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# Space and the Memories of Violence

## Landscapes of Erasure, Disappearance and Exception

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# 9

## 'The Whole Country Is a Monument': Framing Places of Terror in Post-War Germany

*Aleida Assmann*

### Introduction

When it comes to framing places of terror and disappearance, Germany unfortunately has a wide range of cases to offer. In the intense discussion preceding and framing the building of the central German Holocaust memorial in Berlin, which was dedicated in 2005, an interesting comment came from Jewish historian Marianne Awerbuch. She wrote: 'The whole country is a monument!' (Assmann, 2011, p.222). The new monument for the murdered Europeans Jews was built in the centre of Berlin on neutral ground. With her statement Awerbuch wanted to prevent this new site somehow eclipsing, devaluing and displacing the authentic historical sites in the attention and memory of the Germans. A special paragraph concerning the obligation to preserve and care for the former concentration camps, that had been turned into historical sites of memory after the end of the war, had been inscribed into the treaty of unification of the two German states after 1990. This state of affairs, however, in no way demonstrated that 'the whole country is a monument'. Hundreds and hundreds of less conspicuous sites had been made invisible after 1945, transforming them into nondescript places by deleting the traces of their history. If nobody intervenes, nature has a great capacity for de-historicizing places. 'I am the grass, let me work' is the tag line of a poem 'Grass' by Carl Sandburg (Sandburg, 2013) about the great battlefields of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. When it comes to the built environment and architecture, the reuse of buildings has proven to be an effective way to drive the forgetting and effacement of historical knowledge. Even at the historical sites such as the former concentration camp of Dachau, for instance, central well-preserved and stately buildings were reused by the Allies immediately after the war and handed over to the German administration after their retreat. A clear demarcation line was thus drawn separating what was henceforth to be taken into safe-keeping, to be

carefully preserved as tokens from a guilty past, from buildings of the same historical complex that were semantically neutralized and which returned to the normal cycle of everyday use in an ongoing present.

Marianne Awerbuch's statement that in Germany, 'the whole country is a monument', was therefore all but self-evident. It took a new generation of young people to rediscover the forgotten history that was buried under the transformations of modern life. What the parents had been eager to cover up in a pact of silence, the sons and daughters were eager to uncover and mark, thus restoring the past to memory. This material memory work was stimulated and carried out on a local level; the younger generation had neither an official mandate nor financial support when they turned the recovery of historical traces and the marking of sites and buildings into their own generational project. Much of what they started was eventually taken over by official institutions of cities, county and state; much, however, is still based on their individual investment, depending on their personal efforts and energy. This part of their memory work might therefore disappear again soon if it is not taken up and continued by younger members of the community.

Interestingly enough, in Germany it was an artist of the generation of 1968 (who challenged the complicit silence of their parents with the Nazi past) and not a research group of academic historians funded by the state, who stimulated a unique historical recovery project in 1996 that anticipated Awerbuch's statement about the whole country being a monument. Sigrid Sigurdsson (1999), an artist and activist of memory, who had become famous for her archival installations, created a map of Germany with the boundaries of 1937 with the title: 'Germany – a Monument – a Research Task' ('Deutschland – ein Denkmal – ein Forschungsauftrag') (Figure 9.1).<sup>1</sup> She was the first to notice that no map existed in which all the known Nazi concentration camps and detention sites from 1933 to 1945 were listed. This is why she called her work 'Forschungsauftrag' (research commission) rather than 'Forschungsprojekt' (research project) – it was a reminder to the public and historians, pointing out to them a dimension that they had overlooked. Sigurdsson hired a historian and with her she created a map of the German topography of Nazi terror, visualizing for the first time in detail its extended and all encompassing network of power, destruction and death.

