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Redefining Memorial Landscapes:
The Stolpersteine Project in Berlin

A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Science
Degree
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Matthew Russell Cook

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ABSTRACT

Geographers have long been interested in the ways that states and individuals use cultural landscapes to shape the meaning and understanding of the past. In this thesis, I argue that individuals and the state embed different interpretations of the Holocaust past in the German landscape. In particular, I focus on the German artist Gunter Demnig and his Stolpersteine (stumbling stones) Project as a case study of memorial projects created by an individual. The Stolpersteine are small memorial stones for a single Holocaust victim. The stones are installed in front of homes and businesses that were the last known location of the victim before deportation or murder by the Nazi regime. While the project began as a small art installation to memorialize Romany Holocaust victims in Cologne, the memorial stones are now installed for all victims of the Holocaust, including Jews, Roma, Sinti, the handicapped, homosexuals, political opponents, euthanasia victims, and others. I compare the Stolpersteine Project to three large Holocaust memorial projects in Berlin that were sponsored by the German government.

This project incorporates qualitative methods to research the ways that Demnig creates meaning in the landscape and to observe how people respond to the Stolpersteine. The findings provide insights into how cultural landscapes are produced and also contribute to the literature on landscape studies and memorial processes. I explain how the Stolpersteine fit into the broader context of Holocaust memorialization through an explanation of the scholarly debate on how to represent the Holocaust.

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Introduction

Gunter Demnig walks the streets of Berlin like a man on a mission. He doesn't usually stop to chat, but he will answer the occasional question in his soft-spoken timbre. Decked in his brown leather fedora, denim jacket, and thick pants despite the warm German summer drawing near, one might come to the conclusion that he is just another quirky Berliner. But they would be wrong.

The artist from Cologne always seems to do his work the same way, no matter what city he is visiting: Down on his right knee, tools off to one side, the occasional spectator or school group on the other. Demnig is on the road most of the year, 300 days in 2009 and 255 in 2010. Reaching in his jacket pocket for a cleaning rag, he polishes the small stone he has just finished installing in the sidewalk.

**HIER WOHNTE
MARION EHRLICH
JG. 1928
DEPORTIERT 29.11.1942
ERMORDET IN
AUSCHWITZ**

Here lived Marion Ehrlich. Born in 1928, deported on Nov. 29, 1942. Murdered in Auschwitz.

Another Stolperstein has been laid. Another victim of the Holocaust is now remembered.



Figure I. Stolperstein for Marion Ehrlich. Giesebrechtstraße, Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf, Berlin. Picture taken 14 May 2011.

Chapter 1 – Stumbling upon the Past: Gunter Demnig's Stolpersteine Project

This thesis studies the ways in which Germany's past is represented in the landscape through memorialization, focusing on Gunter Demnig's *Stolpersteine* [stumbling stones] Project. The Stolpersteine are small, 4-by-4 inch memorial stones placed in sidewalks in front of homes or businesses that were the last known location of Holocaust victims (see Figure I, previous page). The project has grown from a small art installation in Cologne to over 32,000 Stolpersteine in roughly 700 locations in Germany and surrounding countries.¹

Memorialization in Berlin, as is true for perhaps all of Germany, is highly contested: numerous authors describe contestations over the meaning, location, and cost of nearly every monument and memorial in the German capital (Young 1993, Ladd 1997, Wise 1998, Till 2005, Jordan 2006, Young 2000). One of the fiercest contestations concerns who and what should be memorialized. Germany began to memorialize victims of World War II almost immediately after the end of the war. However, it was not until the 1970s and 1980s that younger generations of Germans began to question the faceless and nameless memorials that often focused solely on the victims as groups or numbers rather than individual victims and perpetrators (Ladd 1997: 152-153). This period marked a major increase in the so-called *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* – the attempt to come to terms with the past.² *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* has continued in Germany to the present, as seen in the thousands of Holocaust and other war-related memorial sites around the country.

By researching Holocaust memorialization in Germany, I study how the landscape takes on meaning as a result of power relations between individuals and the state. I also examine how

¹ Email from Anna Warda, a coordinator for the Stolpersteine Project, 16 March 2011.

² *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* literally means coping or handling the past, but the literal translation does not incorporate the history associated with the term. In Germany, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* has meant the process of coming to terms with mistakes of the (implicitly Nazi) past, with the understanding that such a past can never be repeated.

contestations over representation shape people's understanding of the Holocaust by analysing the ways that people respond to the Stolpersteine. In this chapter, I will explain the historiographical and geographical framework that shapes my research, and then outline my research questions. Next, I will give a brief biography of Gunter Demnig before concluding with a chapter overview.

A Framework for Researching the Holocaust

In a section on the Holocaust for *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, Derek Gregory points out that geographers have paid little attention to the Holocaust. "It is strange that [the Holocaust] should have attracted so little analytical attention, even by Israeli historical geographers, not merely because the Holocaust 'had' a geography – it was distributed over space and varied from place to place... but more fundamentally because Geography as both discipline and knowledge was central to the project" (Gregory 2009: 337). Gregory notes that a few geographers have looked at the philosophical and historiographical dimensions of the Holocaust and have questioned the role of landscape and memory, but he argues that studying the Holocaust is "necessarily both an interdisciplinary and a comparative project" (ibid: 338).

Following Gregory's assertion that Holocaust research must be interdisciplinary, my research is situated at the intersection of historiography and geography. Historiography, as I will explain, is concerned with questions and debates about representation and interpretation of the past, how best to remember the past, and who should be responsible for remembering the past. Geography's role in my framework is to question how the historiography of the Holocaust is reproduced in the landscape and how understandings of the past are tied to place.

Historiography Framework

Hayden White, in his well-known essay on "Interpretation in History," explains the role of historiography in defining a history:

Theorists of historiography generally agree that all historical narratives contain an irreducible and inexpungeable (sic) element of interpretation. The historian has to *interpret his materials in order to construct the moving pattern of images in which the form of the historical process is to be mirrored*. And this because the historical record is both too full and too sparse. On the one hand, there are always more facts in the record than the historian can possibly include in his narrative representation of a given segment of the historical process. And so the historian must "interpret" his data by excluding certain facts from his account as irrelevant to his narrative purpose. On the other hand, in his efforts to reconstruct "what happened" in any given period of history, the historian inevitably must include in his narrative an account of some event or complex of events for which the facts that would permit a plausible explanation of its occurrence are lacking. ... A historical narrative is thus necessarily a mixture of adequately and inadequately explained events, a congeries of established and inferred facts (1973: 281, emphasis added).

White's explanation of historiography points to some of the questions that historiographical scholars attempt to answer in their research: How does a society or individual remember the past? What is the best way to remember or represent the past? And, most importantly for my research, who should ultimately be responsible for preserving the past? In this thesis, I will investigate this issue as a schism between the state and individuals. State-sponsored versions of the past are often ideological in nature, used to portray the state in a more positive light. The state may also attempt to use its history to attract tourism, in effect commodifying the past (for example, see Till 2005). These versions of history are enforced and reinforced through the state's hegemony. In contrast to the often generalizing nature of the state, individual versions of the past are often much more personal and specific.

Studying the history of the Holocaust, as is true for any genocide, is a difficult undertaking because it is an emotional subject and it is nearly impossible to grasp the extent of the atrocities committed. An estimated 13 million civilians, including 6 million Jews, were killed by the Nazi regime because of their ethnicity, political or religious beliefs, age, or sexual orientation. After more than 65 years since the end of World War II, a number as large as 13 million can still be difficult to grasp. Given the large number of victims, some individuals and social groups argue that attempts to

remember the Holocaust *must* be impersonal because of the absences created by the death of so many victims. As Till (2005: 9) explains about the creation of places of memory:

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.” 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 (emphasis original).

However, there are many people and organizations working to preserve the memory of individual Holocaust victims. As Demnig has said about the Stolpersteine:

Six million is an incomprehensible number. But to carve the name of a single person on a single marker is to say, “Look, this individual lived – lived right here at this actual address. He or she looked out this window or stepped out that door everyday. This was someone just like you or me. Not just an **anonymous victim of history**.³

As individuals and organizations work to uphold the humanity of Holocaust victims through memorialization, people who visit or observe these memorials may derive new meanings and understandings of the Holocaust.

Researching the Holocaust is also difficult because it is an event that has been studied and intensely debated for decades. Many of these debates are ongoing (cf. Niewyk 2011), but perhaps none is more relevant to research of the Stolpersteine Project than the debate over whether or not it is appropriate to represent the Holocaust. (And if it is appropriate, what is the best way to properly represent what happened?) The debate over representation of the Holocaust goes back to German Sociologist Theodor Adorno (2003: 162), who famously wrote in 1949, “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric.” Adorno pointed out a major paradox of the representation debate: he argued that language and conventional representation are inadequate to truly convey the nature of the Holocaust, but at the same time people should not forget what happened. Scholars have interpreted

³ Quoted in Nickerson (2007: n.p.).

Adorno's argument against "poetry after Auschwitz" as a *Bilderverbot*, or a "ban on graven images."⁴

As the film critic A.O. Scott (2008: 2) explains, Adorno's statement on the Holocaust *Bilderverbot*

has frequently been interpreted, aphoristically, as a fiat of silence, a prohibition against the use of ordinary tools of culture to address the extraordinary, inassimilable fact of genocide. But those tools, however crude, are what we have to work with. And if Adorno intended a warning against representations of the Holocaust, it has been more quoted than heeded.

Scott further explains that the Holocaust has galvanized many people, particularly survivors, to produce representations that are truly masterful. However, Scott says that the unfortunate side of representation can be seen in the many exploitation works of art, film, poetry, etc. that claim impunity from critique because they use the Holocaust as their subject:

The perception that this catastrophe overwhelms conventional aesthetic strategies and traditions has led to the creation of a remarkable range of formally innovative work, including the lyric poetry of Paul Celan, the early prose works of Elie Wiesel, Claude Lanzmann's epic documentary "Shoah," [and] Art Spiegelman's "Maus" ...

To describe these as masterpieces is not especially controversial, but it is also, as Adorno perhaps anticipated, somehow unseemly. If the Holocaust can inspire a great work of art, then it can also incubate the ambition to achieve such greatness, and thus open itself up, like everything else, to exploitation, pretense and vulgarity. Worse, the aura that still surrounds this topic – the sense that it must be treated with a special measure of tact and awe – can be appropriated by clumsy, sentimental and meretricious films or books, which protect themselves from criticism by a cloak of seriousness and piety... (2008: 2).

My research on the Stolpersteine uses historiography in general, and the representation debate in specific, to understand how Germany interprets the Holocaust through memorialization. Historiography and the representation debate also raise important questions for memorialization, asking what are appropriate ways to remember the past, and who should be responsible for remembering the past. The Stolpersteine Project attempts to represent the past on a personal level, while trying to refrain from generalizing or homogenizing the Holocaust.

⁴ This phrase carries obvious religious connotations, coming from the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. Verse 4 states (*King James Version*), "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."

Geographic Framework

This thesis investigates how Holocaust representations and peoples' understandings of the past are tied to place. I take the position that geographic space is not Cartesian – a discreet, material object – but rather, following Lefebvre (1991) and others, space is a socially constructed phenomenon. This means that spaces are created and given meaning through social projects, and they are the result of complex power relations. Geographic scholarship has long questioned how different groups of people make meaning in the cultural landscape, a subject that I will return to in Chapter 2.

As seen in historiographical debate, the state and individual actors often disagree on ways to represent the past. Geographers have argued that these contestations are made visible in social space through the landscape. According to Till (2005: 9-10):

When people make places of memory, they often give evoked ghosts [the absence of Holocaust victims, in this case] a spatial form through landscape. Through the material authority of a landscape... a particular understanding of the past is believed to be uncovered and made visible.

This thesis argues that the power relations between individuals and the state become embedded in the landscape through memorialization. Several of the newest Holocaust memorials in Berlin, including the Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas [*Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*], the *Topographie des Terrors* [Topography of Terror], and the *Jüdisches Museum Berlin* [Berlin Jewish Museum], fit Ladd's (1997) critique of the anonymous state memorials that Germans began to question in the 1970s (see Figures 1.1-1.3 for photos of these memorials.) These state-sponsored memorials are examples of how the German state has embedded its own interpretation of history in the landscape. In this thesis, I will use the Stolpersteine as a case study to understand how individuals challenge state representations of the Holocaust in Berlin.



Figure 1.1. Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe. People are not supposed to step on the individual granite *Stelae*, but this frequently happens. Picture taken 1 July 2006.



Figure 1.2. The Topography of Terror. The building to the left houses the museum and an archive of Holocaust resources. At right is the original outdoor Topography of Terror exhibition. Picture taken 20 May 2011.



Figure 1.3. Old and new wings of the Jewish Museum in Mitte. Picture taken 20 May 2011.

In *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place*, Till (2005) explores different sections in the “new” city through the lens of “new cultural geography” – applying a landscape studies framework to the morphology and meaning of landscape. Till examines sites in central Berlin that are located near or even directly on top of the former Berlin Wall, including the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe, the Topography of Terror, and the Jewish Museum. Marrying landscape studies to memory studies, Till turns to the work of Walter Benjamin (1972, quoted in Till 2005: 10-11), who argued that memory is the *Schauplatz* [scene] 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.” To Benjamin, memory is not merely information that people can recall (what Lowenthal 1984 calls *semantic* memory), nor is it merely time that has been layered into a landscape. Instead, memory is “the self-reflexive act of

contextualizing and continuously *digging* for the past through *place*” (Till 2005: 11, emphasis added). In Berlin, contextualizing, or “digging up,” a past marred by extensive violence brings up a number of questions. Which “ghosts” should be remembered? Which versions of the past warrant remembrance or forgetting? And, in what *forms* and which *places* should memory be concentrated? Till looks critically at the history of some of Berlin’s most famous Holocaust memorials to examine how Germans deal with the past through political dialog and contestation.

Both a geographer and an ethnographer, Till investigated the ways in which people constructed landscapes to navigate the past, present, and future. For example, she explains how a “memorial district” was built in Mitte in the late 1990s and early 2000s.⁵ Three separate Holocaust/war-era memorials were planned for the center of Berlin in the 1970s and 1980s. These three projects moved slowly at first because Berlin was divided into East and West, and public funding for memorialization was low. However, the projects began to move forward after reunification in the 1990s when public interest in acknowledging the Holocaust past increased. The projects began separately as the Holocaust Memorial, the Jewish Museum, and the Topography of Terror (Till 2005:197-200).

As was the case with many other construction plans after reunification, however, the three projects had to address the issues of land availability and cost. As design competitions were held for the Holocaust Memorial and the Jewish Museum, the directors of the Topography of Terror Foundation proposed creating a memorial district to avoid being left behind (Till 2005: 201). The memorial district would present all three Holocaust memorial sites as necessary parts of “a new centralized public culture of commemoration” (ibid). The Topography of Terror Foundation’s Academic Director Reinhard Rürup explained the need to create a memorial district by saying:

⁵ *Mitte* means “middle” or “center,” and is the district in the heart of reunified Berlin. During the Cold War, it was located at the border of East and West Berlin. As such, it was a site of much new construction and restoration after reunification.

The Foundation has tried to convince parliamentary members, government officials, and journalists that the Topography of Terror is a site where National Socialist crimes and the society of perpetrators are represented and explained, a central and indisputable part of the memory culture of the capital. In retrospect, the Jewish Museum in Berlin and the Holocaust Memorial have *important architectural designs* from Daniel Libeskind and Peter Eisenmann. ...In view of the complementary character of the three institutions, the Topography of Terror cannot be left behind these two impressive buildings in terms of the aesthetic quality of the building (Topography of Terror Foundation Annual Report, April 1999-March 2001: 6, quoted in Till 2005: 201, emphasis added).

