet the ritual practice of returning creates a sense of temporal continuity and coherence. When someone goes back home (and each of us may have many homes), he or she may experience such vivid memories that it may appear (even if only momentarily) as though the place and the person returning are exactly the same as they once were. Time stands still. Such moments are actually quite rare, but it is in pursuit of those moments and rediscovering the emotions tied to them that individuals engage in such pilgrimages.\textsuperscript{39}

When we return to a place, remember an experience in a place, and perform a rendition of the past through a place, we may feel haunted by that which appears not to be there in material space but is, in fact, a powerful presence.\textsuperscript{40} When people speak of ghosts, they use a metaphor to describe their feelings of being haunted. As de Certeau describes, "there is no place that is not haunted by many different spirits hidden there in silence, spirits one can ‘invoke’ or not."\textsuperscript{41} He argues that people can only live in haunted places, where, to quote T. S. Eliot, "Time past and time future / What might have been and what has been / Point to one end, which is always present.” People set aside ruins, wastelands, or fragments as belonging to some other time and protect them as places that are haunted and somehow lost or stuck in the temporalities of the present. Through place making, people try to contain the past.

But even these places are haunted by our social needs in the present. Dydia DeLyser argues that one reason people make and go to ghost towns is because they can see what they want to see about the past, believe what they already know is true about the American West or about themselves as Americans.\textsuperscript{43} From a secure place in the present moment, people create places as eyewitnesses to the past. They may preserve ruins. They may archive documents. They may exhibit artifacts. They try in some way to give a form to the past and to their feelings of being haunted. In so doing, they engage in social memory, an ongoing process whereby groups map understandings of themselves onto and through a place and time.

Material remnants haunt our imaginations and performances by materializing social relations. We collect and make photographs, buildings, scrapbooks, films, archives, memorials, tourist pilgrimage routes, and other artifacts to document and save the past, as outcomes and sites of memory.\textsuperscript{44} Through the juxtaposition, interpretation, and representation of these sites in the cultural spaces of their production, we try to localize meaning about what we think the past is. Marita Sturken argues that the outcomes of memory are always entangled with the very technologies and processes of their production.\textsuperscript{45} But why the obsession with material traces? Individuals and groups may try to validate their recollections and their myths of self through an anxious saturation of “bygone reliquary details, reaffirming memory and history in tangible format.”\textsuperscript{46} Although we may think
the past exists, without textualized and material remains we may feel uncertain about the "reality" of the past.

People become obsessed with material remnants because the past is a fiction: what remains are memories that are defined by our mourning for that which can no longer be present.\textsuperscript{47} We try to preserve memory by creating traces of a past that by definition can never be present. When places are made and understood in this way, their perceived material or emotive presence may seem comforting in the present moment because they are interpreted as giving the past a material form. Euclidean science tells us moderns that no two things can be simultaneously in the same location; hence place has come to signify a fixed quality, of being situated, of locational and temporal stability.\textsuperscript{48} We often assume that these rules of located site also apply to time. Because we think of places as stable, we often understand them as having a timeless quality.

However, if the past is a construction, if our understandings of time change with our needs in the present, then what is being made? Why do people spend so much energy giving the past a form through place making? When people make places as stable sites that materially embody the past, they are attempting to give form to their search for a mythic self, a coherent, timeless identity. Moreover, in the process of locating and mapping the past through place, social groups and individuals give a shape to their desire to be connected to that which is no longer metaphysically present, but that which continues to have an important presence in their contemporary lives.

Personal and social memory are experientially punctuated and fragmented and reflect the needs and desires of individuals in the present. When people remember the past, they are physically located in contemporary social and spatial contexts;\textsuperscript{49} through the experience of being in certain kinds of places, they may wish to (re)imagine the past and themselves. Memories are unexpectedly triggered by smells, songs, stories, people, travels, and places. When in the presence of a familiar place, recollections may cascade back, mixed with imagination, hopes for the future, and desires for knowing a "true" self. When individuals "go back home," they go to a place because they feel a need to visit a familiar past. One visits a childhood home or school or returns to a well-known neighborhood in a city; these places become thresholds through which an individual may experience intense memories that become fleeting moments of returning, reexperiencing, remembering.