Sigurdsson's map had three important effects. The first was *visualization*. The map littered with black dots signifying larger and smaller sites of terror shows the extent of the bureaucratic system of repression, persecution, exploitation and death at one glance. It creates the impression of an epidemic disease covering the whole country. A second effect was *instruction*. The detailed map shows that the network of terror extended into all regions of the country, sparing none. The insight revealed by this map was that of a shocking proximity to the sites of terror. Suddenly the sites and traces of this past were no longer neatly contained in clearly marked areas but extended into the immediate neighbourhood, which could be reached from

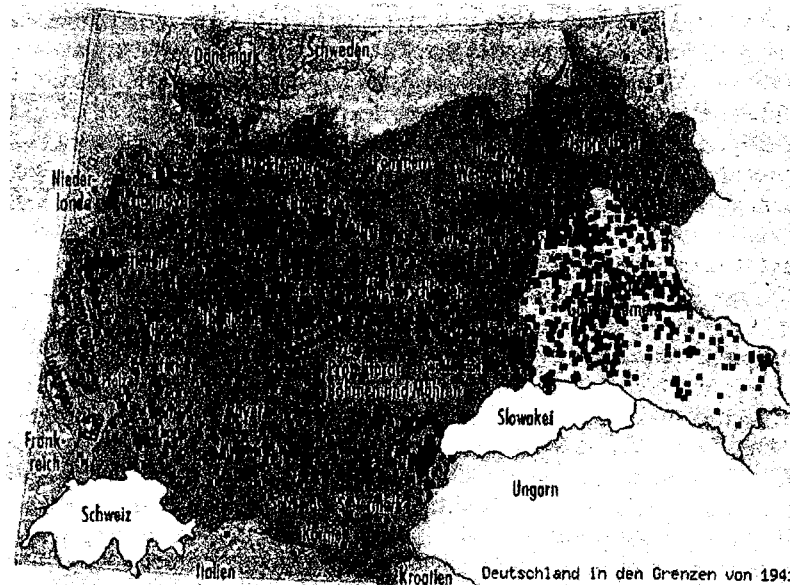


Figure 9.1 Map of Germany with the borders of 1937, showing the sites of concentration camps

Courtesy of Sigrid Sigurdsson.

everybody's front door. The third effect was *integrated research*. The visual artwork of the map was connected to a digital database into which all relevant information was to be fed. In this way, it became an innovative framework for co-operative research by linking museum and university, supporting existing activities and stimulating new ones. This individual initiative of an artist shows amazing institutional flexibility, taking part in different mediations, being part both of exhibitions and research projects. It also highlights the open-endedness of this ongoing encompassing 'monument' as a collective project and work in progress.

### Recovering two topographies of terror in post-war Germany

'Great is the power of memory that resides in places' (Cicero, 1989, pp.394–396). This was the conviction of Cicero, the Latin master of mnemotechnics. He did not only invent artificial systems of imaginary memory places, using the technique of *loci* (the pigeon holes) and *imagines* (the images to be stored in these places), but also focused on historical sites, such as the site of Plato's academy in Greece. When he visited that site with his friends, there were no material traces left as reminders of its great history. This, however, was not a problem for the historical tourists from Rome

who were well read and whose memory and imagination were stuffed with stimulating stories and images. Therefore they were struck by the particular aura of the authentic place that kindled their imagination and transformed the knowledge they had brought along into a 'lived experience' of the place.

There is a long cultural tradition of marking places where important events happened and singling them out for monumentalization and memorialization: birth places of political leaders and cultural heroes, battle fields where decisive victories or defeats happened, places that are connected with religious martyrs and miracles. The spatial practice of cultural and religious pilgrimage arose from the attraction of those sites, which were believed to retain something of the presence of former saints and heroes. It is this belief in the aura of authentic places that constitutes their mnemonic power and attraction for *HisTourism* (Mütter, 2009).

Of such places we may say that they retain and support a *voluntary memory*. They are selected and maintained by the society for their normative potential to reinforce heroic models and reproduce cultural values. I want to distinguish them here from places that are not intentionally chosen and embraced for a memorial purpose. They remain ignored and unmarked until they suddenly reappear and resurface unexpectedly. Then they confront the society with a history that it had preferred to forget.

I want to present here two examples of such involuntary places. The first is the so-called topography of terror in Berlin. What I find particularly striking about this place is the story of its involuntary recovery. After reunification, German memory was redesigned to integrate firmly its traumatic history. This development was confirmed with the opening of the holocaust monument in 2005, 60 years after the end of the Second World War. The marking of memorable places of Nazi history, however, was far from consensual until well into the 1980s: some memorial plaques had been put up on buildings by local initiatives to indicate their function in the administration of the Nazi regime, but many of these plaques like, for instance, the one designating the former Imperial War Court (Reichskriegsgericht) soon found their way into the waste-bin.<sup>2</sup>