Till argues that the foundation's attempts to gain funding for a "memorial district" amounted to creating a "hypervisible, cosmopolitan Holocaust memory" (Till 2005: 202). She also argues that the attempt to create a memorial district would be a manifestation of then-Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's agenda of "normalizing" Germany to the rest of the world through a presentation of guilt and penitence, similar to other world leaders like Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, and Jacques Chirac who apologized for past national crimes. Till acknowledges that Schröder did not attempt to justify the Holocaust past, but she argues that the use of Berlin's landscape as a national morality stage actually had the opposite effect. By making the Holocaust past "hypervisible," Till says, it has actually become spatially *invisible* and devoid of meaning (2005: 204). As a result of forcing memorialization of the Holocaust onto the national stage in a centralized location, Till says that the memorial district has had the effect of "Americanizing" the Holocaust into a product meant to be consumed.⁶

Given Till's critique of the Berlin memorial district, it is important to question who has the power to define the past. Till (2005) argues that the German state-sponsored version of history amounts to turning the Holocaust into a commodity for consumption in the Mitte district of Berlin. This is one clear example of a landscape becoming an ideology, used by the German government to

⁶ Till does not define the idea of an "Americanization of the Holocaust," but many scholars have written about this phenomenon of making the Holocaust more palatable or consumable for a stereotypical American audience. For one such scholarly work, see Flanzbaum (1999).

promote tourism in the district, while simultaneously promoting an “Americanized” version of the Holocaust.

Research Questions

At every Stolperstein site across Germany, the atrocities of the Holocaust are remembered when Demnig installs a stone for an individual victim. Thus embedded at a site where a victim once lived or worked, the Stolpersteine take on a personal dimension that state memorials simply do not (or cannot). My fieldwork shows that many people find the project’s focus on the humanity of a single victim to be much more meaningful than the state-sponsored memorials.

The contestation between individuals and the state over Holocaust representations leads to the following research question: **How do individuals create meaning in the landscape, and how do the power relations between individuals and the state shape people’s understanding of the Holocaust?** My research uses Demnig’s Stolpersteine Project as a case study to show how individuals question and contest state representations of the past by making individual Holocaust victims visible in the memorial landscape.

My secondary questions are threefold: First, How are individual and state memorial creation processes different? This question explores how a personal understanding of the Holocaust led to the creation of one artist’s memorial project, as opposed to the institutional, state-sponsored memorials. Demnig’s Stolpersteine differ from the German memorial processes described by Jennifer Jordan (2006), who concludes that most of Berlin’s memorials are first created when they attract media coverage and public attention. By examining Demnig’s creation process, this thesis adds to the literature on memorialization processes. My next question is: What meanings do people derive from the Stolpersteine? This question seeks to understand the outcomes of Demnig’s memorialization of individual victims, and it investigates the ways in which individuals respond to the Holocaust past when they encounter a Stolperstein. My final question addresses how these

meanings fit into the socio-political context of Holocaust memorialization. This question reveals people's responses to an individually created project that memorializes a single victim, as opposed to the state-sponsored projects, which Americanizes the Holocaust into a commercial district that often ignores individual victims (Till 2005).

Biography of Gunter Demnig

I belong to the '68 generation. When I began studying in Berlin, there was the Vietnam War. I made my first political piece: I drew a US flag on a shop window with skulls instead of stars. They put me in jail for half a day. For me it was the discovery that art in museums is ok, it's important. It *must* be. But art can do a lot more. Art can influence things *directly* if it's placed in public spaces.⁷ --**Gunter Demnig**

Gunter Demnig was born in Berlin in 1947, two years after the end of World War II. He grew up in a household that spoke little about the Holocaust or the war. Gunter finished his secondary education at the age of 18 when he found out that his father had served in the *Wehrmacht* [the German army] before and during the war. "I found a box with photos: My father in the Condor Legion in Spain, sitting in [military] pants on a flak gun. Later he served in France in the famous '8.8 battalion' " Demnig said in an interview (Franke 2008). In 1936, Adolf Hitler approved the creation of the Condor Legion – a combined military unit of army and air force personnel – to fight in the Spanish Civil War for General Francisco Franco (Jurado 2006). The legion fought in Spain, testing many of the military technologies and tactics that would later be used in the German Blitzkrieg, and triumphantly returned to Berlin after Franco's victory in 1938. Like Gunter Demnig's father, who fought in the 8.8-centimeter flak gun battalion, many of the Condor Legion's soldiers continued to fight for Hitler in the Wehrmacht at the outbreak of World War II. Despite many attempts to talk about the war with his father, Demnig said, "He suppressed everything. ... We didn't talk for five years. It was impossible" (Franke 2008).

⁷ (Transcript from Franke 2008, emphasis added.)



Figure 1.4. Gunter Demnig after a Stolperstein installation. Demnig (left) talks with an onlooker after installing a Stolperstein in Mitte. Picture taken 10 May 2011.

During this period of silence with his father, Demnig finished his *Abitur* [the final exams taken after finishing secondary education] and began studying art pedagogy at the Berlin Academy of Fine Arts in 1967 (Demnig 2012). From 1969 to 1970, he also studied industrial design at the Academy before continuing his studies in Kassel. In 1974, he passed the state examinations to teach art, which he did for several years at the University of Kassel until 1985 when he opened a studio in Cologne. It was then that Demnig's art became both political and personal, as he began to work on several public art projects in Cologne. In 1990, he created a temporary art memorial trail for Cologne's Roma and Sinti Holocaust victims. In 1993, he retraced the Roma and Sinti trail and began to envision a more permanent and widespread memorial for individual Holocaust victims all

around Germany (Grieshaber 2003, Franke 2008). As I will explain further in Chapter 4, this was the beginning of the Stolpersteine Project.

Chapter Overview

This thesis is divided into six chapters. In the first chapter, I have introduced Gunter Demnig and the Stolpersteine, as well as the concepts of individual- versus state- empowered and created landscape meanings, and the debate over how to represent and understand the Holocaust. In Chapter 2, I discuss several of the major works on memorialization, the memorialization process, and the history of studying landscape meaning in the geographic tradition. Chapter 3 presents the research methods used during fieldwork in Berlin, as well as a justification for the use of qualitative methods. It also includes an explanation of how I selected the research sites and a statement on my positionality as the researcher.

Chapters 4 and 5 are both reports of the major findings of my research. In Chapter 4, I discuss in greater detail the history of the Stolpersteine Project, the creation process and installation of a Stolperstein, and the ways that this memorialization process differs from the process described by Jordan (2006). Jordan argues that memorialization projects come to fruition only after they have received widespread public support and address issues of land use and land ownership. I then report on the findings from my interviews and field observations in Chapter 5, explaining the four major responses to the Stolpersteine and why these responses are important. In Chapter 6, I consider the larger socio-political context of Holocaust memorialization and how the Stolpersteine fit into this context. I also examine the ways that this research makes geographic contributions to cultural geography and landscape studies.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Scholars in the social sciences have become increasingly interested in memorialization since the “cultural turn” in the 1970s. Beginning with David Harvey’s (1979) study of the strategic and symbolic placement of the Basilica of Sacré-Coeur [Sacred Heart] atop the Butte Montmartre in Paris, geographers and other social scientists have investigated memorialization from Marxist, feminist, and post-modern viewpoints. Harvey explains his reason for researching the Basilica Sacré-Coeur through the lens of Marxism as follows:

The building hides its secrets in sepulchral silence. Only the living, cognizant of this history, who understand *the principles of those who struggled for and against the ‘embellishment’ of that spot*, can truly disinter the mysteries that lie entombed there and thereby rescue that rich experience from the deathly silence of the tomb and transform it into the noisy beginnings of the cradle.

All history is, after all, the history of class struggle (1979: 381).

With this research, Harvey opened the door for critical geographic research to study memorialization and provided the first geographic study of hidden meanings and power relationships in memorials. Today, there are many geographers who research memorialization, including Foote (1997), Atkinson and Cosgrove (1998), Alderman (2000), Hoelscher and Alderman (2004), and Till (2005).

Scholars have investigated the semiotics and meanings of memorials, both as intended by the creators and as interpreted by the public. As discussed in Chapter 1, the memorialization of World War II has been a contentious issue in Germany since the war ended. Scholars of Germany’s memorialization, including Young (1993), Ladd (1997), Young (2000), Till (2005), and Jordan (2006), note a contention between Germans who believe that Germany has been sufficiently penitent for the atrocities of World War II and Germans who believe that Germany can never be allowed to forget its troubled past. By focusing on individual victims of the Holocaust, Gunter Demnig is strongly in favor of remembering the past (Nickerson 2007). Demnig’s memorialization of individual victims of the Holocaust aims to force people to think about the horrors of the past and the

personal nature of what they represent. In an interview with Grieshaber (2003), Demnig said, “It goes beyond our comprehension to understand the killing of six million Jews. But if you read the name of one person, calculate his (sic) age, look at his old home and wonder behind which window he used to live, then the horror has a face to it.”

This chapter seeks to theoretically frame my research questions on how power relations between states and individuals shape the representations of the past. I will discuss literature on memorialization, the history of landscape studies, and explain the memorial creation process of the German state. First, I will define memory and memorialization, followed by a brief history of landscape studies in cultural geography, shortly discussing the work of Sauer (1963) and Mitchell (1996). Then, I will explain the ways in which Foote (1997) categorized the memorialization of violence. Next, I will discuss the state memorial creation processes that Till (2005) and Jordan (2006) researched in Berlin, before ending with a summary of references to the Stolpersteine Project in scholarly literature. I will study how individuals create meanings in the memorial landscape in ways that differ from a state-sanctioned version of the past.

Defining Memory and Memorialization

In this thesis, I take memory and memorialization to be complex social constructions that result from power struggles over the content, meaning, and representation of the past. Johnson and Pratt (2009: 453) argue that **memory** is “an inherently geographical activity: places store and evoke personal and collective memories, ... and memories shape imaginative geographies and material geographies of home, neighbourhood (sic), city, nation, and empire.” Johnson and Pratt note that human geography has long been interested in the role of memory in shaping the material landscape.

In the early beginnings of Geography as an academic discipline, regional geographers empirically described memorials as part of the built landscape. One notable example is Mansfield’s

(1925) “Geography of Southern Idaho,” which provides a geographic description of southern Idaho, and encapsulates the history of the fur traders who explored Idaho and fought against Native Americans. Mansfield only briefly mentions that some of the fur traders’ names were preserved in the nomenclature of Idaho and that a memorial had been built in Montpelier, Idaho, to mark the “old emigrant road to Oregon.” Another example is Pattison’s (1955) positivist research on the cemeteries of Chicago. Pattison researched the location of cemeteries by cataloging the number of cemeteries, their distribution, and the amount of land they occupied (1955: 245). Interestingly, Pattison says that it is a mistake to treat cemeteries as *merely* burial grounds, recognizing their potential for adornment and social significance (1955: 246). However, he does not draw any conclusions about the nature of memory or its importance to the people of Chicago.

Based on Lowenthal (1985), I define **memorialization** as the set of processes, events, and objects that are used by individuals and groups to remember specific, significant past events. Lowenthal describes three types of memory as ways of remembering the past: semantic memory, which is the rote memory of things such as facts, lines of poetry, multiplication tables, etc.; sensory-motor memory or “muscle” memory; and episodic memory, into which memorialization is categorized (1985: 201-204). In order to more fully understand how a landscape is given meaning through memorialization, it is useful to first understand different types of memory, particularly episodic memory. Lowenthal classifies episodic memory into the categories of *instrumental* (or everyday) *memory*, *reverie*, and *affective memory*. Instrumental memory of past events is in essence remembering what happened when and in what order. Reverie is remembering the feelings that were experienced during an event, and affective memory – also called total recall – is the sensation of completely reliving the past, usually triggered involuntarily.

Using the formal definition of memorialization, the Stolpersteine fit into all three categories of episodic memory, depending on who is observing. Survivors and families of the victims may

experience affective memory or reverie when observing the memorial stones of friends, family, or fellow victims. Pedestrians may be reminded of historic events – instrumental memory, according to Lowenthal – or become aware that atrocities committed by the Nazi regime affected ordinary people. Memorialization can take on meaning with the potential to change people’s understanding of the landscape and the past, depending on both the intent of the memorial creator and the interpretation of the observer. I use Johnson and Pratt’s (2009) and Lowenthal’s (1985) definitions of memory and memorialization to understand how memorials created by an individual, Gunter Demnig, are different from state-sponsored memorials in their scope, audience, and intended message. I will discuss these differences in further detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

A Brief Overview of Landscape Studies

No history of landscape studies is complete without the work of Carl Sauer and his students. Sauer’s approach to studying the landscape focused on the material landscape – the buildings and infrastructure, populations, production, etc. – of a given place. According to Sauer (1963: 321), landscape is:

proposed to denote the unit concept of geography, to characterize the peculiarly geographic association of facts. ... Landscape is the English equivalent of the term German geographers are using largely, and strictly has the same meaning: a land shape, in which the process of shaping is by no means thought of as simply physical. It may be defined, therefore, as an area made up of a distinct association of forms, both physical and cultural.”

In other words, to Sauer, the landscape was seen as an unproblematic canvas upon which cultures were built. As Mitchell (1996: 24-25) explains, Sauer intended to use “Morphology of the Landscape” to sound the death knell for environmental determinism as the dominant paradigm in U.S. geography. Sauer started a new research tradition in which geographers should view landscape as:

the organic unit upon which the ever-changing human-environment relationship could be observed, measured, and recorded... Culture played the key role as the agent of change emanating from the human side of that relationship. Thus, for Sauer, culture, rather than environment, was the dynamic, causal agent of change (quoted in Oakes and Price 2008: 97).

The second geographical tradition of landscape studies is the so-called “new cultural geography,” which explores landscape as a social construct. Many geographers, including Cosgrove (1984), Daniels and Cosgrove (1988), Mitchell (1996), and other Anglophone scholars, began to study landscape inspired by Henri Lefebvre (1974). Scholars who use this framework focus less on the morphology of the material landscape, à-la Sauer. Instead, they research how a society produces its social landscape and gives it meaning. For instance, Daniels and Cosgrove (1998) use a Marxist framework to show that the bourgeoisie promotes its own preferred representations of place so they can hide representations deemed to be unaesthetic or uncomfortable. Thus, new cultural geographers study landscape meaning as a result of power relations and conflict (Mitchell 1996: 26-27).

Mitchell begins his book on the labor geographies of the California landscape, *The Lie of the Land*, by addressing how landscape is represented and how landscape is produced. Any theory to understand the interplay between landscape representation and production, Mitchell argues, must answer three basic questions: What landscape is, how landscape is produced in a particular social system, and how the landscape and its representations function in its social setting (1996: 30).

To answer the question of what landscape is, Mitchell discusses at length the two geographical traditions of researching landscape: Sauer’s morphological approach and the critical lens of new cultural geography (1996: 24-29). Mitchell argues that scholars should not use one tradition to the exclusion of the other, and he says that geographers who consider both approaches will have a more complete understanding of landscape. Mitchell says that Sauer was correct to

address the morphological features in a landscape, just as the new cultural geographers have been correct to address the power struggles over the meaning of landscape.

Landscape is *thus a unity of materiality and representation*, constructed out of the contest between various social groups possessing varying amounts of social, economic, and political power. Meanings are both posited in and developed out of the landscape's morphology... Landscapes, and landscape representations, are therefore very much a product of social struggle, whether engaged over form or over how to grasp and read that form. And these struggles, of course, are fully recursive (Mitchell 1996: 28-29, emphasis added).

Since landscape is the outcome of social struggle, Mitchell further elaborates that landscape can never be completely stable (1996: 30). Different social actors (including the state) with varying degrees of power are constantly forced to make sense of the landscape and its complex history. Mitchell says that this happens when people try to impose meanings onto the landscape and make connections that may not really exist – similar to Hobsbawm and Ranger's (1992) idea of the “invention of tradition.” This invention of new meanings for a landscape can occur, for example, when historical facts are glossed over and made to fit into a more heroic or optimistic light.

Mitchell (1996: 32) says that the second question that must be asked in landscape studies is how social groups produce landscape. As suggested before when discussing Daniels and Cosgrove's work, Mitchell argues that social groups produce landscape through struggle and contestation. As a social product, landscape is “*enacted* in the process of struggle, [and] ... the shape of the landscape gives rise to new (social) realities” (1996: 32, emphasis original). Mitchell calls landscape a “quasi-object” – it is a real, physical thing, but it is also the symbolization of the struggles and contestations that went into creating it.

