The Brandenburg Gates:
Unity, Division, and Reinvented Tradition in Post-Wall Berlin

by

Dima Ayyash

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ABSTRACT

Twenty three years after the German Reunification (German: Deutsche Wiedervereinigung), the once divided Berlin is still undergoing a process of recovery from the deep political, social, cultural, and physical divisions of the 20th century. Such divisions seem to have manifested themselves in every corner of the city throughout the course of history, creating a highly politicized environment, and hotly contested spaces decades after conflict ended. One particular area of controversy lies in the center of the city, along the former path of the Berlin Wall. This part of the city was heavily destroyed after the Second World War. Despite some unsuccessful reconstruction efforts after the War, the Berlin Wall passed right through the center of the city, wiping out the few buildings that were left standing, leaving the area completely barren and deserted. This area of the city came to be known as the ‘death strip’ (German: Todesstreifen), characterized by a long wide empty space, a wall on the west, barbed wire on the east, and occasional checkpoints and military units along the way.

Over the last twenty three years, the Senate Department for Urban Development and the Environment (German: Berlin Stadtentwicklung) has sought to restore, preserve, rebuild, and develop large parts of the city, including the former death strip. Its goal has been to physically reconnect fragmented parts the city, by creating spaces that serve as meeting points for former East and West Berliners, in order to reintegrate the city’s physical landscape and recreate its cultural identity. One of the Senate’s key development projects focused on the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin’s iconic landmark, and its surrounding public spaces, for the political, cultural, and historic symbolism they represent to the city. This thesis will first examine the conditions under which the Brandenburg Gate has served as a symbol of unity and division in the city throughout its evolving history. Then, it will discuss the Brandenburg Gate and its surrounding spaces as a network of reinvented traditions, with the Gate serving as passageway to the physical and temporal histories to the city-hence, the Brandenburg Gates.
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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

Historians estimate that the city of Berlin developed around a swamp in the late 12th century, with recent findings by German archaeologists suggesting that human settlement in the city dates back to 1174 at least. Since then, the city has played a significant role in shaping the political and urban landscape of Europe, serving as the capital of the Kingdom of Prussia, the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), and Reunified Germany. Throughout these pivotal periods in Berlin's history, the city continued to grow in size and population, and its status as a center for power became more influential. In the 19th and early 20th century, Berlin became a hub for cultural and intellectual exchange, social revolutions, arts, sciences, theater, entertainment, and a thriving economic center. The city was famous for its many museums, universities, architecture, diverse population, and a stellar public transportation system that was emulated throughout today's Germany and the rest of Europe. The impacts of the First World War on the city manifested themselves in a sharp increase in the city's population, after its neighboring suburbs and towns became a part of a greater state called Berlin-Brandenburg. It was the rise of the Nazis to power in the 1930s followed by the Second World War that transformed Berlin from a beacon of knowledge, culture, and modernism to a troubled city for the decades that followed. The Second World War also triggered the start of the Cold War in Germany in which Berlin was once again at the center of conflict and power struggles.

After the Second World War, Germany was divided into two nations: East Germany (GDR) and West Germany (Federal Republic of Germany, FRG). While Berlin lay in the GDR, it was decided that due to the city's historic and political significance, it would be divided into four sectors and governed by four ruling powers: the United States of America (southwest), Great Britain (center-west), France (northwest), and the Soviet Union (east). The four nations also agreed that Berlin could neither become the political capital of the GDR nor the FRG, and established Bonn as the capital of the FRG. Each of Berlin's four sectors had its own borders, checkpoints, and entry-and-exit stamps in the language of the ruling power. However in 1947, the Soviet sector was declared as the capital of the GDR, thus signaling the start of the Cold War and the formal division of the city into East and West Berlin. The division was further solidified when on the morning of August 13th, 1961, citizens of Berlin awoke to find long