The former headquarters of the Gestapo in the centre of Berlin offer a striking example of an involuntary place of memory (see Reichel, 1995). It was from here that the concentration camps were administered, that the records of the regime's opponents were kept, and thousands of the latter were detained and tortured before being sent to concentration camps. The buildings that had housed the former headquarters of the Gestapo secret police, the SS and the State Security Office between 1933 and 1945 were demolished in the 1950s. From then on, it was impossible to identify Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse 8 – the official address of their headquarters – either on the spot or on maps of the city. The most feared address in Berlin had thus silently disappeared. The East Germans had replaced this street with a new one, Niederkirchnerstrasse, named after the seamstress and Communist

resistance fighter Käthe Niederkirchner, who was murdered at the concentration camp of Ravensbrück. On the West German side of the area, the land had been levelled out, and for many years the remnants of the buildings were used as rubble: *Erdverwertung* (reutilization of earth) was the technical term. In 1981, Bazon Brock seized on this term when he included the area as part of a cultural tour and reframed it for the historical imagination. He turned 'the reutilization of earth' into an eloquent metaphor for historical change: 'It was here that the ruins of what had been were and are piled up, sorted out, and re-designated' (Brock, 1986, p.194). A sizable part of this rubble from the Nazi ruins was used for the foundations of Tegel Airport. This combination of demolition, waste, and covering up was later conceived to be highly symbolic. Brock also noted that for decades the site had been used for driving without a driver's licence (*Führerschein*), and he could not resist a pun here: in stark contrast to the spatial practice of the Third Reich 'when the *Führer* (the leader, Adolf Hitler's title) and his *Unterführer* (sub-leaders), at least since 1938, were in possession of *Führerscheine* (a collective licence) issued by the German people' (Brock, 1986, p.195).

In 1983, a competition was announced to turn this area of wasteland into a 'memorial park for the victims of National Socialism'. A monument proposed by the Rumanian poet Oskar Pastior and garden architect Edelgard Jost was praised but not realized. It would have totally voided the place and sealed its surface with a layer of solid black plates of stone. The accompanying message of the artist was: 'Only an empty space can do justice to this place.' An additional design resembling a spider web was to indicate this point of origin of Nazi crimes, adding the word 'HERE' in the centre to establish a contact-zone between the historic site and later visitors to suggest the effect that 'HERE you yourself are the monument'.

Since this monument was never built, the status of the site as an historical place of memory remained officially unrecognized. An application by the opposition SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany) to excavate the remnants of the buildings was rejected by the Berlin Parliament on 31 January 1985. A few months later, US President Ronald Reagan visited Germany on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. On 5 May 1985 together with Chancellor Helmut Kohl he held a ceremony at the military cemetery at Bitburg, which contains the graves of German soldiers, including those of SS troops. The Reagan-Kohl commemoration event at Bitburg triggered a symbolic counter-demonstration that took place in Berlin on the same day. A crowd of people armed with shovels began to dig wildly on an inconspicuous plot of land of the former Prinz Albrecht Strasse, firmly determined to contradict the popular opinion that 'there was no longer anything to seek or find at the site of the SS and Gestapo headquarters' (Figure 9.2) (Wirsing, 1986).

In the summer of 1985, a systematic examination of the site under the direction of the Berliner historian Reinhard Rürup uncovered the remains



*Figure 9.2* Collective excavation at the site of the former Gestapo headquarters (1985)  
Photograph by Hans Peter Stiebing.

of a basement with washrooms and a kitchen area. This was a symbolic breakthrough which, in the very heart of Berlin, established material contact with the recent past and which was eventually put on display beneath a provisional roof under the heading 'Topography of Terror', also dubbed 'the silent place' in a later exhibition (Rürup, 2010).<sup>3</sup> After the provisional exhibition, a museum was opened on the site in May 2010 in the shape of a two-storey glass and steel rectangle. The present director of the museum, Andreas Nachama describes it as an exemplary place where party and state institutions were fused together, adding: 'It holds lessons about the workings of other dictatorships as well... The Pinochet dictatorship in Chile or the military junta in Argentina.' (*DIE WELT*, 6 May 2010)