The final question that landscape scholars must ask is how a landscape functions: specifically, for Mitchell, how it functions in a capitalist economy (1996: 33). Mitchell discusses how capitalists use the landscape in their search for opportunities to extract surplus value in California. While Mitchell does not address capitalism's role in memorialization, Karen Till (2005: 202-205)

discusses how the German state commodifies (and Americanizes) Holocaust memorials in the Mitte memorial district.

Applying Mitchell's questions to the Stolpersteine yields questions that are almost identical to my research questions: What are the Stolpersteine (as part of the material and social landscape)? How are the Stolpersteine produced and given meaning through conflict? And, what roles or functions do the Stolpersteine perform as Holocaust representations? These questions help guide the analysis of my findings, described in Chapters 4 and 5.

***Shadowed Ground* – How can memorialization of violence be categorized?**

Geographer Ken Foote's (2003) categorization of memorialization is based on sites of violence in the United States. Foote noticed that memorialization literature rarely addresses what happens to sites where violence or tragedy occurred, aside from historical research of battlefields from the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. He set out to discover what happened at each location, finding that each site of historical violence could offer an understanding of struggles over the meaning of tragedy (2003:7). He developed a continuum of memorialization divided into four categories: sanctification, designation, rectification, and obliteration. Foote's continuum is based on the community's response to violence or tragedy, and, as such, it can be used to help place the Stolpersteine in the larger context of memorialization. While the continuum may not fit every situation or cultural group, it is a useful starting point to understand how people respond to past violence and tragedy.

At one end of the continuum is sanctification, which happens most often after martyrs or heroes have died or when a community faces a great loss. Sanctification involves some kind of permanent memorial and a ceremony that dedicates a space as sacred. This kind of memorialization is often contested, because the community may initially disagree over whether the victims deserve

commemoration as martyrs and heroes (Foote 2003: 8-16, 36-37). Foote notes (2003: 27) that most contestation over *whether* victims should be commemorated often takes place in the form of arguments over *how* the memorial should be constructed. Foote (2003: 9) identifies five ways that makes a place sanctified, each of which can be contested. First, the place that is sanctified is often marked by clear boundaries and contains a description of what took place at what time. Second, the site is carefully maintained for decades or centuries after the event. Third, ownership of the land often changes from private to public. Fourth, the community continues to memorialize the event through services or ritual visits to the site on anniversaries or special events. Fifth, the community may turn the sanctified site into a form of memorial depository, where community members place other memorials that are completely unrelated to the initial tragedy.

Designation is similar to sanctification because the site of violence has some kind of marker, but there are no rituals or consecration services to “sanctify” the space (Foote 2003: 16-20). Designated locations are often in transition between becoming a sanctified space or being effaced into rectification or obliteration, though that is not always the case. Some locations are designated instead of sanctified because members of the community contest the site’s meaning. Designated spaces that are on their way toward sanctification but may be lacking public or financial support can be termed “places in process.”

Rectification occurs when the site of a tragedy or violence is restored to its former function after a period of fame (Foote 2003: 23-24, 145). The space is no longer associated with the event that occurred and retains no sense of honor or shame in the minds of community members. Rectification is common and requires the least amount of work on the community’s part: they simply let the site “return to normal.” Rectification often takes place when community members view tragedies as accidents and violence as senseless or unexplainable. Rectified sites can often be thought of as “innocent” places because they are not viewed as essential to the tragedy. These types

of disasters can happen at any place or any time, and the focus of the community is not on matters of honor or shame, but instead on finding the cause of the disaster and then finding a remedy to prevent further tragedy (Foote 2003: 145, 165). In some instances of rectification, a site may sit vacant for a few years before returning to a previous function, as the attention of the public's focus shifts from the blame of a tragedy to its remedy.

Foote notes (2003: 24-27, 174-175) that obliteration only occurs when senseless violence causes community members to feel shame. Foote lists examples of crimes committed by mass murderers, assassins, or mobsters as possible reasons to obliterate a site of tragedy. Obliteration goes beyond merely cleaning a space to return it to a former use; rather, it is the complete scourging of space and destroying everything at the location. The sense of place is lost, and the site becomes a placeless, unused space for a long time after the event. If it does become used again, the site is normally given a completely different function. Interestingly, Foote observes that obliterated places often stand out from their surroundings as much as sanctified spaces, if only for their emptiness (2003: 25). The most shocking and horrific events can scar a location to the point where the community attempts to deny any memory of the event through destruction of the landscape.

Obliterated sites are rarely ever cleansed from their past history (Foote 2003: 25). While there is a common set of steps to commemorate other types of violence through sanctification (the memorial process described by Jordan 2006), mourners and survivors do not have an established plan to follow in response to crimes that bring shame to a community. The destruction of the location is not usually a planned event, and most communities do not establish a committee to oversee obliteration. Without a ceremony or commemoration, the community handles its grief in various other ways, and many people never experience catharsis, which psychologists have found to be essential to coping and moving forward. Therefore, Foote argues that obliteration is not a complete process (2003: 179-180). Because community members wish to ignore or forget the

violence, they do not reach closure, and the shameful place continues to attract attention. This can be dangerous when suppressed feelings among survivors are eventually released by depression, other forms of anxiety, or suicide.

While Foote argues that one of the four outcomes detailed above will occur at every tragedy site, there always exists the possibility that the location's meaning and interpretation change over time, whether slowly or radically (2003: 29-31, 214-215). Changes in meaning or interpretation can cause a site to change from one category to another, most commonly occurring after time passes and people interpret an event differently. Alternately, historical facts can be made to fit into a more heroic or optimistic light during historical debates. Once a change in meaning has occurred, community groups ranging from grassroots campaigns to wealthy citizens to survivors themselves may change the landscape to reflect the new interpretation. Foote observed that these changes occur most often between 50 and 150 years after the event, usually at important anniversaries such as centennials (2003: 262-263). In many cases, the process changes the landscape from rectified to designated in a time of transition. Sanctification often occurs later if the community does not object.

Foote's categorization of memorialization is very important to researching the Stolpersteine. Although Foote's categories were developed in an American spatial and temporal context, I argue that they are applicable beyond the United States to other parts of the world, particularly in Europe.⁸ Given Europe and the United States' commonalities of colonialism, wars, philosophy, and economic paradigms, the outcomes of memorialization processes in Europe bear a striking resemblance to memorials in the United States. Thus, Foote's categories seem to fit many memorials in Europe, particularly the many World War I and II memorials throughout Europe that are highly sanctified. However, the Stolpersteine do not neatly fit into one of Foote's categories. Given the wide range of

⁸ This is not intended to suggest that Europe is the only region sharing commonalities with the United States, or that Foote (2003) can only be applied to the U.S. and Europe. Rather, I address Europe here because of my research focus on German memorialization.

responses to the Stolpersteine that I observed in Berlin, the Stolpersteine fall somewhere in between sanctification and designation. Some individuals consider the stones highly sacred, while a small fringe group like the neo-Nazis would prefer to destroy the stones. Many people I talked to in Berlin have a little knowledge about the stones, but at the same time, they do not consider the sites to be sanctified as Foote (2003) defines it. This range of responses draws attention to the fact that the Holocaust past is still a contentious and highly debated issue.

***Structures of Memory* – How are memorials created in the “New Berlin”?**

The final element of my theoretical framework comes from Karen Till’s (2005) study of state-sponsored memorials in Berlin (previously explained in Chapter 1) and Jennifer Jordan’s (2006) research on memorial creation processes in Berlin, which I address here.⁹ Jordan asks one of the fundamental questions of memorialization: Why are some places of past cruelty or heroism easily forgotten, while others are transformed into sites that are marked, well maintained, and frequently visited (essentially, sanctified)? To address these questions, Jordan uses contemporary Berlin to explore the deeper meanings of memorialization. She examines locations in Berlin that were former sites of persecution from or resistance to the Nazis. In her efforts to present a complete range of memorialization, Jordan uses examples of both well-known memorials and sites that are forgotten except by a few remaining survivors.

Jordan observes that most memorialization sites in Berlin have been created as an outcome of the intersection of four factors: land use, landownership, resonance of the site’s meaning with the broad (often international) public, and the actions of a “memorial entrepreneur.”¹⁰ Jordan examines

⁹ While Jordan specifically focuses on Berlin for the case studies in her book, she states in the first chapter that her theoretical framework can also be applied to other cities around the world. “This book offers a guiding set of questions with which to examine the dynamic interactions of memory, markets, and politics in cities around the world, whether in Lower Manhattan, Phnom Penh, or Buenos Aires” (2006: 2).

¹⁰ Jordan defines a memorial entrepreneur as a person or group of people (such as survivors, academics, students, city councils, etc.) who lobby for a memorial’s creation (2006: 11).

the creation process of Berlin memorials to explain how the memorialization process has changed over time.¹¹ Using specific examples of memorial construction in Berlin, Jordan establishes a general process of memorialization in Germany. First, memorial entrepreneurs are spurred into action by a catalyst, such as a desire to make sure that the past is not forgotten or the desire to repent for a past action. They then begin gathering support in small groups before attracting attention from the press or the government. This increasing attention must reach the general public, which must become interested enough in the memorial to support it. Eventually, the project gains enough resonance with the public that memorialization becomes the only acceptable use for the site, and the city, state, or national government approves it. However, memorial entrepreneurs and public support are not enough to make a project successful. Land use and ownership largely determine if the memorialization process will continue, especially if the land or site is privately owned. For example, if an individual or private business owns the site of a former Jewish synagogue, the attempt to create a memorial may be limited by the owner's plans for the site (Jordan 2006: 134-173).

I will use Till (2005) and Jordan (2006) to investigate how individuals and groups create memorials, specifically focusing on Berlin. Till's critique of state-sponsored memorials and her questions about the state's actions of commodifying the Holocaust reveal a major way that the German state approaches Holocaust memorialization. I will show how Gunter Demnig, as an individual memorial project creator, takes a very different approach to understanding the past and embedding the past in the landscape. Similar to Till (2005), Jordan's focus on the general patterns of memorialization in Berlin is useful as a contrast to the Stolpersteine, because many of the projects she investigates are state-funded or state-initiated.

¹¹ Jordan studies Berlin in the immediate post-war period, the period during the Cold War when Berlin was divided into East and West Berlin, and reunified Berlin of the last two decades.

The Stolpersteine in Scholarly Literature

While much has been printed about the Stolpersteine Project in newspapers, websites, and blog posts from travelers, and photographs of the Stolpersteine seem to exist in abundance on the Internet, the project has rarely been examined by scholars. Since the project's beginnings in the mid-1990s, only a handful of scholarly sources reference the Stolpersteine, much less position them as a subject to be questioned. In this final section, I will briefly outline these few sources, before concluding with the ways in which my research will add to the literature.

Harjes (2005) appropriates the term *Stolpersteine* to apply to several Holocaust “countermonuments,” including Demnig’s Stolpersteine Project and other memorial signs and plaques, like the *Gedenktafeln* [metal plates hung from street signs] in Berlin’s Schöneberg district. Harjes does not define countermonument, but cites Young (1993: 27), who defines countermonuments as “brazen, painfully self-conscious memorial spaces conceived to challenge the very premises of their being.” Young (ibid) explains that countermonuments are created by artists who call into question the role of a monument:

Ethically certain of their duty to remember, but aesthetically skeptical of the assumptions underpinning traditional memorial forms, a new generation of contemporary artists and monument makers in Germany is probing the limits of both their artistic media and the very notion of a memorial.

Harjes compares the Stolpersteine (qua countermonument) to the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe (at the time of her writing, not yet completed). Harjes first introduces the purpose of countermonuments after concluding that the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe is only partly effective:

Widespread efforts to define the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe as a national memorial have not satisfied the wish to create more memorials and to diversify and democratize memory. This is especially apparent in the case of so-called countermonuments. One type of countermonument is the “stumbling stone,” or

Stolperstein memorial. Rather than presenting a ready-made interpretation of German history, this type of memorial aims to make people think (2005: 143).

Harjes goes on to explain Demnig's Stolpersteine Project in detail, before launching a critique. She argues that while the Stolpersteine are useful as a countermonument because they "speak out" for individual victims, they do not provide contextual information to people who encounter the memorials.

The stones are distributed throughout certain areas of Berlin, yet no explanations at all accompany this memorial. It relies entirely on already existing sources of Holocaust memory. It thus depends on an audience that is generally well educated, or at least somewhat curious and investigative. ... Their implied audience is curious, enlightened, and self-reflexive. To educate, these memorials need communicative people and documentation to complement their minimal messages (2005: 147-148).

The next scholar to address the Stolpersteine Project is Jordan (2006). Jordan mentions the project only briefly in her concluding chapter, and she says that the project became a popular subject of major U.S. newspapers in 2004. Jordan also describes the basic information about the Stolpersteine (purpose, cost, size, etc.), before commenting that the project confirms that memory and history are intimately tied to geography. "The intense specificity of the sites of Nazi power in the historical imaginations of activists, European Community members, and readers of the *New York Times* may seem to contradict recent analytical assumptions that see the specificity of 'place' receding in the face of homogenizing forces" (2006: 192-193.) Furthermore, "Plaques, sculptures, museums, and other memorial forms comprise one set of ways in which memory and politics settle into the social and physical terrain. By creating such places, people craft landscapes, conjure up selected elements of the past, and plot courses for the future" (ibid: 195).

Finally, Hansen (2008) writes about the Stolpersteine Project in Hamburg. Hansen compares Holocaust memorials in Hamburg, Germany, and Haifa, Israel. Hansen traveled to Hamburg primarily to research war memorials, and discovered Demnig's project by accident:

I visited most of these memorials on Good Friday, Easter 2007 ... The shops were closed and only a few pedestrians in the street made the city and sidewalk appear like open spaces – and this made the memorials I was about to discover more easily seen. The sidewalk was empty and I noticed the discrete *Stolpersteine*, or Stumbling Stones... (2008: 172, emphasis original).

Hansen briefly explains the information that appears on the *Stolpersteine*, and he states that the project serves as a kind of tombstone meant to fill a (psychological) void for victims who were never given a burial ceremony. This interpretation flies in the face of Gunter Demnig's intentions that the *Stolpersteine* not be considered gravestones (cf. Grieshaber 2010). However incorrect this interpretation may be, Hansen nonetheless recognizes the *Stolpersteine*'s significance:

We walk on top of history – and we are reminded of that while walking. You may not intend to visit the memorial, yet this one will visit you! This is an important spatial strategy. You are not likely to take a long walk around Hamburg without visiting a *Stolperstein* at some point. ... You suddenly stand in front of the place where a man, woman or family was dragged out and taken to a camp – formerly a real environment or space of memory, but today turned into something different: a *lieu de memoire* or site of memory (2008: 173, emphasis original).

Conclusion

Comparing and contrasting the *Stolpersteine* with the memorial district will hinge largely on who created them (individual vs. state), the victim(s) that the creator intends to remember, the memorials' creation processes, and the different meanings that people ascribe to them. Decisions about the memorial district projects began at the national scale before scaling down to the local Berlin level and scaling up to the international level. However, the *Stolpersteine*, like many other memorials, began at the local scale. Commensurate with the large media coverage on national-scale monuments, much of the scholarly literature on memorialization focuses on national-scale monuments that are often ornate but impersonal. Building on the work of geographers and other social scientists who have investigated memorialization (Harvey 1979, Young 1993, Mitchell 1995, Atkinson and Cosgrove 1998, Foote 2003, Till 2005, Jordan 2006 etc.), I investigate the local-scale

Stolpersteine and then place them within national and international political contexts. As a result, this thesis provides a personal face to the existing body of Holocaust memorialization literature.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

In this chapter, I will describe the qualitative methods that I used during the research project's five major stages (see Table 3.1). First, I will discuss the justification for selecting Berlin as the site for my research and how I selected the districts in which I conducted observations. Second, I will explain the qualitative methods used during the fieldwork stages and explain why qualitative methods were best suited for my research questions. Next, I will explain my positionality as a researcher in the field. Finally, I will discuss how I navigated between insider and outsider viewpoints to obtain a more nuanced understanding of people's responses to the Stolpersteine.