Stories about the self are always situated; they have a particular time and place.\textsuperscript{50} People may find comfort in at least believing that the places to which they return are more or less unchanged, for they house experiences and memories from and about other times through their materiality and spatialities. Yet every return also includes those confusing and shocking moments when the places are not the same as the places so fondly remembered: the twenty-story-high building in one's mind is really only three stories high, the expansive wooded lake is actually a small pond, one's childhood hiding place is just a small bush. Equally shocking are those moments when a place from one's childhood memory is no longer there, like the neighborhood dairy in my hometown—with its small pasture, cows, and drive-through milk pickup under the giant plaster cow—that had become a parking lot and minimall when I returned home.
for a visit from college one summer. In these moments, the sense of time and decay is nostalgic, reminding us of our own lives: ‘‘Oh yes, that’s where the old cinema used to be,’ we say, or ‘do you remember, that’s where those houses were all squatted, before they were pulled down.’’

When people tell stories and fictions about their pasts, they also constitute places as significant contexts and as actors that define who they are and who they may become. Returns narrate time yet are not placed in time. Returns narrate self yet remind us that there are many selves. Elizabeth Wilson suggests that when one returns to a city in which one has lived for a long time or has often visited, that person is not only aware that he or she is returning to a place that has changed since last visited (for most know that cities are in continual change); one is also aware that one is returning as a different person. A person is someone else when returning but may want to remember what it was like to be the person that once lived in that city. Visiting past places brings a sense of nostalgia for the past and for past selves.

Sometimes, through the ritual of returning, one may experience a transformative moment and confront personal and social hauntings. This may be true when one returns to familiar place-times to which one has affective attachments but has neither experienced nor visited in person. Through memories of listening to stories of parents and grandparents, watching films, looking at old photographs, engaging or making art, or visiting places that have special personal or cultural meaning, people evoke social ghosts that communicate yet other people’s past experiences. Those ghosts are familiar through the images and stories that circulate in the popular imagination as well as in families. Through these encounters, through these returns, the past is not defined by recollections of “firsthand” knowledge but rather creatively imagined through the reconstructions and repetitive viewings of images, stories, and other representations by second or later generations.

Marianne Hirsch and Andrea Liss use the term “postmemory” to indicate the process whereby knowledge about past events, and in particular violent pasts, is mediated through the circulation of representations of other people’s memories in popular domains. Second, third, and future generations may seek to bridge their experiential distance to an “empirical” past (History) through familiar images and stories and in the process may feel closer to that past or even their ancestors through imaginative space and postmemorial practice. They may also embark on pilgrimages, sometimes to places that are social symbols of trauma for their cultural nation or contemporary era, such as Auschwitz or Hiroshima. They “return” to a place that is known to them through representation (popular films, narratives, family stories). Often individuals who go on a pilgrimage will upset the sacred image known through their imaginations, for the experience of visiting a place may disturb their ideal of what the place should be or, even worse, the emotional attachments they believe they should have in the presence of a sacred past/site haunted by ancestral ghosts. In the documentary film Peace of Mind coproduced by Israeli and Palestinian teens, for example, Bushra, a Palestinian woman living in a West Bank refugee camp, travels to what was once Iraq al-Manshivyya, the ancient homeland of her family’s village. Her family instructs her to “see everything,”
to visit the tomb of a holy man, and to bring back soil from this sacred place. The stories of village elders depict a rich and fruitful land, an imagined future for a Palestinian nation-state. Bushra travels to this place, now an Israeli neighborhood called Qiryat Gat, to find a deserted area and destroyed tomb. As she looks at the site not knowing how to respond, one of her film coproducers, an Israeli youth, awkwardly states, “At least it is still there.” Past and present collide. This is not the homeland she had imagined. Bushra prays at the site and brings back the sacred soil for her family and elders but remains silent about her experiences.

Postmemorial returns like Bushra’s are motivated by an intense desire to know who one is. But there are no answers. Nothing can be recovered because the past one attempts to visit is haunted by someone else’s ghosts and secrets, even as those ghosts continue to haunt and define social spaces of belonging and attachment. Such returns are different from returns to places associated with personally experienced pasts, for the former is a quest to make a connection to past lives, and the latter (re)constitutes traumatic recall. In traumatic recall, individuals compulsively repeat acts, repress the memories of what happened, or create multiple stories of what happened to continue living an ordinary life in the present.\(^7\) Being in a place where one experienced violent events may cause a person to relive memories of one’s pasts, even if only for a moment. Rearticulating what happened through narrative form may be too difficult for some individuals due to the intensity of the event(s) experienced, such as the horrific events associated with the Holocaust.\(^8\) In these instances, people may make places to supplant narrative and locate their loss. They return to emplace their traumatic memories of the past and relive part of that past as a little death in the present.\(^9\)