This archaeological securing of evidence shows clearly what the status of an involuntary place of trauma is in the land of the perpetrators: placed materially in immediate proximity, but worlds away in terms of consciousness, visibility, memory. These 'stones of provocation' connected to the topography of terror were uncovered and brought to public view against considerable resistance (Spielmann, 1988). The power of memory in this case asserted itself from the bottom up against a strong desire to forget and to suppress. According to playwright Heiner Müller, traumas are mnemonic dynamite, which sooner or later will explode: 'The work of memory and of mourning proceeds from shocks', he said in an interview.<sup>4</sup> Like Nietzsche, Warburg and Freud he advocated a theory of memory as psychic energy

that links lasting traces of memory to primal scenes of violence. For Müller as for Walter Benjamin, memory is a revolutionary force which 'brings to the fore the blood of forgotten ancestors' together with residual, unresolved issues from the past. Both Marxists considered this act of revolutionary remembering as a passionate objection to the suffering and injustice of history.

If the National Socialist administration had had its way, it would have followed up the Jewish genocide with a mnemocide. Forgetting is the strong desire of all perpetrators. After a regime change that also involves a radical change of cultural values, not all signs and messages are immediately reorganized in the society. In Germany it took a long time and a huge effort to turn the tables. The Nazi propaganda had of course fallen silent after 1945, but those formerly condemned to silence had not yet had a real chance to speak out. Forty years later, persecutor and persecuted had still not openly exchanged their roles and status.

There is a sequel to this story that brings us into the actual present, because it took place another three decades later. It shows how the non-recognition of involuntary places can be prolonged. This story is still evolving in Southern Germany in Stuttgart, capital of the federal state Baden-Württemberg. Its site is a building named 'Hotel Silber' after its former use. This imposing nineteenth-century building had housed the regional central office of the Gestapo from 1937 to 1945. It did not disappear after the war and received no historical mark whatsoever; instead, it was immediately reused as Stuttgart's central police station. In this case, it was not rupture and the effacement of the traces but a firm institutional continuation after 1945 that rendered the historical site fully invisible. Focus on the building was renewed by the intention to remove it in 2008, when the government of Baden-Württemberg together with a local investor planned to reconstruct a sizable part of the city centre to build the so-called Da Vinci Complex, an area with new grand hotels, business space and an expensive shopping mall. This economic redesign of the city centre was the context for the re-entry of Hotel Silber into public consciousness as a traumatic historic site. When it also became known that the building was to be torn down, a small number of citizens formed a protest group, trying to prevent the plan (Figure 9.3). They worked hard to reinsert this place on Germany's map of terror, but to no avail. The newspapers denigrated the protest as anti-modern and notoriously backward looking. In the end it was not protest that was successful but the intervention of the Japanese Tsunami, which damaged the nuclear reactor in Fukushima and effected a landslide in the German federal elections in 2011, producing unprecedented support for the environment-conscious Green Party. After 58 years of continuous rule the conservative CDU (Christian Democratic Union) was replaced by the 'green' politicians. When the latter took office they decided to leave the Hotel Silber untouched and transform it into a site of memory. In the coalition agreement between



Figure 9.3 Flyer of "Aktion Hotel Silber"  
Courtesy of Elke Banabak, Initiative Hotel Silber.

the conservatives and the Green Party we can read: 'Places of memory are to be supported with conceptual and archival work. The memory culture that – thanks to many local and regional initiatives – has gained a new importance in public life needs continuation and reliability.'<sup>5</sup>

This recent development shows the extent to which a memory culture is contingent on contemporary interests and party politics. In a democratic society, memory places are always identified and supported by one group and ignored or even resisted by another. By themselves, the traumatic sites do not cry out: 'I am witness to a story that must not be forgotten!' On the contrary, if nobody tells and heeds their story, life evolves carelessly and effaces all traces. Historic buildings are torn down, reconstructed or transformed through new functions and uses. Nor is the memory of the inhabitants a reliable source but dissolves after three generations.<sup>6</sup> Public debates and contestation, on the other hand, are a powerful stimulus for memory. After 67 years, the Hotel Silber became a prominent place that has

moved it into the centre of political interests, public attention, media information, internet blogging and personal commitments. This example also shows that the number of involuntary sites of memory is never closed, just as the work of memory that is always embedded into the changes of social life and open towards the future.