Site Selection (Stage 1)

I chose to conduct my fieldwork in Berlin for several reasons. First, Berlin had more than 3,000 Stolpersteine as of May 2011, more than any other city except Hamburg, Germany. With the

Table 3.1. Research Schedule

Time period	Task	Site
3/11 – 4/11	Stage 1 – Identify observation sites from Berlin's 12 districts	Knoxville, TN
5/1/11 – 5/23/11	Fieldwork in Berlin	Berlin, Germany
5/5/11 – 5/18/11	Stage 2 – Observation of pedestrians' reactions to Stolpersteine	Prenzlauerberg, Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, Mitte, and Spandau districts in Berlin
5/7/11 – 5/23/11	Stage 3 – Informal interviews with pedestrians	“ ”
5/10/11 – 5/20/11	Stage 4 – Observation of Stolpersteine installations and semi-formal interviews with project personnel	Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, Mitte districts in Berlin
6/11 – 3/12	Stage 5 – Data coding, analysis, write-up	Knoxville, TN

project currently numbering 32,000 stones in around 700 European cities, Berlin contains almost one-tenth of all the Stolpersteine.¹² Second, Demnig was scheduled to install more than 100 new Stolpersteine in Berlin over a three-day period in May 2011. I also chose Berlin for practical purposes because I had previously conducted fieldwork in Berlin for my undergraduate honors thesis in July 2008.

After I decided upon Berlin as the fieldwork site, I chose four districts in which to conduct observations of pedestrians' interactions with Stolpersteine. To choose these districts, I first found information about the Stolpersteine locations in Berlin's 12 districts through Berlin's official city website (City of Berlin 2011) and the *Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand* [the German Resistance Memorial Center] in Berlin.¹³ Then, I found data on the demographic characteristics of Berlin's 12 districts from the *Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg* [Berlin-Brandenburg Statistical Office] (2010).¹⁴

I decided to select districts for my observations and interviews based on the percentage of the district's population that was foreign born – defined as people who live in Berlin that were born outside of Germany, with a citizenship other than German (Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg 2010: 47). I chose some districts with a high percentage of foreign-born population (Mitte and Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg), and some with a low percentage (Pankow and Spandau). I realized that Demnig installed more Stolpersteine in Mitte and Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg because of their history as areas with high ethnic diversity. Parts of these districts were home to many working class Jews and non-German laborers before World War II. Parts of Wedding, Mitte, and Kreuzberg were filled with working class Jews from Eastern Europe (Poland, Ukraine, etc.) and the Soviet Union before

¹² Demnig's hometown of Cologne has about 1,800 Stolpersteine (Museen Köln 2012), and Hamburg has 3,940 (Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Hamburg 2012).

¹³ Berlin's official website contains webpages for each of the 12 districts (City of Berlin 2011). Ten of these pages have a list of the Stolpersteine locations within the district's jurisdiction or links to a list on another website. The Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand (GDW) manages the project in Mitte and Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, and location lists for these two districts were sent to me on 5 April 2011 by Gabriele Kühne, one of GDW's Stolpersteine Coordinators.

¹⁴ See Appendix A for selected data and Appendix B for metadata.

the war. Charlottenburg and Wilmersdorf were middle class neighborhoods that were home to many German Jews.

When planning my fieldwork, I had to consider that some of the former districts with high pre-war Jewish populations had been merged with other districts after reunification. In 2000, Berlin's government consolidated its districts from 20 down to 12, as part of a plan to help integrate the former East and West and to reduce the cost of 20 district governments with separate administrative oversight (see figure 3.1). Today, Wedding and Mitte are part of one larger district (also called Mitte), Kreuzberg has merged with another neighborhood to form Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, and Charlottenburg and Wilmersdorf have also been combined to form one district. While the districts have eliminated some of the neighborhood names from the political map, the Wedding and Kreuzberg areas are still working class neighborhoods, and Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf is still middle class.

Qualitative Fieldwork Methods (Stages 2-4)

The major findings of this study (Chapters 4 and 5) are based on fieldwork research that I conducted in May 2011. During Stage 2, I conducted 220 observations of pedestrians in Mitte, Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, Pankow (in the Prenzlauerberg neighborhood) and Spandau. I spent several hours at four sites to observe people's reactions to the Stolpersteine as they encountered the stones. I took note of their interactions with the stone and categorized them according to whether they looked at the stones, completely ignored them, walked around them, stepped on the stones, or stopped to read them.

In the third and fourth stages, I conducted participant observations of Stolpersteine installations at 10 different sites and conducted interviews with 13 pedestrians and four people who work on the Stolpersteine Project. I also planned to ask pedestrians to fill out a short survey about the

project after they walked by a Stolperstein. I intended to use these surveys to identify participants for longer interviews. However, after attempting this method for a few days, I realized that many Berliners were wary of talking to anyone who asked for their time while holding a clipboard, so I changed my



Figure 3.1. Map of the 12 districts of Berlin. The light-grey lines indicate the former district borders of the 20 districts in Berlin that existed before consolidation in 2000.

Consolidation of the districts eliminated the names of some former districts from the political map. Pankow, Weißensee, and Prenzlauerberg are now all in the Pankow district. The former Wedding, Tiergarten, and Mitte districts are now Mitte. Hohenschönhausen and Lichtenberg are now Lichtenberg. The other consolidated districts are named with a hyphenated form of the previous districts: Steglitz-Zehlendorf, Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf, Tempelhof-Schöneberg, Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, Treptow-Köpenick, and Marzahn-Hellersdorf. (Map copyright 2009 by the author.)

approach and conducted informal interviews with pedestrians. Informants were identified by striking up conversations with people as they walked near a Stolperstein or as they engaged in more leisurely activities, such as sitting in a park or café near a Stolperstein site. After some introductory questions about the Stolpersteine, the informants were told about the research project's goals and intentions and asked for their consent to participate before they were asked detailed questions.

Geographers have used qualitative methods to gain a better understanding of people's perceptions of the places with which they interact. Qualitative methods can take a variety of forms, and I chose to use several complementary methods to obtain a detailed understanding of people's responses to the Stolpersteine. The qualitative interviews helped capture the nuances of pedestrians' interaction with the Stolpersteine, and I was able to gain a better understanding of the memorial creation process from interviews with Demnig's project assistants.

I also used ethnography to immerse myself in the installations and learn about the rituals that are performed when people sanctify a Stolperstein site. As Herbert (2000: 564) says of ethnography:

No other methodology enables a researcher to explore the complex connections that social groups establish with one another and with the places they inhabit, cultivate, promote, defend, dominate and love. If sociality and spatiality are intertwined, and if the exploration of this connection is a goal of geography, then more ethnography is necessary.

Herbert (2000: 554-558) argues in favor of ethnographic methods to answer geographic research questions for two reasons. First, ethnography can reveal the processes by which social structures are reproduced and challenged on both micro and macro scales. Second, ethnography can reveal how specific social lives and processes are meaningful to those who engage with them. At the installation ceremonies in which I participated, I gained insight into the ways that families memorialize lost relatives, how anti-racism school groups participate in the project, and how financial sponsors take quiet solace at more private installations (see Chapters 4 and 5 for a more detailed discussion of the findings).

Positionality, Insider/Outsider Perspectives, and Passing as Jewish

Geographers have been interested in the subjectivity of fieldwork, particularly since the inclusion of feminist perspectives beginning in the 1980s (cf. Hanson 1992). Rose (1997) argues that while it may be impossible for a researcher in the field to be completely aware of her or his own positions and subjectivities, the researcher should still analyze (and in some cases critique) those positions. With this call in mind, I attempted to be aware of my own subjectivities as a researcher in the field and the ways in which my positionality may have affected the relationships I developed with my research subjects. Recognizing Rose's (1997) argument that it is impossible to know myself fully and recognize all of the privileges I may have as a researcher, I will nonetheless describe some ways that my position influenced my interactions in the field.

My role as a researcher in Berlin was influenced by my position as a white, male American with middle-class upbringing, with some (though not fluent) understanding of the German language. Recognizing that whiteness has inherent privileges (McIntosh 2002), I was able to go to any of my chosen research sites in Berlin without fear of being stopped or harassed because of my skin color. My previous research in Berlin helped me feel comfortable in almost all of Berlin's neighborhoods. However, in 2008 I decided to explore the working-class neighborhood of Wedding and felt very uncomfortable walking around by myself in a part of the city that was off the beaten tourist path. Because I was traveling alone in 2008 and my understanding of German was tenuous, I felt very much out of place. As a result, I avoided the Wedding neighborhood entirely in 2011.¹⁵

Being an outsider, as an American with only limited understanding of German, certainly affected my fieldwork in at least two ways. I needed the help of a translator for some interviews, and in other situations I was able to use my position as a foreigner to begin conversations with people

¹⁵ There are only a few Stolpersteine in Wedding, 56 of the roughly 3,000 stones for which I found addresses in Stage 1 of the research. The district accounts for less than two percent of the Stolpersteine in Berlin.

about the Stolpersteine. I found a translator, Gabi, through *H-German*, a listserv used primarily by historians and academics who research Germany.¹⁶ Gabi is a native speaker of German, originally from Austria, who is currently living in Berlin while writing her dissertation for Duke University. Gabi and I met during the first week of fieldwork so that I could further explain the Stolpersteine to her and discuss her role in the research. Gabi assisted me with translating several of the informal interviews, and she also accompanied me to some of the Stolpersteine installations to help me converse with family and other bystanders at the ceremonies. I also struck up conversations (informal interviews) with some people by asking them if they knew why there were shiny stones in the sidewalk and gaining their interest before asking for their consent to be interviewed. This method revealed responses to the Stolpersteine that I would not have otherwise encountered.

However, as Nast (1994) argues, researchers are never completely outsiders or insiders. “Because we are positioned simultaneously in a number of fields we are always, at some level, somewhere, in a state of betweenness, negotiating various degrees and kinds of difference... Betweenness thus implies that we are never ‘outsiders’ or ‘insiders’ in any absolute sense” (Nast 1994: 57). I experienced some insider advantages in the field by having a good understanding of the Stolpersteine Project and by contacting Gunter Demnig and the Stolpersteine project assistants Anna Warda and Gabriele Kühne before my fieldwork began. I informed these contacts about the goals of my research in advance, and they allowed me to observe the Stolpersteine installations as if I were one of the assistants.¹⁷

Another insider advantage, which I had not expected prior to fieldwork, resulted from ‘passing’ as Jewish to families and other participants at the Stolpersteine installations. Passing has been of interest to American scholars for decades, particularly focusing on racial passing in a variety

¹⁶ *H-German* is part of the *H-net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online* listservs hosted by Michigan State University.

¹⁷ There were even a few instances where I arrived at an installation before Demnig, and I explained to the waiting audience that Demnig was running late.

of contexts, with blacks passing for whites to escape persecution as the major theme (Kennedy 2001). Kennedy (ibid: 1) defines ‘passing’ as “a deception that enables a person to adopt certain roles or identities from which he (sic) would be barred by prevailing social standards in the absence of his misleading conduct.” While this definition focuses more on the American context of racial passing, the definition can be broadened to include sexual orientation passing (e.g. gays passing for straight), religious passing (Jews passing for gentiles), and other forms (Schlossberg 2001: 2).

In my situation, I did not realize that passing as Jewish was something that could establish trust with some of my research participants until after the fieldwork was complete. When I started the research in Fall 2010, I discovered that working on a Holocaust-related project led many of the people with whom I discussed it to ask if I were Jewish. I believe this occurred for two reasons: first, because I have a physical appearance that matches features that people assume to be “Jewish” features, and second, because many people think that Jews are more frequently involved in Holocaust research than gentiles. This happened with classmates at the University of Tennessee and people in the Knoxville community as well. I thought nothing of it at the time, but during my fieldwork I was once again asked many times if I was Jewish. In situations where I was not asked about my religious identity, I drew upon my (admittedly limited) knowledge of Jewish customs, particularly the utmost respect for the dead.

In some situations, passing as Jewish led to more detailed interviews and conversations with participants who thought that we shared a Jewish identity, culture, and history. At a few of the Stolpersteine installation, the family members present wanted to include me in their ceremony, further solidifying the advantage of passing as an insider. For example, at the Stolpersteine installation for Rachel and Solomon Schmidt on Pintschstraße, the family gave me a special *yarmulke*¹⁸ that they

¹⁸ A *yarmulke*, or kippah, is a Jewish head covering traditionally worn by males during prayer or sacred occasions. As the Talmud says in Shabbat 156b, “Cover your head so that the fear of Heaven may be upon you.”

had bought for the installation (see figure 3.2). It is impossible to fully know how the situations during which I passed as Jewish would have been different if had I not. However, I recognize now that passing as Jewish and my insights into German culture gained from my previous course work and travel experience gave me a privileged insider position.

Conclusion

During my research, I investigated how the Stolpersteine memorial process differs from other Holocaust memorials processes and found a range of people's responses to the Stolpersteine as they encounter them in the cultural landscape. Here I have argued that qualitative methods were the most appropriate methods to answer my research questions. I have also described the research stages as they proceeded from planning to fieldwork to analysis.



Figure 3.2. Yarmulke made for the Schmidts' Stolpersteine installation. The Hebrew text reads, "In remembrance of Rachel and Solomon Schmidt, done [performed] in Berlin on May 11, 2011." Picture taken 4 March 2012.

Chapter 4 – Individualizing Memorialization: The Stolpersteine as Holocaust Representation

The family of Max Riess waited for nearly an hour. “Where is Demnig? What is taking so long?” the family matriarch asked. In all fairness, the day had turned uncomfortably warm, and the group had expected Gunter Demnig to be there at 12:30 sharp.

I tried to alleviate the tension by speaking up for the esteemed artist. “Well, you see, Demnig often runs late to the afternoon installations because of traffic. And, often the families want him to stay for their ceremonies after an installation.” I was defending a man I hardly knew.

The family nodded approvingly. “And do you work for Demnig?” the matriarch asked.

“Well no, actually, I’m a student from the United States. I study the Stolpersteine Project.” For a few moments, I uncomfortably had drawn attention to myself. The family was intrigued. Why do you want to study the project? How did you find out about it?

This must be how Demnig feels, I thought. Constantly bombarded...It’s so easy to get emotionally invested.



Figure 4.1. Stolperstein installation for Max Riess. Relatives of Max Riess crowd around Gunter Demnig to photograph the newly installed Stolpersteine. Picture taken 11 May 2011.

In this chapter, I will explain how the Stolpersteine Project has grown from its beginnings as an illegal art installation to become one of the most widespread Holocaust memorials in Europe. Then I will outline the process of how a Stolperstein is researched, produced, and installed. Finally, I will discuss how Demnig's Stolpersteine challenge state representations of the Holocaust in the Mitte memorial district, as described by Till (2005).

Jordan (2006: 18) argues that the memorial landscape of Berlin is not merely the result of its 17th-20th Century political history, but rather it is a product of an array of conflicting viewpoints. Jordan says that after the completion of a memorial project, the conflict over its creation is often forgotten, or hidden under the surface:

No scholar (and no savvy passerby) would assert that these sites are inevitable. But once constructed, memorials, like buildings in general, tend to mask the often conflicted conditions of their creation and to take on an apparent permanence that belies their social origin. *Many proposed projects teeter on the brink of failure for years, yet become profoundly uncontroversial (if also often ignored) once construction is complete.* This past materializes into memorial spaces through a mixture of quiet consensus and passionate dispute. (Emphasis added.)

The Stolpersteine process has many differences when compared to the memorial creation process described by Jordan (2006). When he began the Stolpersteine Project in 1996, Demnig originally did not have legal permission to place the stones, and he bypassed land use and ownership regulations, and public debate. Although he began installing the first stones in Cologne and Berlin without permission, Demnig quietly carried on his work for years before gaining notoriety and press coverage (Grieshaber 2010). Even 16 years after the first installation, with approved memorials in approximately 700 European cities, the Stolpersteine remain controversial.

History of the Stolpersteine Project

The precursor to the Stolpersteine Project was another art installation called the Sinti and Romany Trail, which Demnig created in Cologne in 1990. The city government hired Demnig to

trace a chalk line through the city to remember the deportation route along which Roma and Sinti inhabitants were deported to concentration camps (Franke 2008). As he worked on the project, Demnig realized that Cologne's citizens had not questioned where all the victims had gone. Eventually, the Sinti and Romany trail wore off of the sidewalks, and Demnig retraced the lines in 1993. Demnig says that it was this retracing of the trail that sparked the idea for the Stolpersteine:

[As I was working,] an older lady came to me. She was a witness at that time [during the Holocaust]. She said: "Nice what you are doing here, but no gypsies ever lived in our area." I showed her all my documents. The woman's jaw dropped with the shock. That was the idea for me because she didn't realize that. *They'd lived in the same neighborhood*. It was confirmed by the Jewish community, which told me, "Until 1933, we celebrated together, with our Christian neighbors." (Transcript from Franke 2008, emphasis added).