These (post)memories and returns, created by and forming personal and social hauntings, are thus always spatially situated. As such the practices of place making may be one way that people work through trauma. As phenomenologist Edward Casey describes, “To be embodied is *ipso facto* to assume a particular perspective and position; it is to have not just a point of view but a *place* in which we are situated. It is to occupy a portion of space from out of which we both undergo given experiences and remember them.”\(^10\) Through performance and cultural reenactment, an individual may use his or her body to communicate memories of the past, to connect with the dead, to confront guilt or anger, and to work through past traumas in the present. Sonja Kufinec, for example, describes how place-based theater in the war-torn and haunted streets of Mostar, Bosnia, has helped youth of different ethnic groups to work through fear, hate, and grief.\(^11\) They theatrically enacted their memories of a place, their longings for a past that no longer exists, in the context of a conflict-ridden present. The actors and audiences of this theater had to confront their own realities of a haunted present by moving through divided territories and urban spaces to enact and witness the performance. Through these artistic sites, the performers and audience created new spaces through which to experience their pasts and remade personal attachments to the places they called home.

Individuals perform their identities in particular places and through their bodies; by acting, speaking, dressing, and interacting in certain ways at different locales, they cite who it is they are supposed to be.\(^12\) In so doing they create bodies/places through which
they experience, remember, and imagine the world, and through which they fashion an identity. While each person is physically and socially embodied in distinct ways, through routine and repetitive actions a person situates himself or herself in social spaces. Through those repetitive acts, each may experience a reassuring (or distressing) fiction: it is the fiction of the self, that there is some coherent person underneath all of their confusing actions (past and present), that there is someone that remains at least in some respects more or less the same. It is a fiction, of course, because a person is always a different self with each return and with every performance, a self styled according to specific needs and the particular contexts of the present moment.

Memory-Work and the Politics of Memory

As a professional planner, I know that you need a transparent and structured process of planning if you want to have results. This process has had to be open and inclusive of new findings. The debates [about the Holocaust Memorial] have to continue, and many people should participate in them.... This sensibility is especially important when memory is built, when cultural values are represented.

—Interview with Günter Schlusche, urban planner and Holocaust Memorial Foundation building coordinator, 2001

Cultural practices of social memory take place and define a public space through which groups debate their understandings of the past and contemporary social relationships to that past. This planner emphasized that “memory is built,” that its forms are negotiated rather than inherent to a place. To establish a memorial, for example, a society agrees to set aside a parcel of land, build a social site for ritual and tourism, sculpt an aesthetic form, name a place, and inscribe what and who is to be remembered and in whose name. This open and inclusive process in Berlin is, for Schlusche, not only a critical part of constituting the cultural and political meanings of a controversial place of memory (in this case, the Holocaust Memorial); it also creates a public realm, a “sensibility,” that inscribes what a democratic nation and its citizens should be.

The legacies of National Socialism in contemporary Germany continue to be negotiated through parliamentary debate, media representations, public art competitions, tourism, and popular protest actions. This negotiated “politics of memory” (Erinnerungspolitik) narrates national and transnational belonging through the practices of foreign policy decisions, legal institutions, educational reform, party politics, and place making. In this book, I focus on the establishment of public places of memory that call attention to the inherent contradictions of remembering the period of National Socialism, mourning the aftermath of the Holocaust, and claiming a democratic nation in the so-called land of the perpetrators. That these places of memory remain controversial years after reunification demonstrates just how politically fraught national imaginaries in Germany continue to be, despite—or more likely because of—the increasing temporal
distance between contemporary German society and its National Socialist past. In his comments about the proposed Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, for example, Jerzy Halbersztadt, the director of the Museum of Polish Jews in Warsaw, stated that the memorial may have “national importance” but will not be critical for (international) Jewish memory because the historic sites of the Shoah are far more significant. Halbersztadt reminds us that social memory and place-making activities tell us more about the people building a memorial than the peoples and pasts being commemorated.