### National and regional sites of memory

I have already introduced the distinction between voluntary and involuntary memory sites, which have a very different history of commemoration. Let me add here another distinction, which is equally important to further describe the specificity of these places: national and regional. Though this dimension is commonly overlooked, this framing context is of great importance for the organization, message and appeal of these places, including different forms of participation. According to the German constitution, the upkeep and care of regional sites of terror and trauma is a responsibility of the regional governments (*Bundesländer*), except for those sites which are deemed to be of national and international importance, representing certain forms of persecution in exemplary ways. To this group belong the sites of the former concentration camps, which, after German unification, became a national responsibility, including their conceptual articulation and steady financial support.<sup>7</sup>

The situation of the places administered by the regional governments is quite different. They lack a similar visibility, long-term-commitment and structure of support. They are to a large extent memory places from below, discovered, marked and maintained on a voluntary basis by personal commitment. Their designation and number is therefore largely dependent on the historical sensibility, the initiative and commitment of individual citizens. This double structure shows that in Germany, the culture of memory is not only a responsibility that is delegated to the state but also a democratic concern of civil society.<sup>8</sup>

This historical sensibility and interest in active participation required a generational change and took a long time to grow. When, after the war, survivors of the concentration and forced labour camps returned to visit the sites of their suffering and mark them with plaques and other memorial signs, they found little or no support among the German population for their commemorative activities. In this early phase, the memory of the historic trauma was the sole responsibility of the victims, while the former perpetrators left the burdened past behind and invested enthusiastically in the future. This has changed considerably, as Germany has now not only a number of national sites of trauma with high visibility and attracting international tourism, but also a rich memorial landscape of regional and local sites which are visited by neighbouring populations, school classes, affected survivors and their families. What is remarkable about these local places of



terror and trauma, is the long temporal lag before they were established. Although they are relevant places for the whole society; lack of interest and resistance remain strong. But these local places are important for two reasons. One is that they reflect a more democratic form of participation in the memory culture than the national sites, which are far away and in the responsibility of the federal state. The other is that they tell a story that intersects with the memory of the respective populations, relating to their immediate environment in a well-known region. This local anchoring of the history of the Holocaust is an important complement to the trans-nationally standardized Holocaust education supported by the 'International Task Force for Holocaust Remembrance, Education and Research' (founded on the initiative of Swedish president Göran Persson at an international conference in Stockholm in 2000) which has become more and more independent from concrete places. An apt way to characterize the difference between national and regional sites of memory is to use Pierre Nora's distinction between 'milieu de mémoire' and 'lieu de mémoire' (Nora, 1989, p.7). In stark contrast to the national 'lieux de mémoire' that are neatly separated from their surroundings, marking a totally different and alien world that can be entered and left behind, the local sites of trauma are part of a 'milieu de mémoire'; they are situated literally before the front door; you need not look for them, you stumble on them unexpectedly. They are embedded in residential areas and much less conspicuous than the national sites. And, as the case of Hotel Silber shows, many of them are yet to be discovered.

These national and regional traumatic sites of memory elicit very different responses and have different functions for the victims and the succeeding generations of the perpetrators. For the victims, these authentic places retain a visible trace of the crime, triggering painful repercussions in their embodied traumatic memory. For the succeeding generations of Germans, they have become places of learning and commemoration. In this, they have a trans-historical effect: they make retrospectively visible what nobody wanted to see or know about at the time they were operating so efficiently. They reveal to today's Germans what their ancestors had not wanted to see, hear or feel: the irreparable loss that was caused when German Jewish citizens were 'disappeared' from the midst of the society, their cities and villages – 'from apartments, schools, hospitals, law firms, medical practices, universities, courtrooms' – and one should add: shops (Pflug et al., 2007, p.35).

### **Spatial practices: Decontamination and the transformative power of memory**

The political transition from dictatorship to democracy is effected by the replacement of a complex framework of political and legal rules, but this remains ineffective if it is not supported by an important shift in the

historical sensibility within the society. What is its background and motivation? How is it expressed in word and action? These are questions that I want to turn to in the last part of my chapter. My focus will be on new spatial practices that have emerged in dealing with inconspicuous and involuntary places of memory. In Germany after 1945, one way of getting rid of a violent history had for a long time been to ignore the traumatic past, just to wait and let the proverbial grass of forgetting do its work. A distance from the scenes of the crime was created by effacing traces, by allowing life to take its course and cover them up. Buildings were torn down like the central office of the Gestapo in Berlin or reused like that in Stuttgart. Former sites of the many regional KZs (concentration camps) were overgrown with grass and quickly disappeared from perception and consciousness. In these cases, the traumatic past was supposed to disappear more or less on its own, by the sheer force of the passing of time.