After this conversation, Demnig designed 200 stones to install in Cologne in 1993 for the Roma and Sinti victims he had previously researched (Grieshaber 2003). However, he was not given permission to install them in Cologne's sidewalks until 2000, after facing several obstacles from the city council. During the interlude, he installed the first stone and several others illegally in Berlin in 1996. According to Demnig's website, these stones were retroactively legalized when he received permission to install the Stolpersteine in Berlin (Demnig 2012).

When Berlin and Cologne gave Demnig legal permission to install the Stolpersteine in 2000, the project began to gain some media coverage, similar to the process described by Jordan (2006). When school groups, civic organizations, and individuals began to contact him to request Stolpersteine for their communities, the project took off quickly. As Uta Franke explained:

It used to take much longer to get the permission [for new installations]. Now people call me: "We've already got our permit." They call and want us to come immediately! A year ago, I had to explain: Get a permit first. So I had some time until they called again. But now, it all happens at the same time. People have a permit, and they want the stones. Cities like Hamburg, Cologne, Berlin, Stuttgart, and Frankfurt am Main, but also smaller ones with big Jewish communities want us to come at least twice a year. Impossible to manage even in one year! (Transcript from Franke 2008).

As the project has expanded, Demnig has had to hire people to assist with management and organization of the project. Demnig's partner Uta Franke is in charge of coordinating the installation schedule, maintaining records, and archiving. Because Demnig does not have the time to make the Stolpersteine himself anymore, he turned over production of the stones to Michael Friedrich, an artist who works in Berlin (Franke 2008). To help field the many calls and emails about the project, two more paid assistants in Berlin work with people who request a Stolperstein or people who are interested in sponsoring a stone. Anna Warda coordinates the requests for Germany, and Anne Thomas coordinates international requests for the Stolpersteine in surrounding countries.

During my fieldwork in May 2011, I interviewed Anne Thomas to discuss her role in the Stolpersteine Project. Anne said that some of the most difficult aspects have been working with district and city councils like Charlottenburg, Kreuzberg, and Munich. These places initially resisted the Stolpersteine like Cologne, putting up many bureaucratic obstacles for Demnig to work through before he was allowed to install the stones. Munich still bans the stones today from public sidewalks. Anne said it is also difficult to coordinate installations outside of Germany, especially in Poland, France, and Austria. Poland has resisted the Stolpersteine on the principle of blaming Germany for the Holocaust instead of recognizing the role of some Polish civilians in murdering Jews. France used bureaucratic measures to prevent Demnig from installing Stolpersteine since the project's beginning, but according to Demnig's website, the first installations in France are planned for 2012 (Demnig 2012). Vienna has a "counterfeit" Stolpersteine project that mimics Demnig's work, but the Vienna project memorializes both Holocaust victims and Austrian soldiers who died in World War II. The complications that Anne discussed are examples of the Stolpersteine's continued controversy, despite their widespread acceptance.

Stolpersteine Process – One Artist’s Representation of the Holocaust

One of the major questions driving my research has been “How are individual and state memorial creation process different?” This question aims to understand the ways that an individual’s representation of the Holocaust past differs from the German state’s version of the past, as seen in the Mitte memorial district. In this section, I will explain how individuals who desire a Stolperstein for a specific Holocaust victim go about getting one. To better understand this process, I interviewed Gabriele Kühne and Frank Künzling, two of Berlin’s Stolpersteine district coordinators who work for the *Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand* [German Resistance Memorial Center].¹⁹ These two individuals help organize installations in Berlin’s 12 districts and assist people with archival research on a victim’s history.

The first step to obtaining a Stolperstein is to receive a permit for the installation in one of the roughly 700 cities that currently allow Demnig to install the Stolpersteine. In Berlin, the different districts may have slightly different applications for the installation permit, but the basic requirement for any Stolperstein is documented proof that the victim lived or worked at the address where the stone will be installed. Gabriele and Frank at the Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, for example, assist interested persons with archival research to obtain the needed documentation. For some victims, proof is relatively easily obtained, as the Third Reich kept meticulous and well-organized details of deportations and arrests for much of the war. During our interview, Frank showed me their office’s copy of *Gedenkbuch Berlins der jüdischen Opfer der Nationalsozialismus* [Berlin’s Memorial Book of Jewish Victims of the Nazis], a comprehensive book of 55,969 Jewish victims who were deported from Berlin or went missing during the war. The Gedenkbuch is one of the first sources

¹⁹ The Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand (GDW) has a number of purposes and operations. First, the GDW offices are themselves a memorial to the Germans who resisted the Nazi party during World War II, and the offices house a small museum/educational space for rotating exhibits about the resisters. The offices are located in the former prison that housed Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg, the German army officer who led “Operation Valkyrie,” an attempt to assassinate Adolf Hitler. The GDW also houses a research division, and it administers a number of memorials in Berlin, including the Stolpersteine in Mitte and Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg.

checked by Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand to verify victims' addresses for the Stolpersteine process.

In many cases, the research to prove a victim's address is carried out by school groups as part of their education about the Holocaust. School groups helped conduct the research for two Stolpersteine installations that I attended. At the installation for Gittel Littwack on 10 May 2011, I found out that a local Jewish middle school had helped with the research, and some of the students attended the ceremony. A school group that focused on anti-racism helped verify the address for Mathilde Jacob's Stolperstein, and the students were active participants in the installation ceremony. The group presented some information about Mathilde's life and talked about the class project's goals.

Students in cities all over Germany have helped research addresses for the Stolpersteine, making it a participatory form of memorialization (Grieshaber 2010). This aspect of the memorial process differs from that of the state-sponsored memorials, because Demnig encourages participation and input from anyone interested in the project. The state's efforts to memorialize the Holocaust past did have input from the public on whom to memorialize and what form the memorials should take. However, as Till (2005: 196) explains, the memorial district projects of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, the Jewish Museum, and the Topography of Terror were all designed by international architects Peter Eisenmann, Daniel Libeskind, and Peter Zumthor, respectively. An "expert jury" decided the winners of each competition, and although public debate over each project filled the media, it was not an official part of the competition process.²⁰ Till argues that this method of state-funded memory creates a tourist-friendly version of the past that will be

²⁰ Here is Till's description of the jury for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe design competition: "The expert jury was unusually large, with fifteen jurors, to accommodate demands by the three sponsors, but of those people few were art or architecture experts, Jews, former East Germans, or memorial center experts" (2005: 171). Interestingly, this jury was not able to decide on a single winner, providing German Chancellor Helmut Kohl two options. Both choices were rejected, and the project stalled for another year (ibid.)

consumed: “In capital cities, tourism landscapes are material and symbolic expressions of the nation in a phase of late consumer capitalism. They commodify the fears and fantasies of national hauntings by imposing order on time ... and package a palatable and profitable identity through place” (2005: 196).

After a Stolperstein permit has been obtained, the individual or group gives the information to one of Demnig’s assistants. The Stolperstein is paid for by the individual or group that requests the stone or by a separate financial sponsor, sometimes called a *Pate* (male) or *Patin* (female).²¹ Each Stolperstein costs €95 (roughly \$120), increasing to €120 in January 2012 (roughly \$153) (Demnig 2012). Part of the cost of each memorial stone offsets Demnig’s expenses and pays his workers. The remaining cost pays for the materials needed to make the Stolpersteine and for the installation of the stones.

Once the Stolperstein has been researched and paid for, the information is placed on a list for the stones to be produced. Demnig tries to include as many details about a victim’s life on a Stolpersteine as possible to help remember the personal nature of the Holocaust. As shown in the introductory vignette, a victim’s name, maiden name if applicable, birth year, death date, and his or her fate (whether he or she was deported, murdered, killed in a death camp, or committed suicide, etc.) are all listed on the Stolpersteine, if the information is known. Once on the list, the Stolpersteine are produced by Michael Friedrich in Berlin and then transported to Demnig’s workshop in Cologne. When newly created Stolpersteine have been delivered to Cologne, Demnig and another assistant take hundreds of stones in a van to deliver and install the stones. The trips are planned to enable Demnig to visit several cities on the same trip without returning to Cologne. For example, according to the Stolpersteine website (Demnig 2012), Demnig is scheduled to install

²¹ Interestingly, the Pate/Patin appellation also translates to godfather/mother. The term has important connotations, as the sponsor can be thought of as responsible for designating the site and often helps maintain the site after installation. The Pate/Patin plays a major role in ensuring that a Holocaust victim is not forgotten.

stones in 13 cities over a 12-day span in early April 2012 with a one-day break. Demnig will install Stolpersteine in Bickenbach and Beerfelden on April 10, Schriesheim on April 11, Ludwigsburg on April 12, Schwäbisch Gmünd on April 13, Böblingen on April 14, Stuttgart on April 14 and 16, Neckarsulm on April 16, Heilbronn and Weibstadt on April 17, Würzburg on April 19, and conclude with Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler and Remagen on April 19. (See figure 4.2 for a map representation of this trip.)

Next come the Stolpersteine installations, which usually begin after Demnig and his assistant find the address and a place to park their van. Then, Demnig selects the location to install the stone in the sidewalk, sometimes with the input of the family or sponsor. Depending on how the sidewalk is paved, Demnig and his assistant may have to break up asphalt or concrete with a jackhammer, but for the Berlin installations I witnessed, it was relatively easy to remove a few cobblestones with a hammer and chisel. Next, Demnig brings out one or more Stolpersteine for the

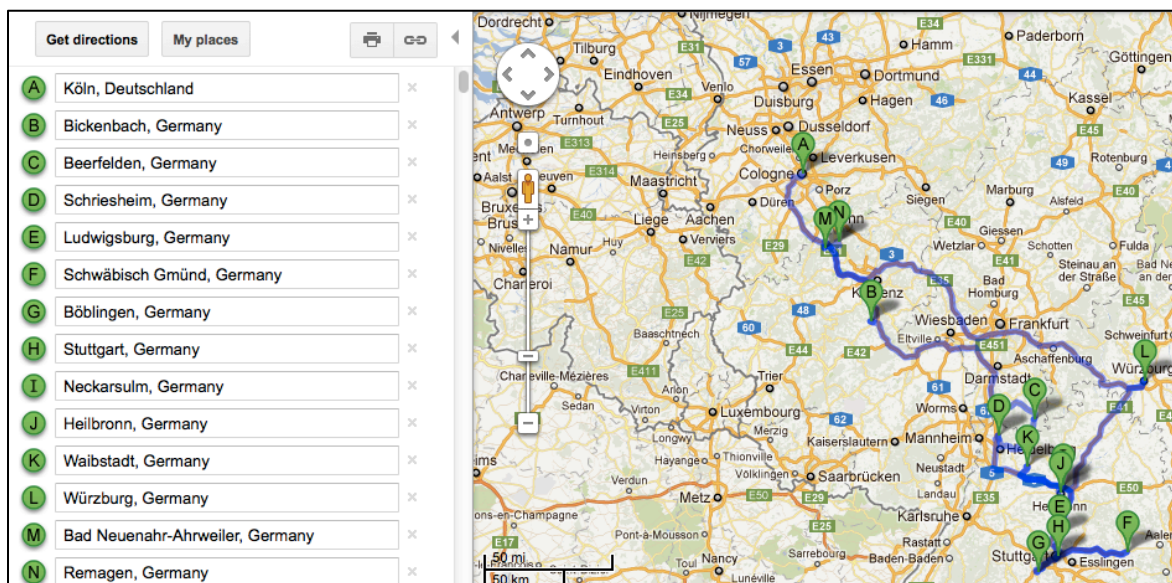


Figure 4.2. Map of the Stolpersteine installations planned for April 10-19, 2012. The Stolpersteine will be installed in the German states of North Rhine-Westphalia and Baden-Württemberg. (Image copyright: 2012 Google Maps)

location and shows them to the sponsor, family, and others who are present. He then gets down on one knee and fits the Stolpersteine into the hole by adding or removing enough dirt to level each stone. For an installation of multiple stones, Demnig will often install the Stolpersteine in an artistic or symmetrical pattern (see figures 4.3 and 4.4 for examples). Once the stones are arranged, Demnig pours concrete around the sides so the stones will be secure, and fills in the rest of the hole with the dirt gravel that was initially dug from the site. Finally, Demnig and his assistant sweep away the remaining dirt and polish the stone with rags before heading on to the next installation.

The Stolpersteine's creation process has much in common with other memorial processes described in scholarly literature. For example, the Stolpersteine are similar to Jordan's (2006) memorials that are "off the beaten path." As Jordan summarizes, there are dozens of memorial stones and plaques around Berlin that recall the memory of anti-fascist resistance fighters or early political opponents who faced persecution from the Nazis. These stones are the product of creation processes that are similar to the Stolpersteine: the memorialized victims mattered to someone after the war, and these people unassumingly went about putting a memorial in place. However, one major way that the Stolpersteine differ from these and other memorials discussed by Jordan is that the project was begun illegally. Demnig bypassed the parts of Jordan's schema that say proper land use and land ownership must be guaranteed before the memorials are built. Furthermore, many of these memorial stones and plaques described by Jordan (2006: 72) are not installed at the same location where actual persecution or resistance took place.

Now that the Stolpersteine Project has received attention from the international mass media, the creation process does fit with Jordan's schema. Individuals who want a Stolperstein must obtain the proper permission from the city, and the cities in Germany that currently allow the Stolpersteine are willing to devote parts of the publically owned landscape (most often, sidewalk space) to the memorials.



Figure 4.3. Demnig's artistic arrangement of multiple Stolpersteine. Picture taken 10 May 2011.



Figure 4.4. Demnig's artistic arrangement of multiple Stolpersteine. Picture taken 14 May 2011.

Through examining the Stolpersteine memorial process, it becomes clear that memorial creation processes change over time – an issue that Jordan (2006) does not discuss.

Revisiting the Stolpersteine as Countermonument

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, Harjes (2005) was among the first scholars to declare the Stolpersteine (a term that she takes to include memorial stones and plaques beyond the scope of Demnig's project) a countermonument to the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe. Taking this line of argument a step further, the Stolpersteine can be thought of as a counter-memorial project to many of the state-sponsored memorials, particularly the ones discussed by Till (2005). Here I will discuss five major ways that the Stolpersteine, as a project created by an individual, differ from the memorial district projects funded by the state. These differences include size, scale, audience, authenticity, and anonymity.

First, the Stolpersteine and memorial district sites differ in size. This may seem like an self-evident deduction, but in a period when “bigger” is often considered “better,” size is a measure that is worthy of critique. The size of the respective memorials is also closely tied to each memorial's cost to build, and eventually, maintain. To state the obvious, the Stolpersteine are modest in cost and size, while the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Topography of Terror, and Jewish Museum are all substantially large buildings that cost approximately €25 million, €20 million, and €30.5 million, respectively, to build.

The second major difference between the memorial projects is the scale of their physical location. The government-sponsored memorials, while large in size, are physically located at a small scale. They occupy at most a few city blocks at three distinct sites in Berlin. The Stolpersteine, on the other hand, are one of the most diffuse memorial projects in all of Europe, with 32,000 stones installed in approximately 700 cities in Germany and the surrounding countries.

In terms of audience, both sets of memorials have some common ground. Both the individually created Stolpersteine and the state-sponsored memorial district are intended to have international audiences. The Stolpersteine and memorial district are known internationally and are visited annually by millions of people from around the world. The major difference in terms of audience is the role of choice. Most visitors who visit the state-sponsored memorials *choose* to visit one or more of the memorials in Mitte. As Till (2005: 197-198) explains:

[The memorial district] will attract tourists who, in planning their travels will include a visit to at least one, if not all, of these places of memory.

Tourists will come to [the memorial district] for a number of reasons, drawn to the center of the city by their curiosity about Berlin's and Germany's unusual history or their knowledge or familiarity with images and narratives of the Holocaust and the Cold War. They might visit the Holocaust Memorial, for example, because of its location, near the Reichstag, Brandenburg Gate, and federal district... They may decide to go to the Topography of Terror because it is adjacent to one of the last remaining fragments of the Wall or because they wish to learn more about the history of Berlin during National Socialism. ...