Two social place-making practices in particular were critical to the establishment of all the places described in this book: public art competitions and citizen actions. In Germany, public art competitions are a venue through which federal and local officials, city elite, experts (historians, artists, art historians, and others), and citizens negotiate how to represent the histories and legacies of National Socialism and the Holocaust. The Association of Artists and Architects and other urban planning and architecture organizations formally administer these competitions, and expert juries evaluate the projects submitted by artists and architects. These competitions are often expensive, take a long time, and are highly politicized. But they are also interpreted by many politicians, social groups, and citizens as an important part of the democratic process. In Berlin, when competitions are not held, people become suspicious of the political motives of a project, and media debates, public controversies, and popular protests often ensue.

During the 1970s and 1980s in West Berlin, a distinctive culture for public art competitions emerged: they were used to explore and discuss different possibilities for memorials as a type of place, and to rethink the possibilities of using art to create public spaces that would encourage residents and visitors to remember and question the past.

Another way that the past was negotiated through the places discussed in this book was through the activist work of citizen groups, survivors’ groups, human rights activists, historians, artists, politicians, and others. These groups and individuals called attention to the ways that political figures and elite normalized the histories of state-perpetrated violence after World War II. By the 1980s and 1990s, many grassroots initiatives remapped urban topographies and uncovered past terrains and pathways of power that had intentionally been silenced and forgotten by public officials. In Berlin, a number of individuals and social groups used landscape practices to communicate their understanding of the social responsibilities of being German in the present and future. Rather than deny or encrypt past losses, these citizen groups, artists, social groups, and politicians gave a form to what they called the “wounds” of their nation. They engaged in a critical process of memory-work by acknowledging what was forgotten, what was not seen, what was lost in the process of remembering and constructing the past.

Memory-work (*Erinnerungsarbeit*), a term used by many memory experts with whom I spoke, is the process of working through the losses and trauma resulting from past national violence and imagining a better future through place. It is a powerful, albeit difficult, way to live with the ongoing presence of modernity’s ghosts. Artists as well as citizens have made “haunting reminders” in their everyday settings to acknowledge their social responsibility for the past, as well as remember the remarkable lives that constitute their social world. They make places to which they can return to confront
what it means to feel haunted as German citizens at the same time that they explore new possibilities for thinking about and representing national belonging in the future.

**Two Moments—die Wende—and the Chapters to Come**

It was simply too painful to remember the significance of Berlin and its historic buildings following the war. . . . “Historic” buildings were removed to forget about the past and boxlike buildings were erected to reflect the modernism of the day. Now the reverse is true. People [today] are sad that so many buildings were destroyed and blown up during and after the war, and so historic preservation exists in an exaggerated form in Berlin.

—Interview with public relations staff member of German Historical Museum, 1991

During times of political and social transition, taken-for-granted meanings and social functions of places may be questioned. As spatial and temporal contexts change, so do the possibilities for place making and memory-work. Two such moments of transition and social instability punctuate the place-making activities described in this book. The media, scholarly accounts, and citizens’ everyday speech referred to these moments as **die Wende**, quite literally the change or turn. People would talk about their jobs, homes, or nation in terms of before or after the change (**vor** or **nach der Wende**) to indicate how
different their everyday worlds and spaces became as a consequence of these ruptures. Both transitions were accompanied by heated public debates about whether German national identity should be defined by contemporary acknowledgments of its responsibility for the Holocaust.

The first followed a period of social upheavals and violence in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG or West Germany) and was accompanied by a switch from a liberal Social Democratic Party (SPD) to a neoconservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) federal government administration headed by chancellor Helmut Kohl in the early 1980s. The second transition was German reunification in 1990. At the national and local scales, both moments were recognized as significant turning points that created new social spaces. These two moments of transition were defined by changes in international geopolitical relations. In response to die Wende, places of memory were proposed, remade, and questioned in ways that resulted in heated debates about belonging and citizenship in Berlin and Germany. Some people engaged in social returns to places and times where absences were previously entombed and pasts were selectively forgotten. Others made or proposed places as sites of resolution and redemption through which Germany could move toward a better future.