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1 http://www.berlin.de/aktuelles/berlin/2674414-958092-berlin-ist-aelter-als-gedacht-hausreste-.html
stretches of barbed wire preventing them from crossing freely between the eastern to the western sectors. Overnight, the Soviet Union had decided to formalize the GDR’s borders with France, Great Britain, and the USA by constructing a separation barrier. The Soviet Union found it necessary to protect its territory against the “fascist states” that sought to prevent the will of the people of the GDR from building a socialist Berlin, and referred to the Wall as the “Anti-Fascist Protection Rampart” (German: Antifaschistischer Schutzwall). The implications of the sudden and alarming construction of the Berlin Wall were experienced most directly by the city’s inhabitants. Not only did the Wall restrict Berliners’ freedom of movement, but its sudden construction also resulted in the separation of many family members and friends, in addition to the loss of approximately 73,000 jobs (63,000 East Berliners who worked in the West, 10,000 vice-versa). The construction of the Berlin Wall impacted the political, economic, cultural, and physical landscapes of the city. Politically, it deepened the rift between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies, in addition to creating new divisions between German politicians in the GDR and the FRG. On an economic level, the Berlin Wall resulted in a massive gap in wealth and economic growth opportunities between the two Berlins. While West Berlin experienced economic growth due to capital investment from its western supporters, the GDR suffered from the lack of jobs and investment. The political and economic strife between East and West Berlin manifested itself on a sociocultural level whereby the pronounced physical division of the land resulted in a polarization in “national” or local identity and character, reflected by each side’s new way of life. Ossis and Wessis (German for: East Berliners and West Berliners respectively) quickly adopted new ways of life, and developed a new sense of identity and allegiance to their respective political allies. The Berlin Wall thus quickly challenged and further divided the identity of the city and its citizens.

The most easily recognizable impact of the Berlin Wall came at the expense of the city’s urban landscape. The Wall cut right through the middle of the city, leaving it fragmented and disconnected. Buildings were destroyed or became uninhabited due to their proximity to the Wall, resulting in further alienation and segregation between East and West. Among the many urban features of the city that were annihilated by the Berlin Wall were its public spaces, particularly those that lay along the path of the Wall. The Second World War and the Berlin Wall brought massive damage to one particular monument, the Brandenburg Gate, and much destruction to its surroundings, which lay in a central part of the city. The Brandenburg Gate lay along the path of the Berlin Wall and was consumed by the “death strip,” while its surrounding spaces were also severely impacted by the construction

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5 [http://www.dw.de/typically-ossi-typically-wessi/a-3927596-1](http://www.dw.de/typically-ossi-typically-wessi/a-3927596-1)
of the Wall. In the last twenty three years however since the fall of the Wall and German Reunification, the city has focused on restoring the Brandenburg Gate and redeveloping its surroundings in order to physically reconnect Berlin at its center and reintegrate its different urban landscapes in the East and the West. In a sense, these redevelopment projects aimed to redefine Berlin's urban landscape to launch the city into a new era of political, economic, and sociocultural recovery and unity.

This thesis is mainly concerned with examining Berlin's redevelopment efforts of the Brandenburg Gate and its surrounding area, and their impact on the physical reintegration of the city, as well its cultural identity. The thesis will provide an overview of the evolution of the Brandenburg Gate as a city monument, its changing function and use, its transformation in the 20th century, and its status today. It will also explore the redevelopment of the Gate's surrounding areas to the north, south, and east, to achieve physical and cultural reintegration. Then, it will analyze the Gate's changing role as a symbol of Berlin's unity and division, in light and its relationship with its surrounding spaces, serving as passageway to the spatial and temporal history of the city.

1.2 Terminology and Definitions

Below is a list of frequently used terms in the thesis and a clarification of the intended meaning of each, respectively.

**Reintegration:**

Integration is defined as “to form, coordinate, or blend into a functioning or unified whole”. The process of reintegration in the context of Berlin's urban landscape and cultural identity refers to the unification of previously fragmented parts in former East and West Berlin. It also refers to the reshaping of fragmented local identities between “Ossis” and “Wessis” to achieve a more unified cultural identity for the city and its citizens.

**Plaza:**

A plaza (German original: Platz) is defined as “a public square in a city or town” or “an open area usually located near
urban buildings and often featuring walkways, trees and shrubs, places to sit, and sometimes shop\(^8\). In the context of Berlin, the plazas are public spaces, surrounded by many urban blocks of residences, shops and restaurants, businesses, and services. In relation to the thesis, Pariser Platz is one of Berlin’s oldest and most prominent plazas and lies to the immediate east of the Brandenburg Gate.

**Divided city:**

Berlin was a divided city. Such a city is regarded as one which constitutes of two, or more separate entities as a consequence of political, social, or economic turmoil. Berlin was formally divided into East Berlin and West Berlin from 1945 – 1990, marking the period from the end of World War II until the fall of the Berlin Wall and the German Reunification. Remnants of Berlin’s division can still be observed today in the city’s architecture, physical appearance, as well as the attitude and lifestyle of many former East and West Berliners, reflecting a phenomenon that is referred to as “Mauer im Kopf” (translation: the wall in the head, mental barrier)\(^9\). In the last twenty three years, this distinction between East and West has gradually faded away through the city’s efforts at reunification, however more permanent physical cues in Berlin continue to highlight the city’s long years of division. Within the context of the thesis, it is important to keep in mind the city’s long history of division when evaluating the redevelopment process of the Brandenburg Gate and its surrounding area.