Tourists will probably continue to spend part of a day at the Jewish Museum, already one of Germany's most visited museums.

In contrast, Gunter Demnig named his work the *Stolpersteine* Project because of the play on words that people "stumble upon" the memorial stones unexpectedly. This audience is meant to figuratively "trip" over a small piece of the past in ways that cause them to remember that the Holocaust affected real people with real lives. This is one of the most important ways that the Stolpersteine are distinguished as a countermonument to the memorial district.

The fourth way in which the Stolpersteine differ from Berlin's memorial district is authenticity. The authenticity of the site on which a memorial is installed is a crucial difference between the Stolpersteine and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and the Jewish Museum. This difference occurs because the two memorial district sites are not specifically located

at former sites of violence or trauma.²² However, the Stolpersteine and the Topography of Terror do have authentic locations. The Stolpersteine mark former houses or businesses from which Jews were deported, or in some cases, killed on the spot. The Topography of Terror is located at the site of the former headquarters of the Gestapo and the SS-Reichssicherheitshauptamt [the Reich's Main Security Office].

Authenticity is closely tied to anonymity, because the authenticity of a memorial site is validated and confirmed by focusing on specific people who once existed – lived, worked, played, ate, cried, bled, and even died – at the place where the memorial has been placed. Harjes (2005: 142) says that while the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe attempts to be intellectually and emotively accessible to a wide audience through its abstract design, the memorial has a limited effectiveness:

Whereas every type or size of memorial is meant to elicit emotions, the experience-based memorial foregrounds this intention, investing much effort and expense on an elaborate manipulation of reality. People visit such a memorial expecting an emotional "ride." The designer of the national Holocaust memorial expects visitors walking among the thousands of narrowly spaced stelae to experience feelings of claustrophobia and oppression reminiscent of the experience of Jews in the concentration camps.

Despite the enormous effort and expense invested in its design, the national Holocaust memorial promises to fulfill the ... functions of contemporary memorials to only a limited degree. Those with little knowledge about or interest in the Holocaust – which describes most young people in Germany today – are unlikely to have the intended emotional experience.

As I will continue to show in Chapter 5, many people who “stumble upon” a Stolperstein are deeply moved by its authenticity and ability to make the Holocaust personal. These five categories of difference between individual- and state-created memorials help contextualize the responses to the Stolpersteine that I observed during fieldwork in May 2011.

²² However, it should be noted that all of the memorial district sites are in the same area as many of the former Third Reich political offices, including the Ministry of Propaganda and the Ministry of Aviation (whose headquarters today houses the German Finance Ministry) on Wilhelmstraße, the Wehrmacht [army] headquarters (which today houses the Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand offices), and Hitler's Chancellery, which was destroyed by the East German government after the war (Ladd 1997).

Chapter 5 – Fieldwork Findings in Berlin: Responses to the Holocaust Past

In this thesis, I have argued that individuals and the state embed different understandings of the past in the memorial landscape. In this chapter I will discuss four types of personal responses to the Stolpersteine that I found during fieldwork in Berlin. The four responses help us understand how individuals come to interpret the Holocaust past and its meaning for modern Germany. Young (1993: xi) explains in the preface to his study on European Holocaust memorials that he replaces the idea of *collective* memory with *collected* memory:

I prefer to examine ‘collected memory,’ the many discrete memories that are gathered into common material spaces and assigned common meaning. A society’s memory, in this context, might be regarded as an aggregate collection of its members’ many, often competing memories. ... [A] society’s memory cannot exist outside of those people who do the remembering — even if such memory happens to be at the society’s bidding, in its name.

My observations of people’s responses to the Stolpersteine show that memorials can have a range of different meanings, which may or may not be tied to the realities of the Holocaust. These responses became apparent when I observed pedestrians interacting with the Stolpersteine and when I discussed the project with several individuals. I will outline the four responses before discussing each in greater detail. I have categorized the four responses as follows: sanctification, general awareness, lack of awareness, and aversion.

The four responses to the Stolpersteine and the categorization of memorialization are similar to those developed by Foote (2003) – sanctification, designation, rectification, and obliteration. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, Foote’s categorization of different types of memorialization is based on sites of violence in the United States. While these types may not be universally applicable, Foote’s categorization of what happens at the sites of violence does share similarities with the responses to the Stolpersteine in Germany.

Sanctification

The most favorable reactions to the Stolpersteine came from people who were closely involved with the project. In addition to Demnig and his assistants, one or more Stolpersteine sponsors (people who paid for the stones to be produced and placed) were present at almost all of the installations. These sponsors were very familiar with the project, and many were related to the victims who were memorialized. Sponsors and other family members often had an emotional response while explaining the details of the victim's past, and several installations were accompanied by a ceremony where tears were shed while Holocaust atrocities were recounted. For many families, the Stolpersteine serve as a form of final resting place for their relatives despite Demnig's intention that the memorials should *not* be considered gravestones (Grieshaber 2010).

One example of the deeply personal and highly ceremonial installations occurred at the Stolpersteine installation for Rachel and Solomon Schmidt at Pintschstraße 18, Friedrichshain, on May 11, 2011. The Schmidts' children and grandchildren traveled from the United States, Israel, and other German cities to witness the ceremony, and the family who sponsored the stones came from France. Though Demnig was only present for about 15 minutes to install the Stolpersteine before driving on to the next installation, the family stayed at the site for over an hour. They held a ceremony in which they recalled the lives of Rachel and Solomon before singing a song in Hebrew and reciting the Kaddish. The family members said during the installation that this was the burial they had never been able to have, and they had special yarmulkes made for the occasion (see figure 3.2 on page 39). The yarmulkes were printed with a Hebrew text that read, "In remembrance of Rachel and Solomon Schmidt, done [performed] in Berlin on May 11, 2011."

The Schmidt installation and ceremony was an excellent example of sanctification. As I discussed in Chapter 4, the people present for the installation added a degree of sanctification that was not felt or expressed at other installations that I observed, where few people were in attendance

and little was said about the victims. For the Schmidt family, the best way to remember their forebears was to observe several Jewish customs, including singing, reciting the Kaddish, and laying candles and roses by the Stolpersteine (see figure 5.1). The two stones were installed in front of the Schmidts' former home on a quiet street where few people will notice it, but to the family and financial sponsors, the place is now sanctified.

Another example of sanctification emerged in conversation with my friend and translator, Gabi, while we were walking on Giesebrechtstraße in Charlottenburg. Gabi and I had talked to several of the neighborhood's older residents about the Stolpersteine on a gray, rainy day before we walked the rest of the short street to look at its many memorial stones (see figures 5.2 and 5.3).²³ After walking in relative silence before crossing the street, Gabi burst into a tirade about how utterly ridiculous it was for the Nazis to deny Jews their citizenship.

Gabi: Your name is Erik Schweitzer. How much more German could it be? Kurt Meyer. Arthur Landsberger. Käthe Landsberger. Of course you don't identify with being Jewish, your name is German! What else *could* they be, other than German?!

Gabi's comments refer to the oft-occurring situation in Germany during the Third Reich in which Jews could hardly believe the horror stories of Jews being murdered in a supposedly civilized nation. Many Jews had gladly fought for and supported the Kaiser in World War I and were decorated soldiers or were middle and upper class citizens with white-collar jobs. These Jews wondered how Hitler could kill his fellow Germans (and these were Jews that identified as being Germany). Gabi's words struck me as a sanctified response to seeing the Stolpersteine because she recognized the humanity of the victims memorialized by the Stolpersteine, even as she expressed anger at the Third Reich's atrocities.

²³ Giesebrechtstraße has been a focal point for the Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf Stolpersteine coordinators' memorial efforts. In two short blocks, the street has more than 100 Stolpersteine. This is not without controversy (as many Berliner say: "Better class than mass!"), but Demnig and Berlin city officials do not have specifications for the ways that districts handle their research efforts. (Email correspondence with Frank Künzling, May 18, 2011).



Figure 5.1. Installation ceremony for Rachel and Solomon Schmidt. Pintschstraße 18, Friedrichshain, Berlin. Picture taken 11 May 2011.



Figure 5.2. Stolpersteine for Arthur Landsberger, Käthe Landsberger, and Kurt Meyer. Giesebrechtstraße 7, Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf, Berlin. Picture taken 14 May 2011.

Gabi also made an interesting comparison between the Stolpersteine's aim to memorialize individual victims at a specific place, and the Nazi's efforts to eradicate "Jewish space" across Germany.

Gabi: [The Stolpersteine project] is quite fascinating, because you have these beautiful, old buildings, and this one up there – the new one – it was completely destroyed. So this whole part of the block still remains. But [Demnig installs] the stones even in front of the newly erected building.

To put Gabi's comment in context, it is useful to briefly explain the history of Charlottenburg after WWII. Much of the Charlottenburg district (including Giesebrechtstraße) was damaged during the bombing of Berlin during the war. The district was largely restored in the 1950s and 1960s when Berlin was still separated into East and West (figure 5.3 is one example of a restored building on Giesebrechtstraße.) According to Ladd (1997: 180-181), West Germany and its allies could not afford to let the capitalist enclave of West Berlin fall victim to the Cold War. The strategic plan to keep the city alive (and thriving) was to establish a system of consumer capitalism by injecting millions of Deutschmarks into the city, particularly around the Kurfürstendamm area in Charlottenburg.²⁴ (See figure 5.4) Despite the profusion of consumer space that was built on the Ku'damm, urban planners restored old buildings on many of the cross streets – including Giesebrechtstraße – to their former uses as homes, apartments, and the occasional small business.

Understanding Charlottenburg's pattern of urban restoration provides clarity to Gabi's second statement. She expressed her amazement that the Stolpersteine are placed for victims even when the original house or business no longer exists. Gabi's response to the Stolpersteine helps nuance and explain the power response of Sanctification: By placing a memorial stone at a location where a person lived and breathed, Demnig ties that individual's specific role in the Holocaust past

²⁴ During the Cold War period, the Kurfürstendamm (Ku'damm for short) already had crowds of people, shops, and restaurants while much of the rest of the city was being rebuilt. It was here in 1965 that the "capitalist shrine" of the Europa Center was built with 22 stories of shopping, office space, and a rotating Mercedes-Benz star on the roof. Other high-rise buildings were built around the Ku'damm in a similar style (Ladd 1997: 180-181).



Figure 5.3. Giesebrechtstraße 8. One of the many renovated buildings in Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf with ties to the Holocaust Past (as demonstrated by the Stolpersteine in front of the entryway.) Picture taken 14 May 2011.



Figure 5.4. The Kurfürstendamm and Europa Center. Picture taken 18 July 2008.

to the landscape, even if part of the material reality of that past (the building itself) is no longer present. Demnig's actions tie identity to place, creating a landscape of belonging (Schein 2009) that is strongly in opposition to the Nazi landscape of exclusion.

I observed the next example of sanctification with a large group of people that attended a Stolperstein installation at a school in Mitte, at the corner of Altonaerstraße and Lessingstraße. This school offers an anti-racism course in which students help research the history of a victim who once lived at the school's location. There were already seven Stolpersteine installed at the site, and Demnig added a new one to those already in front of the school. The school group joined Demnig for the installation, telling the audience about the class's purpose while holding up a banner that read "A school without racism is a school with courage" (see figure 5.5) They also told the history of the victim, Mathilde Jacob, who was deported on July 27, 1942, to Theresienstadt and died there in 1943. This was an obvious example of sanctification because of the ceremonial aspects of the installation, which had been perfected during the seven previous Stolpersteine installations. The installation had many ritualistic components that were similar to well rehearsed religious ceremonies. After Demnig had installed the stone, the school group and other attendees crowded in to see the stone. Then, without being prompted, different students read information about the Stolpersteine project and about Mathilde Jacob, the victim being memorialized during the ceremony.

The final example of sanctification happened several days after witnessing my last Stolpersteine installation, after Demnig had left Berlin to continue his busy installation schedule. Gabi, my translator, had to leave Berlin for a few days toward the end of my fieldwork, so I was on my own to conduct the last interviews. Early on in the fieldwork, I sat at the neighborhood coffee shop across my apartment at Metzger Straße 30 in Prenzlauerberg. Each time, I organized my thoughts about the day's research for a few hours and quietly observed the pedestrians interacting with (or mostly ignoring) a Stolperstein outside the café's front door (see figure 5.6). The café, called



Figure 5.5. School group at the installation for Mathilde Jacob. Mitte, Berlin. Picture taken 10 May 2011.



Figure 5.6. Leibhaftig café and Stolperstein for Ruth Joseph. Metzer Straße 30, Prenzlauerberg, Berlin. Picture taken 4 May 2011.

Leibhaftig [which literally translates as “incarnate,” or “in the flesh”], is run by a man and woman who spent every sunny afternoon outside with their friends and children, who played in a park around the corner.

While the atmosphere at the outdoor café was nice to brainstorm and conduct observations, it was not until the end of the trip that I mustered the nerve to inquire about the Stolpersteine with one of the owners. When I finally asked her about the Stolpersteine after I paid my bill, I could tell that she was extremely proud to have someone ask about it. Her face lit up as she told me the stone was installed in June 2009 for Ruth Joseph, a 16-year-old girl who had lived in the apartment until 1942. It turned out that the café owner’s husband (she pointed and said “the chubby one over there”) was the sponsor for this stone. She also said that the girl was deported in December in snow up to her knees and was not allowed to take anything with her. The Leibhaftig owner sounded sad to tell me that she did not know any more about the Joseph family’s fate after their deportation.

This example of sanctification was the only one I observed that was not at a Stolperstein installation. When I talked with someone who lived and worked around a stone every day, I learned that the reverence and veneration for Holocaust victims continues for years after the memorial is installed. Even at a site where only one pedestrian out of 70 stopped to read the Stolperstein, and only four looked at it at all, the sponsor of the Stone was still proud of her contribution to the memorial landscape.

General Awareness

The second response, general awareness, became apparent during informal interviews with the citizens of Berlin who did not have a personal connection to the Stolpersteine. These participants revealed that the Stolpersteine were widely known in Germany because of regular media

coverage, and most pedestrians had some knowledge about why the stones were installed. Participants often referred to the project as a memorial for the *Opfern der NS-Zeit* – a term that refers to *all* of the victims of the Nazi period, not only Jews. This indicated to me that they were aware of the stones’ purpose and meaning. This word choice is the antipode to the Nazi ideology of categorizing (and thus empowering the discrimination of) people according to essentialist classifications of race, ethnicity, physical or mental ability, belief systems, or sexual orientation. On two occasions, older pedestrians told me stories about the victims, which they heard when they attended memorial installations. Most of the pedestrians seemed to enjoy explaining the stones’ meaning to an *Ausländer* (foreigner), and they gladly expressed their opinions on the Stolpersteine. Three interviewees used similar phrases when asked about the Stolpersteine, calling them “valid” or “fitting” memorials for individual victims of the Holocaust. Here I will relate some of the cases of general awareness that came about during my fieldwork.

I interviewed a Berliner in his late 40s a few feet away from three Stolpersteine on Friedrichstraße near Checkpoint Charlie. The man had heard of the Stolpersteine through press coverage some time ago. He said that he only occasionally walked on Friedrichstraße, and he was not familiar with the story for the three Stolpersteine at Friedrichstraße 55 (figure 5.7).²⁵ He did not notice the Stolpersteine on this particular day, but he had seen other Stolpersteine at the Hausvogteiplatz a few blocks away. When asked what the Stolpersteine meant to him, he responded that he knew that the stones were “memorials for victims of fascism,” but not much else. When asked about other Holocaust memorials in Berlin, he said that the Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz (House of the Wannsee Conference) memorial and education center in the Grunewald

²⁵ The Stolpersteine seen in figure 5.8 are for Arthur, Charlotte, and Meta Kroner. All three worked at this address (*Hier arbeitet*), which suggests that it was likely a Jewish workplace. The Kroners died during the Holocaust in 1943. Meta was deported and murdered in Auschwitz, and Charlotte and Arthur committed suicide in January and April, respectively. The Stolpersteine for Arthur and Charlotte list their deaths as “Flucht in den Tod,” a euphemism for suicide.