Although these transitions were relatively recent, they were premised on the changes that accompanied new social and geopolitical relations after World War II. In particular, the memory of Nazi crimes in the East legitimated the imposition of a second German dictatorship, whereas in the West, silence about the crimes of the Third Reich and German society was seen as necessary to establish a then fragile Western democracy. Jeffrey Herf argues that it was not until the 1960s and 1970s, during a time of social upheaval in West Germany, that political leaders and a significant part of the population in the Federal Republic came to argue that more memory and justice (rather than silence) were needed to build a stable democracy. This shift in political and popular relationships to the National Socialist past in the FRG resulted in the first Wende or time of transition. In West Germany, the long period of instability from the 1960s to 1970s, resulting from environmental, cultural, and political crises, civil unrest, and even domestic terrorism, led to social anxiety about the future and a perceived lack of German national identity. A number of places of memory were established in the 1980s to provide a sense of stability and continuity, such as the museums and memorials proposed by conservatives and officials in Berlin and Bonn who wanted to provide a positive image of German identity for younger generations. New kinds of places were also created during the 1980s as grassroots movements and artists throughout West Germany confronted the history of National Socialism through progressive educational centers, history workshop movements, neighborhood tours, and more radical projects. This emerging decentralized form of social memory explicitly questioned the politics and legitimacy of national (centralized) places proposed by state and federal officials.

In Berlin, the Topography of Terror was established in 1987 as a temporary exhibition, memorial site, and historic terrain located at the former Gestapo, SS, and Reich Security Service headquarters (chapters 3 and 4). It resulted from many years of intense debate, citizen initiative activism (at local, national, and international levels), and sup-
port by some politically left-leaning to liberal politicians, city elites, and historians. The Topography also opened at a time when there was interest and financial support for innovative cultural and historical programs in the city, and was one of many special projects and events celebrating Berlin's 750th anniversary. Although initially made as a temporary place of memory, the Topography of Terror became known as the "open wound of the city," a metaphor that reflects the history of activist memory-work and digging. This place embodies a decentralized culture of memory in its emphasis on the specificity of locale, commitment to a "postnational" politics, and insistence on returning to a traumatic national past in the spaces of a continuously interpreted present. Moreover, in contrast to defining citizens (or the public) as normal Europeans, the Topography of Terror represents Germany as a society of perpetrators. Through this site, the possibilities of a more democratic and humanitarian future are imagined.

The second transition, or Wende, was the collapse of the East-West geopolitical world system. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was quickly followed by unification, the establishment of Berlin as the national capital, and the relocation of the seat of government from Bonn to Berlin. Narratives of the self and of national belonging changed to accommodate the new territory, relative location, and political structures of the state. Because of Germany's divided history of working through the National Socialist past, after unification the legacy of two authoritarian regimes had to be confronted. Addressing these pasts meant returning to the so-called Jewish question. According to Herf, representations of the Holocaust in the two Germanys, and in particular of Jewish suffering, were tied explicitly to Cold War geopolitics that were in turn defined by selective restorations of anti- and non-Nazi traditions suppressed after 1933.73 These hauntings were materialized in the very creation of the New Berlin (chapters 2 and 6); the building of new places of memory, such as realized and proposed Holocaust memorials (chapter 5) or the innovative Jewish Museum (chapter 6); the remaking of existing places of memory, including the Topography of Terror in the former West (chapter 4) and Sachsenhausen Memorial Museum just outside Berlin in the former East (chapter 6); and the relocation of these new and existing places of memory in urban, national, and international commemorative spaces through new trends in public commemoration, such as Berlin's nascent memory district (chapter 6).

The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (hereafter the Holocaust Memorial) is a place of memory in the center of a new postunification landscape (chapter 5). Yet it is a contested field of West German public memory that did not include much participation from East German citizens.74 The debates about the memorial began before unification and continued after 1990 by predominantly West German citizen groups, politicians, memory experts, American and international experts, and representatives of the local and international Jewish community. Although a number of innovative artistic proposals were submitted through two public art competitions, the memorial design chosen reflects the project's history. It embodies aspects of West German public cultures of social memory, most notably the traditional Mahnen (admonishment) approach to national guilt that requires public ritual performances and aesthetic and emotive approaches of mourning for, and dismay toward, Jewish suffering in particular
(Betroffenheitskultur). To a lesser degree, it includes the more recent approach of confronting the past (Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit) through its new educational center. It is also defined by a cosmopolitan understanding of Holocaust memory that represents a global moral order according to the categories of good and evil. Through its symbolic location and monumental size in the center of the new capital, the memorial is intended to show shame at the same time that it signals Germany’s place as a democratic nation in a post–Cold War moral order.