**Death strip:**

The death strip lay along the path formed by the Berlin Wall, in fact in many instances it in itself was the path formed by the Wall. It was home to military checkpoints, border crossing waiting stations, watch towers, military equipment, and was made partly from concrete, and mostly from barbed wire. The strip was characterized by its haunting emptiness, represented by stretches of barren land, empty buildings, deserted plazas, or destroyed houses. It is referred to as the “death strip” because many Berliners faced their death attempting to escape to the other side during the years of the Berlin Wall, mostly from East to West Berlin. Within the context of this thesis, the Brandenburg Gate became a part of the death strip during the years of the Berlin Wall, and its surroundings lay immediately at the Wall’s exteriors.

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8 http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/plaza
9 http://www.dw.de/breaking-down-the-wall-in-the-head/a-1344803
Gate:

A gate represents an entry or exit point to a space, enclosed by a certain boundary. City gates in particular have traditionally been built as part of a city wall, for many reasons, including the control of flow of goods and people, to make announcements, or to protect against invading armies, among others. City gates have historically come in a variety of sizes and architectural styles; some were quite grand and imposing, such as the Ishtar Gate of Babylon, others much smaller in scale, like the earliest construction of the Brandenburg Gate in the early 1700s. For the purposes of the thesis, it is important to keep in mind the initial function of the Brandenburg Gate and how it has changed dramatically throughout the centuries. In addition, keeping in mind the design of the reconstructed Gate in the late 18th century, and how it has actually remained largely unchanged throughout its history.

Invented tradition:

The term refers to certain traditions which claim to be old but in fact were recently invented\textsuperscript{10}. Within the context of the thesis, reinvented traditions refer to certain traditions that are being brought back to present-day Berlin in urban design or planning from past practices, in order to recreate the appearance, function, or usage of spaces or buildings.

1.3 Methodology

This thesis is based on findings and observations from three primary areas of research: 1) literary sources online and offline, 2) informal interviews and conversations with former Berlin or Germany residents from the MIT community, 3) videos, photographs and maps over time. Below is a more detailed description of the sources explored:

1) Literary sources: books, in part or whole; newspaper articles online from English and German language sources; magazine articles in English and German; academic papers online; Berlin Senate Department for Urban Development and the Environment;

2) Interviews: some interviews were formal and were recorded to serve as a reference at interviewee’s approval, others were in the form of unrecorded conversations; both were conducted with former Berlin residents or former Germany residents who are currently members of the MIT community, and informed the author’s views and conceptions of certain events in the city’s

\textsuperscript{10}Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger. 1983. The Invention of Tradition. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press
modern history;

3) Multimedia: all videos, photographs, or maps used for the purposes of this research were found online; videos include documentaries on Berlin and former East Berlin residents’ accounts of life during the Berlin Wall years; photographs of the city throughout history; maps of the city at focal points in history as well as maps of checkpoints along the Berlin Wall.

All of the above research was conducted between September 2011 and May 2013. It is also inspired by the personal experiences and observations from the author’s brief time as a Berlin resident from June to August 2010.

1.3.1 Site Selection

The Brandenburg Gate and its surrounding areas, including Pariser Platz, the Reichstag building, and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, were selected based on the following criteria:

1) Spatial location: the Brandenburg Gate and its surroundings lay along the path of the Berlin Wall. The area was part of the death strip, and suffered varying amounts of destruction and damage. Currently, the area is at the heart of Berlin making it an ideal location at which the city could become physically reconnected, and would serve as a meeting point between former residents of East and West Berlin. Since the Gate’s surrounding area was also entirely destroyed, it was redeveloped under similar constraints, making it interesting for analysis in relation to the Gate and the rest of the city.

2) Historical significance: The Brandenburg Gate is one of the most prominent monuments in Berlin, and has played a significant role through the city’s changing political and cultural history. Its importance also accentuated the significance of its surroundings, making that part of the city a top priority for redevelopment and restoration after the fall of the Wall.

3) Accessibility: the Brandenburg Gate and its surrounding area have been easily accessible to the city's residents and visitors throughout history, through various public and private transportation options.