Figure 5.7. Stolpersteine for the Kroner family at Friedrichstraße 55. Picture taken 7 May 2011.

district was the most meaningful memorial to him. In particular, the stark exhibits on planning the “Final Solution,” which took place at Wannsee under the direction of SS-General Reinhard Heydrich, made a deep impression on him.

This general awareness response is very similar to Foote’s designation category, in which the victims of violence are remembered with a marker or stone, but not sanctified by the community with a ceremony (2003: 16-20). The victims’ former place of residence or business is indeed marked with a type of memorial, as is required for designation, but it was not considered sanctified by this interviewee. However, the man *was* aware that these three individuals were victims of the Nazis’ fascism, and he knew of other Stolpersteine through the media and those that he had seen at Hausvogteiplatz. This example helps explain how the Stolpersteine do not fit perfectly into

Foote's schema of sanctification and designation because individuals have different responses to the Stolpersteine depending on a number of factors, particularly their relationship to the victim.

A few days later, I struck up a conversation with an older woman at a bus stop in the Spandau district about some nearby Stolpersteine. She had heard of the project before, and she usually stopped to read a Stolperstein whenever she saw one. When asked if she knew about the reasons for the memorial, she told me that they were for “gedenken an getöten Menschen” – literally translated as “remembering killed humans.” She also called the Stolpersteine “a recollection of a worse, more diabolic time,” before her bus arrived and we had to part ways.

As in the interview on Friedrichstraße, this woman's interpretations also demonstrate that lines of distinction between Foote's sanctification and designation can be quite blurry. In a similar manner, my categories of sanctification and general awareness are not strictly defined categories. The woman's response does not indicate that she necessarily sanctifies the place or the victims, but she was aware of the project's intent. However, her response to the Stolpersteine is not the same general awareness as that of the man on Friedrichstraße. While the man claims to know that the Stolpersteine are for “victims of fascism” as he learned from the media, the woman recognizes that each stone is installed for a real person [*Mensch*].

Another instance of the general awareness response came up in a conversation with two twenty-something females outside the Jewish Museum. Toward the end of the trip, I knew that I did not have time to tour the Jewish Museum, but I wanted to take some photos of the exterior for potential future use. Across from the museum was a Stolperstein that I did not know about, so I stopped to look at it. As the young women went by, I asked them if they knew anything about the stone, and we struck up a conversation. It turned out that one of the women was a German who lived in Kiel, and the other was her cousin from Wisconsin. The German woman told me that Gunter Demnig had installed a Stolperstein in front of her apartment in Kiel earlier in the week.

During the installation, one of Demnig's assistants rang her doorbell to ask if he could use an electrical outlet for his tools.

After our brief conversation, I could not help but think of how interesting it was that these two young women, out of anyone I could have talked with outside the Jewish Museum, had been part of a Stolperstein installation earlier in the week.²⁶ They said that they were not familiar with the Stolpersteine before the installation, but Demnig informed them about the project during the installation. When I interviewed them, they knew that the Stolpersteine are installed for all victims of the Holocaust and that the stones are located all over Germany. The two young women said that they were not related to the victim being memorialized, and they did not know who sponsored the stone. To me, this is a perfect example of the general awareness response, because the two did not consider the stone to be particularly sacred or sanctified, but they had learned about the project and the victim through their participation in the installation.

Lack of Awareness

Fieldwork in Berlin revealed that the third common response to the Stolpersteine was a lack of awareness about the project. I mainly observed this with immigrants or tourists who do not speak German. I first observed this response while sitting at a café in Kreuzberg to watch pedestrians interact with some nearby Stolpersteine. A Turkish woman who worked in the café had absolutely no idea what the Stolpersteine were, although a new stone had been added to two older stones next to the café just a week earlier. When asked if she knew why the stones were there, she replied that she thought that they might be markers for gas lines under the sidewalk.

Another person who lacked awareness of the Stolpersteine was Tim, an American opera singer who lives in Mönchengladbach. Tim's brother Mark, one of my former professors at UT

²⁶ The encounter was all the more remarkable, in hindsight, because Kiel is approximately four hours away from Berlin (by car), and Kiel only has 128 Stolpersteine according to the Kiel city website (City of Kiel 2012).

Martin, gave me Tim's contact information. I conducted a Skype interview with Tim about the Stolpersteine, and he said that he had never heard of the project. He, like the waitress in Kreuzberg, thought that the Stolpersteine might be related to the Mönchengladbach's city projects or gas lines.

Tim: You know, I think I've seen a lot of them [the Stolpersteine]. I've never paid any attention to them. I've never looked at them, but really seriously, just a week ago, I was walking down the street and – what are they made of?

Matt: Brass, I think.

Tim: Yeah, so I noticed that there were four of them together, and I looked at them. I had seen them around before but hadn't really thought of them. I thought they were for the city to mark gas lines, or measure something. I didn't really look at them before, and I looked at them this time and I said, "Oh... that's what this is." I just thought they were specially for Mönchengladbach, or around here. But I didn't know it was a countrywide project.

Both of these examples of a lack of awareness could be attributed to the "foreigner" status of the interviewee. The waitress in Kreuzberg had a difficult time communicating with me in German or English, and her guess that the Stolpersteine was perhaps related to the city gas lines suggests that she had not or was not able to read about the project in the news coverage. Tim, on the other hand, does speak some German, but he never stopped to look closely at the stones until after he heard about the Stolpersteine from his brother, Mark. During our interview, Tim described how his response to the Stolpersteine changed from a lack of awareness to a general awareness about the project.

Matt: What was your initial reaction to seeing or hearing about the Stolpersteine?

Tim: Well, to be honest, it was "Oh, I didn't know what this was." I thought it was a measuring point. (laughs) That's what I thought it was until I looked down at it, so I was surprised by it. It didn't affect me in any way, because I knew that, you know, practically every street, and every house, and every town, and every corner – there were people deported.

By saying he was not affected by the Stolpersteine, Tim did not consider the Stolpersteine to be sanctified, although he told me twice that the project was "a brilliant idea." He also said that he did

not visit other Holocaust memorials, but he thought that the Stolpersteine were different from the major Holocaust memorials because they were specific, personal and more widespread.

Aversion

The fourth response to the Stolpersteine is an aversion to the memorials. Some municipal governments have banned Demnig from installing Stolpersteine. The most infamous instance is Munich, where Charlotte Knoblauch, the president of the German Central Council of Jews, and Munich Mayor Christian Ude banned the memorials from public-owned property in 2004 (Perman 2007, Pearson 2010). Knoblauch did not support the Stolpersteine because she believed that stepping on the Stolpersteine is sacrilegious. According to Jewish religious beliefs, it is extremely disrespectful to step on a grave, and Knoblauch believed that this would happen with the Stolpersteine (see figure 5.8). However, this goes against Demnig's belief that the Stolpersteine should not be considered gravestones.



Figure 5.8. Pedestrians walking on three Stolpersteine. Picture taken 7 May 2011.

On 20 November 2011, Munich received its first new Stolpersteine in several years. According to Janne Weinzierl (2011), who posted on the *Stolpersteine für München* Facebook page after the installation, “The Stolpersteine installation this afternoon by Gunter Demnig was very moving, and now all 12 [former] inhabitants of this house at 3 Kyreinstraße are personally remembered, and also a stone for Eugenie Isaac was installed. ... Gunter Demnig justified his work with conviction and full humility.” Munich’s official policy is to still ban the Stolpersteine from public spaces, but Stolpersteine like those at 3 Kyreinstraße can be installed on private property with consent from the owner. Through Facebook and other websites, the *Stolpersteine Initiative für München*, a group of people interested in the project, are working to bring more Stolpersteine to Munich on private property.

The Munich example is the most high profile example of a city banning the Stolpersteine, but other cities have banned them as well, including Pulheim (Mrziglod 2010). According to Perman (2007), cities that ban the Stolpersteine usually do so because they ascribe a metaphorical meaning to the Stolpersteine that Demnig never intended. This is most commonly seen with those critics who say it is offensive to step on the stones as a grave marker. This is one of the most often cited reasons to ban the Stolpersteine, because Charlotte Knoblauch, leader of the German Council on Jews in Munich, did not want the stones to be stepped on in a disrespectful manner. This metaphorical resistance is one of several kinds of aversion to the memorial project.

Another example of aversion to the Stolpersteine can be found in many German cities. There have been some reports of homeowners who do not want the memorials in front of their houses, claiming that they will lower property values. This first occurred in Cologne, when a homeowner took Demnig to court to prevent him from installing a Stolperstein in the sidewalk (publicly owned space) in front of the homeowner’s property (Perman 2007). Demnig said that the homeowner claimed it would lower his property value by 100,000 Euros. This kind of aversion amounts to little more than

an excuse for homeowners when they do not want to be confronted with the past on a regular basis. To me, this demonstrates that the Stolpersteine do challenge some people to (uncomfortably) remember that the Holocaust affected all kinds of people, including people just like them.

The next type of aversion occurs when neo-Nazis express their hatred of the Stolpersteine, as they have of many Holocaust memorials. As of 2008, at least 41 stones had been vandalized across Germany. According to the documentary film *Stolperstein* (Franke 2008), police officers regularly accompany Demnig when he places stones in eastern German regions with large numbers of neo-Nazis. The dialog from the documentary film shows that Demnig is not too alarmed by the neo-Nazi threats, but that he does take precautions in some parts of Germany, including Brandenburg where this conversation took place (Franke 2008).

1st Policeman: The NPD neo-Nazi Party made a flyer. Mr. Pehtke has one.
Demnig: When did it show up?
2nd Policeman: People living around here had it in their mailboxes.
1st Policeman: We and the mayor decided to come, so we won't have any nasty surprises.
Demnig: But they tried really hard to make it look good!

The neo-Nazi aversion stems from a desire to obliterate the past, as discussed by Foote (1997). However, unlike the examples given by Foote, in which a community wants to forget a horrible crime or an unwanted criminal, the neo-Nazis deny the Holocaust ever happened.

International aversion to the project can be seen in the examples of France and Poland, which both initially resisted Demnig's attempts to install the Stolpersteine. France resisted through a number of bureaucratic obstacles that Demnig and his assistants had to work through before successfully scheduling installations in 2012 (Demnig 2012). According to an interview with Anne Thomas, the Stolpersteine Project's coordinator for installations outside of Germany, Poland would not permit the memorials during the project's early years because of a perception that the Germans were largely responsible for the Holocaust. As Thomas said, "It is much easier to blame the

Holocaust on the Germans instead of recognizing the role [that] Poles played in murdering Polish Jews” (Anne Thomas, May 2011, personal interview). The project has had continued difficulties in Poland, despite a few stones that have been installed in Kolin, a small town about an hour’s drive from the German border, and Wroclaw, the fourth most populous city in Poland.

Discussion

Individuals’ responses to the Stolpersteine range from aversion to the memorials by neo-Nazis and others to a deep, personal connection to specific Stolpersteine by family members and financial sponsors. By focusing on individual victims – giving a “face” to the Holocaust – Demnig’s project is changing some peoples’ understanding of the Holocaust past. As Mitchell (1996:9) explains, the landscape (the Stolpersteine, in this case) can be used as a powerful ideology (the remembrance of individual people who were mercilessly killed by an evil regime) to shape the lives of the people who encounter that landscape. Demnig envisioned the Stolpersteine to be distinctly different from the large, impersonal memorials created by the German government. As Demnig himself has said, the trigger behind the project was “the idea that we *have* to restore their names. In the concentration camp they were numbers” (Franke 2008).

The Stolpersteine have been a source of great comfort for families of Holocaust victims while at the same time being a target of continual hatred by others. This juxtaposition of responses to the landscape demonstrates that Germany’s past continues to be a source of cultural, political, and generational struggle 67 years after the end of World War II. Because these contestations continue to be fought out through landscape, the representations of Germany’s past are challenged and reshaped. As Demnig continues his work and the number of Stolpersteine increases every year, the Holocaust past will continue to be embedded in the German landscape in a way that challenges more people to think about the past and question their prior understanding of it.

Chapter 6 – Contexts of the Stolpersteine

On Friday, January 27, 2012, the world remembered the 67th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz on International Holocaust Remembrance Day – a holiday designated by the United Nations in 2005. In Germany, the day was observed this year with a special session of the Bundestag, during which the Bundestag President Norbert Lammert encouraged all Germans to resist all forms of right-wing extremism (Benzow 2012). On Thursday, April 19, 2012, Jews around the globe, including the growing Jewish communities in Germany, will have another Holocaust remembrance day called *Yom Hasboah* on the anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising of 1943 (USHMM 2012a, 2012b).

Holocaust remembrance days are not the only way that Germany's past continues to reverberate, as President Lammert's speech against extremism has a special significance this year. In late 2011, revelations of a neo-Nazi terrorist cell based in Zwickau shocked Germans across the country. On 11 November, police investigating an explosion at a house in Zwickau, Saxony, and investigators at a double suicide in Eisenach, Thuringia, began to piece together evidence that the two incidents were related. Two men in the Eisenach suicide were suspected to be part of a Zwickau-based neo-Nazi organization. This "terrorist cell," as the German media labeled it, is suspected of murdering nine immigrants and a policewoman in Germany since 2000. The two men and a female accomplice called themselves "National Socialist Underground" and are believed to have targeted, almost exclusively, foreign Turks living in Germany (Der Spiegel 2011b).

However, a fringe group of extremists – who would praise Hitler all while pushing for a "pure" Aryan society – is just one more way that Germany's past continues to be felt. Another example can be seen in the stalled creation of a national memorial for Roma and Sinti Holocaust victims. The Roma and Sinti memorial has been discussed by the media and debated by the public

for several years. An estimated 500,000 Roma and Sinti were murdered by the Third Reich (Der Spiegel 2011a), yet plans for the construction of a memorial for Roma and Sinti Holocaust victims have been delayed numerous times since the project began. The memorial was originally scheduled for completion in October 2010, but disputes over the workmanship on the memorial and payment to the Israeli artist who designed it have postponed the unveiling throughout 2010 and 2011 (Berg 2010, Der Spiegel 2011a).

Hundreds of other examples could be given – a web search of one of Berlin’s major newspapers, the *Berliner Morgenpost*, yielded 2,884 articles with the word Holocaust in the text from June 2001 to February 2012. Over the course of just over a decade, the *Morgenpost* has printed articles that, at the very least, *mention* the Holocaust at an average rate of 1.5 times every other day.²⁷ By most indications, the Holocaust past is still defining Germany today. At the same time, not all of Germany’s conversation about the Holocaust is negative, like the neo-Nazi terror cell or the stalled Roma and Sinti memorial project. The Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe’s underground information center welcomes half a million visitors each year, and the above-ground portion of the memorial – consisting of 2,711 concrete stelae – has millions of visitors that are not counted.

This vast array of Holocaust representations – ghosts, to use Ladd’s (1997) wording – is the context in which the Stolpersteine Project has been created. At the same time, the Stolpersteine are distinctly different from state-sponsored monuments like the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, the Topography of Terror, the Jewish Museum, or the planned Roma and Sinti Memorial. As memorials created by an individual artist, the Stolpersteine are not given one definite, concrete meaning, but are left open to interpretation. “Officials lay wreaths [at the state-sponsored

²⁷ From October 6, 2001, to February 19, 2012, 3,789 days had elapsed. 2,884 mentions of the Holocaust divided by 3,789 days is equal to 0.7611 times per day, or 1.522 times every other day. For comparative purposes, *Bild*, a Hamburg newspaper, had an average of 0.3353 articles per day, 740 articles over a span of 2,207 days. Please note that these are convenience samples, not intended to be statistically representative of all German newspapers.

memorials], but average citizens rarely bother with these places,” Demnig has said. “[Stolpersteine] are on streets where everyone walks. The names cry out from the sidewalks of everyday life” (Quoted in Nickerson 2007). As my thesis has shown, the public responds to the Stolpersteine in a variety of ways, from knowing little or nothing about the project to sanctifying a brass stone in the sidewalk. By remembering the *absence* of a single person with a single stone in the landscape, Demnig causes people to mentally “stumble” over the implications of that absence. *What if this person were still alive today? Would he or she have gone on to greatness? Or contributed to society in some way?* The Stolpersteine remind us that we can never know.