By the late 1990s, this cosmopolitan Holocaust memory was given a new kind of visibility in the New Berlin through the emergence of a national memory district (chapter 6). The memory district will include the Jewish Museum, designed by Polish American architect Daniel Libeskind (who lived in Berlin for ten years and is now working on the World Trade Center site in New York); the Holocaust Memorial, designed by the American architect Peter Eisenman; and the future permanent center of the Topography of Terror, designed by the Swiss architect Peter Zumthor. While it is hard to know how the introduction of a memorial mall in the New Berlin will influence the existing national commemorative landscape, some experts are concerned that this new centralizing trend—which they associate with a global Holocaust industry and its easily consumed, popular representations of “the Holocaust”—will detract attention and cultural significance from the existing national decentralized network of authentic historic sites that emerged in the 1980s in West Germany. This network includes important sites of suffering and perpetration, such as Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp Memorial Museum, located just outside Berlin in the former East. For second- and third-generation educators, historians, directors, and citizen initiatives, such authentic historic sites are places where future generations should bear witness and confront the histories and consequences of National Socialism. The emergence of a memory district, as well as criticisms of it, raise important questions about the moral economies of (post)memory, authenticity, and Holocaust tourism at local, national, and international levels.

**Hauntings: Stories and Images**

Before the conference started, early in the morning I went to the special court [at Auschwitz]. . . . When I arrived, the cleaning lady was wiping the windows and dusting the gas chamber. That was the first thing I saw. The second thing I saw was an elderly lady who was a survivor from the United States. She herself was not in Auschwitz, but lost most of her family there. I saw this woman standing in front of the crematorium and approaching the oven. You could literally see how something formed in her throat, how she couldn’t breathe anymore. She gasped for air and then started crying. After she had cried she came closer to the ovens, touched them, looked through this hole, put her head in. She was no longer touching this oven as an instrument for murder, but touching it like
a shroud, like a thing that touched the dead in their last minutes of living.

You have this ambivalence in Israel and everywhere else where the context [of social memory] is dominated by the survivors. You have the ambivalence between the instrument of murder and the last thing of the beloved people. That is true for everything they exhibit in Washington [at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum]. Somehow you have that ambivalence. [pause] But where shall that come from in Germany?

—Interview with Hanno Loewy, director of the Fritz Bauer Research Institute, 1993

The process of selectively calling forth the dead and the past through place is one way individuals and groups try to fill absence and represent loss in the present. To talk about ghosts means to interrogate the reasons people feel haunted, or even feel the need to be haunted, in the present. It means to take affect seriously as a part of politics of place making, memory, and social identity.

To represent these complex social relationships, I have written and organized the narratives, images, and spaces of this book in somewhat unconventional ways. Because my research and writing spanned roughly a decade of time (1992–2003), I did not want to create an artificial narrative coherence defined by an ethnographic present. My voice changes in this book in ways that reflect my shifting positionalities (as geographer, ethnographer, and humanities scholar; as student, “Frau Doktor,” and tourist; as a young woman, American of German ethnic descent, and adopted Berliner) in the different times and places in which I lived, researched, and wrote this book.25 I have also written the book in a way that I hope will make sense to scholars and students in various fields in the humanities and social sciences, as well as to memory experts and interested citizens. By attempting to speak to a broad audience, I wish also to question institutional academic and disciplinary boundaries that, while increasingly permeable, remain marked by distinct practices that legitimate certain narrative forms as “valid knowledge.”

The structure of the book reflects and questions the process of ethnographic research. First there are the formal chapters, beginning with this introductory chapter, and followed by another about the context of this study: memory in the New Berlin (chapter 2). I then explore the case studies (chapters 3 through 6) and end with a discussion of the memory district in the New Berlin (chapter 6). Between these chapters, interlude pieces, which loosely take the form of fieldnotes, work to connect chapters, undermine the narratives and claims to authority I make, or introduce new case studies. They are set off in a different font; I ask the reader to interpret my experiences and the significance of the everyday, the mundane, through these fieldnotes. The images in this book, including photographs, advertisements, and maps, also represent place differently than do my formal narratives. I ask the reader to think about how these images and texts work (or not) as sites of ethnographic authority (“I was there”), visual data, and postmemories.
Engaging in a geo-ethnography means to take ghosts seriously as a contradiction of social life.⁷⁶ One must talk and listen to those individuals who wish to connect their actions, feelings, dreams, desires, and social relationships in some way to past worlds through place. For this reason, I distinguish my words from those of the people I worked with and interviewed—memory experts including historians, preservationists, urban planners, city marketers, museum and memorial directors and exhibition authors, artists and architects, politicians, representatives of various victim and survivor groups, citizen initiatives, residents, tourists—even though I recognize the uneven power relations that accompany the performances of researching, writing, and editing. These ethnographic texts, set off by quotes or a different font, work as both evidence and fragment, words offered to the reader to suggest the multiple and nuanced ways people struggle with, confront, deny, and celebrate being German citizens and residents of Berlin. Their words have haunted me, my research, and how I wrote and revised this book.⁷⁷