Over the last three decades we could observe a shift from forgetting to remembering in relation to involuntary traumatic places. The new spatial practice relating to traumatic sites is premised on remembering. It is based on the insight and experience that a traumatic past does not simply disappear by itself but tends to linger subliminally and refuses to go away. 'The past that does not pass' (Nolte, 1986) has become a standard formula for trauma which, at its core, is a 'state of exception' in the structure of our temporality. It applies, as we have learned since the 1980s, to three contexts in particular: juridical, medical and moral. In cases of excessive violence and trauma, the past does not automatically disappear but returns to be readdressed by lawyers, therapists and concerned citizens. The past returns, firstly, in the crimes against humanity that need to be prosecuted and indicted in the (inter)national law court. It returns, secondly, in the suffering of victims from post-traumatic stress disorder that needs to be therapeutically attended to, and it returns thirdly in the moral consciousness of a society that establishes commemoration places and practices for the victims. These have become regular forms of transition for states undergoing a transformation from an authoritarian society to a democratic one. In all of these contexts, it is remembering rather than forgetting that has become the general agenda. I will confine myself here to a few German examples of this shift from forgetting to remembering, showing how new practices of remembering were locally invented and enacted.

All of these new practices were invented by individuals introducing elements of art into social space. My first example are the 'stumbling stones' by Gunter Demnig which he has been inserting into the sidewalks of German and other cities since 2003. These small blocks of brass are inscribed with the names and fates of victims of Nazi terror – Jews as well as those that were persecuted for political reasons, Sinti and Roma, Jehovah's witnesses, homosexuals and victims of euthanasia – and placed in the ground in front of their last address from which they were 'disappeared'.<sup>9</sup>

This spatial practice is underpinned by local civic groups who cooperate by doing the extensive archival research that goes with the placing of the stumbling stones. They recover biographies of forgotten victims together with information about their families around the globe who are included in the commemoration process and often participate in the local events of dedicating the blocs. I see in this spatial practice an important local complement to the de-territorialized national holocaust monument in Berlin. While the one monument covers the space of a whole football field, the other fits on the palm of a hand. The un-inscribed vertical *stelae* of Peter Eisenman's monument differ greatly from the horizontal brass plates with their names and biographical information which, in order to read, one has to bow down to. Nor are the stumbling stones a monument that one intentionally goes to visit; on the contrary, they wait for us to stumble upon them unawared and to read them when we had not expected to do so.

Today members of the third and forth post-war generation live in houses the history of which they do not know. In a country where excessive crimes were perpetrated, some of its younger citizens might feel haunted by this unknown history that still lingers, even though time has seemingly effaced its traces. The urge to mark the houses in their city and to uncover this history may emerge from the desire for knowledge and the personal decision of individuals to distance themselves from a contaminating complicity with silent profiteers. The recovery of the history of the house is thus embraced as an act of solidarity with the victims, helping to 'de-contaminate' the social space.

In Vienna, where Demnig's stumbling stones were rejected by the city magistrate, a group of citizens has invented another spatial practice with a similar symbolic effect. The Servitengasse in the Alsergrund district was once a place inhabited by many Jewish families and lined with Jewish shops. In 2004 a group of younger tenants got together to find out who had once built and lived in the houses that they were now inhabiting. After four years of intense archival research this collective project in search of lost tracks led to an exhibition and a monument. The exhibition showed the stories of many former Jewish tenants, owners and shopkeepers of the Servitengasse. The monument was designed by the artist Julia Schulz and dedicated in 2008, 70 years after the annexation of Austria to Nazi-Germany. It consists of a square glass box, placed in the ground and illuminated during the night, containing the symbolic 462 keys and name-tags of Jewish citizens that had been expelled and deported from this district, most of them from this street (Miljković, 2008). Of the 377 Jews of the Servitengasse only seven survived the Nazi terror. These seven returned to the street for the first time on the occasion of this exhibition.<sup>10</sup>