As discussed in Chapter 1, all of the Holocaust representations discussed in this thesis have been the subject of heated debate by scholars, German politicians, and the general public. Adorno’s (2003: 163) argument from 1949 (“To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric”) remains incredibly powerful today. Language alone cannot encapsulate the entirety of the Holocaust, and yet it seems like the world today cannot or will not stop discussing it. This raises epistemological questions that cannot be ignored: Should we even try to discuss and learn from the Holocaust? Is it even possible?

Pleasants (2004: 188-189) summarizes the logic behind these questions – the ‘un-knowability thesis,’ as follows:

The epistemic side to this ‘un-knowability’ thesis embraces a particular conception of the nature of knowledge and understanding. On this conception, to know is to understand; and to understand is to render familiar something which was hitherto unknown, strange, or alien. The process of coming to understand something consists in making that which is unfamiliar familiar, which *ipso facto* changes it, or changes the inquirer’s relationship to it. When we come to understand something that was previously unknown we do so by relating and comparing it to that which we *do* (or think we do) understand.

This process of changing-through-understanding is perhaps no bad thing with regard to the objects of natural scientific understanding, where the aim is to render the natural world a more hospitable place for human habitation. And perhaps it does not matter for many kinds of social scientific inquiry where the orienting aim is also to effect changes that improve the condition of people’s lives. But with respect to the Holocaust, ... we do not, or should not, want to make the object of understanding

more familiar so that it becomes easier to deal with and live with. If, in coming to understand the Holocaust, we change it into something recognizably familiar, something that fits in with other things that we know, we thereby distort and falsify what happened. This would be a self-defeating exercise. We start off wanting to understand the Holocaust, but through the very process of seeking that understanding we distort and falsify it (emphasis original).

Pleasant's argument is a reinterpretation of the historiography framework explained in Chapter 1. By attempting to make the Holocaust into something we can understand, we dishonor the Holocaust through simplification or selectively rewriting the past. However, Pleasants continues, the un-knowability thesis should not be taken as a literal claim to the truth, but as an expressive act of speech.

On this view, the claim that the Holocaust is un-knowable is neither true nor false, but rather the expression of an attitude to what was done. Perhaps what is being expressed is a worry that if one should ever come to understand how perpetrators did what they did one would thereby have reduced oneself to their level, to have rendered oneself capable of behaving in that, or a similar, way (2004: 189).

Demnig's reasons for creating the Stolpersteine Project, and then making it his life's work, speak to this second epistemological understanding of the un-knowability thesis. Demnig devised the stones to be a permanent memorial to individual victims of the Holocaust and to preserve a small piece of their memory – their last known home or business before deportation – for future generations. Demnig's oft-repeated quote that explains why he feels that the Stolpersteine are necessary sheds further light on his perspective: *Ein Mensch ist erst vergessen, wenn sein Name vergessen ist*. "A person is only forgotten when his/her name is forgotten" (translation mine).

Research Contributions

My thesis research contributes to the discipline of geography and helps nuance the literature of cultural geography, landscape studies, and memorial processes. My findings provide insights into how cultural landscapes are produced. Researching the Stolpersteine also contributes to literature on

the memorial landscape of Berlin and Germany's memorial creation processes. I will discuss each of these contributions below.

I have researched the Stolpersteine Project from a geographic perspective because the memorialization process is inherently geographic. Memorials of all types work to embed meaning in the landscape, turning *space* into *place*. Before the Stolpersteine are installed, the locations in Berlin and other European cities at which Holocaust victims once lived have few meanings for people outside the victims' family. They are simply buildings and sidewalks that are a part of everyday urban life. However, when Demnig installs a Stolperstein at a site, he is intentionally *re-placing* a victim in the physical space from which they were once removed. By evoking their memory and marking their former location, Demnig's project causes at least some people to realize that a *real* person actually lived at the address – not just an “anonymous victim of history” (Nickerson 2007). Once this small part of the urban landscape takes on a new meaning, even if just for a few people, the space has been turned into a place embedded with social meaning. This is the emotional power of a single Stolperstein: to cause individuals to “stumble” over genocide in their everyday life.²⁸

Researching the Stolpersteine contributes to the literature of cultural geography in several ways. First, my thesis has shown that individual memorial projects differ from state-sponsored memorials in five ways: size, scale, audience, authenticity, and anonymity. This categorization complements the work of Harjes (2005) and Till (2005), particularly because the Stolpersteine can be thought of as a “countermonument” to the large, state-sponsored memorials discussed by both authors. While the large, government memorials are some of the most famous Holocaust memorials in the world, one still must choose to visit them. With the Stolpersteine, a person does not usually know where he or she will stumble across a memorial, and this unintended “trip” over the past leads to a range of responses, as my fieldwork discovered.

²⁸ Thanks to Josh Inwood for devising the phrase “stumbling over genocide.”

My research also contributes to the area of landscape studies. Lefebvre (1974: 26) states that, “(Social) space is a (social) product.” One of the implications of this social production is that every society produces its own space, a concept especially true for Germany in light of its tumultuous history in the 20th century. A significant part of Germany’s socially constructed space is its memorial landscape, and my research shows that individuals create meanings in the landscape just like the state. The actions and statements of the people who work on the project and those who request or financially sponsor a Stolperstein show that at least some individuals have a much deeper emotional connection with Demnig’s memorial stones – a level I have called *sanctification* – than with the state-sponsored memorials that have a less personal impact.

Third, my thesis adds to cultural geography by adding a new degree of understanding of memorial landscapes. For example, my work adds to the research of Foote (2003) by showing that his categorization of memorials – while paying attention to a specific time and place in the United States – is applicable to other parts of the world, especially in Germany. Demnig’s memorial stones are neither completely sanctified nor are they simple designations, as I have argued in Chapter 5.

Next, my research contributes to the scholarly understanding of memorial processes, describing a path to memorial creation that is similar, but not identical, to Jordan (2006). According to Jordan’s process, memorialization in Berlin (and she argues, many other cities as well) is most likely to succeed if the project gains enough attention from the public and the media to become *inevitable*.

The calls of memorial entrepreneurs must resonate with a broader public. After initially being meaningful only to a handful of people (generally intellectuals or those with firsthand experience of the events), memorial projects follow a trajectory of increasing visibility through use of the press, university courses, and/or voluntary organizations by memorial entrepreneurs to publicize the meaning of the site. As pressure on political representatives grows, and press coverage increases, *the campaign seems to reach a point of no return*, a moment at which any alternative use of the land becomes unthinkable (ibid: 11-12, emphasis added).

The history of the Stolpersteine Project described in Chapter 4 shows that Demnig has had widespread success with his Holocaust memorialization, even after he began the project by installing stones illegally. Demnig did not receive widespread attention before he began his installations; he took it to be a form of political, public art and installed several Stolpersteine in the ground despite the potential consequences. It was only later in the project that Demnig began to receive national and international press coverage, after he had clashed with several municipal governments over the necessary permission to install the stones legally. While this early history of the memorial creation process differs from Jordan's (2006), Demnig still has to consider several of the factors that are required for the memorials to be created – particularly the ownership of each site at which he installs a memorial. In this way, the Stolpersteine Project has much in common with Jordan's memorial creation process.

Finally, the Stolpersteine have not been the subject of much scholarly geographic inquiry, despite being a case study with a number of components of interest to cultural geographers. Jordan (2006) and Hansen (2008) mention the Stolpersteine Project in passing as one of many small memorial projects in Berlin, and Harjes (2005) discuss the Stolpersteine as part of a comparative study of memorialization. However, it does not appear in the geographic literature. The Stolpersteine have received plenty of media attention in feature stories in hundreds of newspapers, magazines, and blog posts. While this media spotlight may inform the general public about the Stolpersteine, few of the journalists and authors have time to devote to more scholarly inquiry.

Conclusion

In closing, this thesis has sought to answer research questions about the ways that individuals create meaning in the landscape and how the processes of memorialization shape people's understanding of the Holocaust in Germany. I have discussed the most pertinent literature

on the cultural geographies of landscape meaning, the frameworks that geographers have used to study the landscape, and how memorial processes operate in Berlin. I have also described the fieldwork methods used to obtain the answers to my research questions.

My research has used Gunter Demnig's Stolpersteine Project as a case study to examine how individuals create meaning in the landscape. I have shown that Demnig's Stolpersteine embed a personal side of the Holocaust past that is not visible in the state-sponsored memorial district. I have also used the Stolpersteine as a case study to learn how people respond to individually created memorials in different ways. I have explained that these responses fall into four categories of sanctification, general awareness, a lack of awareness, and aversion. I have also shown how the Stolpersteine fit into the broader context of Holocaust memorialization by explaining the scholarly debate over how to best represent the Holocaust. Finally, I have presented the ways that my thesis contributes to the literature of cultural geography and landscape studies.

Conclusion

Yit'gadal v'yit'kadash sh'mei raba. Amein.

b'al'ma di v'ra kbir'utei

v'yam'likh mal'kbutei b'chayeikhon uv'yomeikhon

uv'chayei d'khol beit yis'ra'eil

ba'agala uviz'man kariv v'im'ru:

*Amein. Y'hei sh'mei raba m'varakh l'alam ul'al'mei
al'maya*

*Yit'barakh v'yish'tabach v'yit'pa'ar v'yit'romam v'yit'nasei
v'yit'badar v'yit'aleh v'yit'halal sh'mei d'kud'sha*

B'rikh hu.

l'eila min kol bir'kbata v'shirata

toosh'b'chatah v'nechematah, da'ameeran b'al'mah, v'eemru:

Amein

Y'hei sh'lama raba min sh'maya

v'chayim aleinu v'al kol yis'ra'eil v'im'ru

Amein

Oseh shalom bim'romav hu ya'aseh shalom

aleinu v'al kol Yis'ra'eil v'im'ru

Amein

May His great Name grow exalted and sanctified Amen.
in the world that He created as He willed.

May He give reign to His kingship in your lifetimes and
in your days,
and in the lifetimes of the entire Family of Israel,
swiftly and soon. Now say:

Amen. May His great Name be blessed forever and ever.

Blessed, praised, glorified, exalted, extolled,
mighty, upraised, and lauded be the Name of the Holy
One.

Blessed is He

beyond any blessing and song,

praise and consolation that are uttered in the world.
Now say:

Amen.

May there be abundant peace from Heaven
and life upon us and upon all Israel. Now say:

Amen.

He Who makes peace in His heights, may He make
peace,
upon us and upon all Israel. Now say:

Amen.

The Mourner's Kaddish. Transliteration from Hebrew with English translation. The Kaddish is a Hebrew prayer spoken or sung in chant at burial ceremonies. It has become a major part of Stolpersteine installations for Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

The children rushed around Herr Demnig with the first *klink* of the hammer strike. In all fairness, they had been waiting for the memorial artist for more than an hour. Their music teacher led them in familiar German folk songs, sung to parents whose faces beamed with pride as their children participated in such an important cultural event.

This day was to be a Stolperstein day.

Finally, Demnig's red work van pulled up to the sidewalk at No. 7 Bartningallee, and Demnig appeared, Stolperstein in hand.



Figure 6.1. Gunter Demnig hammers the sidewalk to make room for a new Stolperstein. Picture taken on 10 May 2011.



Figure 6.2. New Stolperstein for Gittel Littwack. Picture taken on 10 May 2011.

As usual, the installation did not take more than a few minutes. It wasn't even a difficult installation – the stone for Gittel Littwack would be added to others at the same address for Rosa Ziegler, Herta Jakobsthal, and Herbert Jakobsthal.

Demnig knew just where to put this special stone.

Within a few minutes, Demnig had to rush off to the next installation, already behind schedule for the other dozen or so installations that day. But the children and parents and school teachers all crowded in to see the culmination of their time and effort:

**HIER WOHNTE
GITTEL LITTWACK
JG. 1939
DEPORTIERT 9.12.1942
ERMORDET IN
AUSCHWITZ**

Here lived Gittel Littwack. Born in 1939, deported on Dec. 9, 1942. Murdered in Auschwitz.

A local cantor recited the Kaddish, the Jewish mourner's prayer, as the crowd stood in silence for the first time all day. Then, a little girl stepped forward and read from a piece of paper.

"Dear Friends, I thank each of you for all the time and effort that you have sacrificed for this special occasion. ... When I think about little Gittel, I thank God that my brother and I were spared a similar fate."

"The Stolperstein for little Gittel should serve first as a reminder for you, and second as a memorial for all humanity, that such a cruel time should never be forgotten," she continued.

"PS: I found this Eskimo saying very nice and fitting for this occasion:

Perhaps they are not stars, but rather openings in heaven
where the love of our lost ones pours through
and shines down upon us to let us know they are happy."

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Appendix

Appendix A – Demographic Data for Berlin’s 12 Districts, 2010

DISTRICT	POP_2009	POP_65 +	POP_F %	POP_M%	MEAN AGE	FOREIGN POP%	UNEMPLOY%	STEINE
Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf	320087	69937	0.5266	0.4734	45.7	0.1887	0.1170	1095
Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg	268839	27252	0.4894	0.5106	37.2	0.2101	0.1500	578
Lichtenberg	259663	52438	0.5075	0.4925	43.2	0.0663	0.1340	89
Marzahn-Hellersdorf	248026	40611	0.5060	0.4940	42.4	0.0335	0.1420	10
Mitte	333437	46941	0.4851	0.5149	39.5	0.2731	0.1790	691
Neukölln	312367	55817	0.5024	0.4976	41.5	0.2201	0.2060	116
Pankow	365697	58949	0.5068	0.4932	40.7	0.0587	0.0900	131
Reinickendorf	241065	57759	0.5192	0.4808	45.0	0.0980	0.1630	103
Spandau	223724	50250	0.5147	0.4853	44.4	0.0949	0.1800	11
Steglitz-Zehlendorf	293725	71012	0.5366	0.4634	45.7	0.1083	0.0870	190
Tempelhof-Schöneberg	334993	67919	0.5178	0.4822	44.2	0.1565	0.1180	290
Treptow-Köpenick	241052	59715	0.5129	0.4871	45.3	0.0309	0.1060	19
BERLIN TOTAL	3442675	658600	0.5102	0.4898	42.8	0.1337	0.1370	3323

Metadata

Data Category	Item Description	Unit	Decimal	Source
POP_2009	Total Population by end of year 2009	ABS	0	BERLIN JAHRBUCH 2010
POP_65+	Total Population over age 65, 2009	ABS	0	BERLIN JAHRBUCH 2010
POP_F%	Female percent of population, 2009	PCT	2	BERLIN JAHRBUCH 2010
POP_M%	Male percent of population, 2009	PCT	2	BERLIN JAHRBUCH 2010
MEAN_AGE	Average (mean) age, 2009	ABS	1	BERLIN JAHRBUCH 2010
FOREIGN_POP%	Foreign Population as percent of Total Population, 2009	PCT	2	BERLIN JAHRBUCH 2010
UNEMPLOY%	Percent Unemployment, 2009	PCT	1	BERLIN JAHRBUCH 2010
STEINE	Count of Stolpersteine in each district, 2009	ABS	0	Various – District sites on Berlin.de

Vita

Matthew Cook grew up in west Tennessee, where he graduated valedictorian from Westview High School in 2005 before attending the University of Tennessee at Martin. At UT Martin, Cook obtained Bachelor of Science degrees in Geosciences with an emphasis in geography and Communications with an emphasis in print journalism. It was here at UTM that he decided to study geography at the graduate level, thanks to the advice of his major professors Jeff Rogers and Mark Simpson. He graduated UT Martin as a University Scholar, Summa Cum Laude, in 2009.

Cook began the Master's program in Geography at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville in 2010, studying with Dr. Micheline van Riemsdijk. His major coursework focused on cultural and urban geography, and social theory. Following the completion of his first year of studies, Cook was awarded the W.K. McClure Scholarship for the Study of World Affairs from UTK's Center for International Education, a McCroskey Scholarship from the UTK Geography Department, and the Maria Harris Award from the UTK German Department to study the Stolpersteine Holocaust memorial project in Berlin during May 2011.

Cook taught Geography 101 for the Geography Department for two semesters during his Master's program, and he plans to continue a career in academia by starting a Ph.D. program in fall 2012. His long-term goal is to research and teach geography at the university level.