The ghost is one way to make “the injustices of life walk amongst the living—a way of calling for justice.”⁷⁸ Through the process of conducting my research and working with numerous individuals and groups, I have learned that it is important to take our hauntings seriously.⁷⁹ By following ghosts, I have perhaps overemphasized place-making activities that advance progressive political agendas in this book. Americans, as well as citizens from other countries, have a lot to learn from the German experience, particularly in the contemporary political context of renewed aggression that defines a world order through exclusion and fear. Unless we consciously remember the ways that absences constitute the (violent) histories of nations, there will always be a gap, a willed amnesia, inherited phantoms that will continue to haunt.
Notes

A Fence

1. The full text reads: "Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe. Here is the place! When the German Bundestag can decide, after ten years of discussion the memorial will be built at this site in 1999/2000.—By the Federal Republic of Germany, the Association Supporting the Establishment of a Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe, and the city of Berlin." The Förderkreis zur Errichtung eines Denkmals für die ermordeten Juden Europas e.V. was the organization responsible for this and other posters. See chapter 5.

2. Under the equation, the text continues: "Since 1989 there has been public discussion about the construction, location, and design of a memorial for murdered Jews in this country of perpetrators. In 1999 the decision will be made [by the German Bundestag] concerning whether and how it should be built. Compensation payments and the construction of the memorial shall be the end of the discussion about responsibility for National Socialist crimes. We are opposed to this." The Initiativkreis gegen den Schlußstrich was responsible for this and other posters.

1. Hauntings, Memory, Place


3. Berlin was the capital of the first unified German nation-state (including Weimar
Germany), National Socialist Germany, the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), and now reunified Germany (Federal Republic).

4. In the discourse about the postunification city, the “new” is a contested term that I explore in chapter 2.


15. Compare Andreas Huyssen, “The Voids of Berlin.”


23. Compared to other European nation-states, Rudy Koshar suggests that Germany’s relationship to historic locales and landscapes as a site through which to imagine the nation has been particularly intense. Koshar, Germany’s Transient Pasts.


26. As geographer Doreen Massey argues, social relations always have a spatial form and content; they exist in and through place as well as across space (Space, Place, and Gender [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994], 168).

27. Walter Benjamin, Berliner Chronik, 486-87. I adopt Gerhard Richter’s translation of Benjamin. My readings of Benjamin owe much to discussions with Gerhard Richter, Rudy Koshar, Rick McCormick, and the graduate students in our fall 1999 memory seminar at the University of Minnesota and University of Wisconsin.


31. De Certeau and Giard, “Ghosts in the City,” 142.

32. See the section titled “Hauntings: Of Places and Returns” hereafter.


34. Linda McDowell, Gender, Identity, and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

35. Compare with Avery Gordon’s discussion of haunting in Ghostly Matters.

36. Derrida introduces the term “hauntology” in Specters of Marx to describe how contemporary social discourses, institutions, and cultural meanings are always already haunted by past structures of meaning. These presences, while not considered experientially part of
present-day "reality," nonetheless define the very possibility for that reality to exist. For a discussion of hauntology in Mostar, see Kufincec, "[Walking through a] Ghost Town."

37. Gordon, _Ghostly Matters_.


39. Compare Benjamin, _Berliner Chronik_.


41. De Certeau, "Walking in the City," 108.


47. Derrida, _Memoires for Paul de Man_.


49. After Maurice Halbwachs, _On Collective Memory_, ed. and trans. Lewis Coser (1941; 1952; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Although Halbwachs's work has been criticized for his implicit assumption of a Durkheimian collective consciousness, his work is important in contemporary scholarly discussions about memory because he explored how individual memory is socially and spatially constructed. For critiques, see J. Fentress and C. Wickham, _Social Memory_ (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992); Sturken, _Tangled Memories_; Charlie Withers, "Place, Memory, Monument: Memorializing the Past in Contemporary Highland Scotland," _Ecumene_ 3 (1996): 325–44.