My last example is Gusen, a small village in Austria where the artist Christoph Mayer was born in 1974. As he grew up there he slowly learned from indirect hints that this village was different from others. Gusen had

been the site of a concentration camp during the Second World War where the inmates were exploited with forced labour in a nearby mine, 37,000 of whom were murdered in the process. After the war there was nothing left to remind outsiders of their suffering and the history of the place. The only carrier of this knowledge was the embodied memory of the survivors themselves who regularly returned to this site of trauma and built a monument in 1965. Their commemorative practices were not joined by the villagers, and these activities evolved largely unnoticed by the local community. With his memorial project, Christoph Mayer broke away from this solid post-war community of silence and repression. In another act of 'decontamination' he brought the historical site back into social memory – without moving a single stone. He created an audio installation that leads the visitors through the memorial landscape of Gusen. By listening to the audio guide, which constellates voices of survivors, bystanders and perpetrators, the visitors have to create their own images of what they do not see with their eyes as their feet walk on the authentic site (Figure 9.4) (Lebert, 2007).<sup>11</sup>

## Conclusion

As Marianne Awerbuch insisted, after 12 years of Nazi rule, the whole of Germany has indeed become a 'monument'. What she meant was: a place littered with traumatic spaces, reaching from the former concentration camps to the extended transnational network of repression and terror up to the destroyed synagogues and various apartments from which Jewish citizens



Figure 9.4 'Audioweg Gusen'. The present Gartenstraße in Gusen in which, between 1940 and 1945, the Barracks from the camp Gusen I were located  
Photograph by Christoph Mayer chm.

were forcibly deported and murdered. The artist Sigrid Sigurdsson transformed the 'monument' of the country into a map showing the multiple sites of terror, which covered the land like an infectious disease. As traumatic sites are places of an involuntary memory that shuns the confrontation with their history, they can easily be evaded by effacing traces or covering them up through new use and function. Nevertheless, these traumatic spaces also retain a kind of mnemonic energy that calls for a belated response, exerting a power to return to these places of haunting and unrest. Sites of traumatic memory differ considerably from monuments, memorials and museums in that they are never congruent with the meaning given to them in retrospect. While monuments can be defined as 'identity fictions of the survivors', traumatic sites generate an affective surplus of suffering and guilt which calls for later action (Koselleck, 1979). In spite of their sparse material relics, authentic historic sites are more than just symbols, because they are also themselves. While cultural symbols may be built up and pulled down, these places can never be totally appropriated or made to disappear completely in a new geopolitical order. Uncovering these traumatic places, marking them and inventing commemorative practices are responses to their mnemonic energy that reintroduce the forgotten into social consciousness and integrate what had been split off by assigning it a place in the memory of the community.

## Notes

1. This project was done in cooperation with Cornelia Steinhauer. Since 2009: Extension of the database and integration into the 'architecture of remembering', Karl-Ernst Osthaus Museum, Hagen, curated by Michael Fehr; since 2011: cooperation with historians Bettina and Holger Sarnes. <http://www.deutschland-ein-denkmal.de/ded/information/texts?textName=text-002>, date accessed 4 December 2013.
2. For example, the memorial plaque at the former Reichskriegsgericht, Witzlebenstr. 4–5 (Reichel, 1995, pp.191–192).
3. See also the Internet page of the 'Stiftung Topographie des Terrors'.
4. 'Verwaltungsakte produzieren keine Erinnerungen', Interview given by Heiner Müller on 7 May 1995 in Berlin and done by Hendrik Werner, <http://hydra.humanities.uci.edu/mueller/hendrik.html>, date accessed 7 January 2014.
5. Election Program of the Green Party, 2013, p.261.
6. An open letter of the initiative Hotel Silber addressed to the Breuninger family clearly explains the plans: 'The building Dorotheenstraße ten must be preserved as a place of memory, of learning and research. Following the model of the cities Cologne, Berlin, Nuremberg, Dresden and Munich it shall house the long overdue Stuttgart and Württemberg NS-Center of Documentation.'
7. These national sites of trauma are: Bergen Belsen, Buchenwald, Neuengamme, Ravensbrück, Sachsenhausen and Dachau. See also Knigge and Frei, 2002.
8. 'To a large extent, the memory work at the regional places is in the hands and responsibility of committed men and women of the civil society' (Pflug et al., 2007, p.35).

9. For 120 Euro anybody can initiate a stumbling stone by funding its production and its placing in the ground. For further information see <http://www.stolpersteine-leipzig.de/index.php?id=268>, date accessed 7 January 2014.
10. DER STANDARD, 16. June 2010.
11. See also <http://audioweg.gusen.org/>, date accessed 7 January 2014.

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