53. Nostalgia is not always reactionary or politically regressive. With sentimentality, argues Elizabeth Wilson, nostalgia can bring an awareness and perhaps acceptance of change. Wilson, "Rhetoric of Urban Space"; see also Boym, _The Future of Nostalgia_.


55. See also Sturken, _Tangled Memories_.

56. ...


59. Compare Perlman, Imaginal Memory.

60. Edward Casey, Remembering: A Phenomenological Study, ed. James Edie, Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 182, italics in original. Casey distinguishes site (as a point in Cartesian space as well as relative location) from place but then uses a more traditional (and problematic) understanding of place: “It is the stabilizing persistence of place as a container of experiences that contributes so powerfully to its intrinsic memorability” (186).


66. Normally a jury of five or more individuals is created with two categories of expert jurors: Fachjuroren, who are experts in public art, art history, and architecture or are practicing artists and architects, and Sachjuroren, experts and representatives responsible for the project, such as city officials or citizen groups. For more about competitions in Berlin, see Strom, Building the New Berlin. For an interesting cultural commentary and critique of this process for the Holocaust Memorial, see Jochen Spielmann, “Der Prozeß ist genauso wichtig wie das Ergebnis: Fußnoten zu Kunst-Wettbewerben als Kommunikationsformen der Auseinandersetzung: London 1953—Oświęcim 1959—Berlin 1995,” in Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst, Der Wettbewerb für das ‘Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas: Eine Streitschrift (Berlin: Verlag der Kunst, NGbK, 1995), 128–45.

67. Such was the case with the establishment of the Neue Wache memorial. See Till, “Staging the Past.”

68. Interview with Stephanie Endlich, art historian and Berlin memory expert, 1998.

69. Gordon, Ghostly Matters, 25.

70. See Daphne Berdahl, Where the World Ended: Re-unification and Identity in the German BorderLand (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); John Borneman, Belonging in the Two Berlins: Kin, State, Nation (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Borneman, After the Wall; Dinah Dodds and Pam Allen-Thompson, eds., The Wall in My Backyard: East German Women in Transition (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994).

72. There was much debate, for example, about proposals to build a national history museum in Berlin. See Maier, The Unmasterable Past; Christoph Stölzl, ed., Deutsches Historisches Museum: Ideen-Kontroversen-Perspektiven (Berlin: Popylan, 1988); Till, Place and Politics.

73. Herf, Divided Memory.

74. Notable exceptions include Bruno Flierl and Wolfgang Thierse. See chapter 5.


76. Gordon, Ghostly Matters.

77. As a result of my conversations with people in interviews and informal settings, the ideas and feedback of particular people helped me focus my questions. Because I wrote and revised during a lengthy period of research, I often returned to my interview transcripts only to rediscover and interpret them again. I found myself drawn to familiar passages and words, to the insights of these consultants. In some instances, when I reread what people had to say, I remembered not only our conversations but also other interviews, other experiences, and other moments when I gained a better understanding of the processes of memory and place making in Berlin.


79. Otherwise, to use Jani Scandura’s and Michel Thurston’s words, “one brings the lost object into the self and encrypts it—buries it alive—refusing to mourn the loss, denying that anything ever was lost, that the self might ever have to transform as a result” (Modernism, Inc., 7). The authors are referring to Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok’s work on melancholia.

A Metro Stop

1. Open from 1995 to 2000, the INFOBOX housed exhibitions, gift shops, and views of the Potsdamer Platz area under construction. It displayed information about “man’s” technological feats: state-of-the-art transportation technologies, groundwater management techniques, and engineering feats in which “nature” was mastered, such as changing the direction of the Spree River. Investors in the new city center sponsored the exhibitions, including Daimler, Sony/ Tishman Speyer/Kajima, ABB + Terreno, Bewag, Deutsche Telekom, Deutsche Bahn, the Berlin Senate for Building, Housing, and Transportation, Mercedes, and A + T Investment Group. INFO BOX: The Catalogue (Berlin: Dirk Nishen, 1996).


2. The New Berlin