1.3.2 Limitations

The main limitation of this research is its qualitative nature. Berlin is a city comprised of heavily contested spaces, and
twenty three years after Reunification, it is still a city in recovery; there are many new redevelopment, restoration, and preservation projects all over the city, including modifications that continue to take place at the Brandenburg Gate and its surrounding area. As a result, the sources relied on were at times outdated, since it's very difficult to document the city's rapidly changing urban landscape. The author found that generally, the German sources mostly provided detailed accounts of the city's historic events and how they relate to the built environment, the processes that took place during redevelopment projects, and the impact of these projects, be it political, cultural, economic, or physical. The writing was mostly factual, direct, and treated the redevelopment projects of post-Wall Berlin in an independent manner. On the other hand, English sources treated those issues differently. While they still relied on the facts provided, they often hypothesized on the meaning and impact of certain processes, decisions, and outcomes, and tried to draw connection between different projects, or connections to certain political and cultural circumstances. The author generally regarded the German sources as more distanced and left little room for controversy, whereas the English sources were more opinionated and analytical. These two largely different perspectives on Berlin's modern affairs left the author with differing conceptions of Berlin's new physical landscape and cultural identity, within the context of its spatial and temporal past and present.

1.4 Thesis Overview

This thesis is presented in six chapters. In the first chapter the author defined certain terms relevant to the thesis and outlined the methodology behind this work, and its limitations. In the following section, 1.5, and its subsections (1.5.1-1.5.5), the author will provide a timeline of the city's history as well as an overview of the politics of Berlin in the different periods of its history, from the Prussian Kingdom and German Empire, to the First World War and the Weimar Republic, to the Third Reich, Second World War, followed by the Cold War and the years of the Berlin Wall, and finally post-Wall Berlin under German Reunification.

In chapter 2, the thesis will discuss the evolution of the Brandenburg Gate as a political space in Berlin, from its inception as a humble city Gate, to its reconstruction as a Gate of Peace in Prussia, and its rise as a symbol of protest, resilience, and dissatisfaction with the political circumstances of the early 20th century. The thesis will also discuss the rise of the Gate as an internationally recognized symbol during the Third Reich, its status as a symbol of division after the Second World War, and its
resurrection as a monument of peace, hope, unity, and reintegration since 1990.

Chapters 3 and 4 will focus on the areas surrounding the Brandenburg Gate and their importance as they relate to the Gate and the reintegration process of the city, by examining their history and redevelopment process in the last twenty three years. Chapter 3 will focus on Pariser Platz, east of the Brandenburg Gate, one of Berlin's most historically prominent plazas, which serves as a political-cultural hub in the city today, and falls at the western end of “Unter den Linden”, one of the city's oldest avenues. Chapter 4 will examine the north-south axis of the Brandenburg Gate upon which fall two of the city's most significant and controversial monuments, the German Parliament building, “Reichstag”, and the Berlin Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.

Chapter 5 will treat the Brandenburg Gate, Pariser Platz, Reichstag, and Memorial as a network of reinvented traditions, in which the Gate serves multiple functions, firstly as an edge and a center to the city as a whole, as a gate to and from physical locations around it, and also as a gate to and from temporal periods in the city's history, embodied by certain design features, which import elements of the city's past to its present to reinvent certain political or cultural traditions.

Finally, chapter 6 will state the conclusion of the thesis with regards to the Brandenburg Gate's role in Berlin as a symbol of unity and division, and its future impact on its immediate surroundings and the city as a whole.

1.5 The Politics of Berlin: An Overview

For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to have a clear understanding of the political circumstances and governing bodies in Berlin since its early days, and especially the first construction of the Brandenburg Gate.

1.5.1 Early Settlement, the Prussian Kingdom, and the German Empire\textsuperscript{11}

The central part of today's Berlin was settled along the River Spree as two independent towns between the 12th and 14th centuries. In the early 14th century, the two towns merged due to economic and social ties and formed Berlin. In the 15th century, the city was chosen as the capital of the Margraviate of Brandenburg, a principality of the Holy Roman Empire, and was later ruled by the Hohenzollern dynasty for the following five centuries. The Hohenzollerns established the Duchy of Prussia in

\textsuperscript{11} Overview based on the timeline provided by the Berlin city website: http://www.berlin.de/berlin-im-ueberblick/geschichte/index.de.html
the 16th century, with Berlin as its capital. The Duchy was one of Europe's most powerful ruling entities, acquiring vast lands and expanding its borders from its early days. Many symbols in today's Germany have Prussian association, such as the Iron Cross, the black eagle, and the black and red colors in its flag, to name a few. In the aftermath of the Thirty Years' War in the 17th century, one third of the houses in Berlin were destroyed and the city lost half of its population. As a result, Friedrich I sought to establish religious tolerance and promote immigration in Prussia. By the end of the century, Prussia was a land of immigrants and religious refugees who were offered asylum in Berlin, such as the French Huguenots, Bohemians, and immigrants from Poland and Austria-Hungary.

At the start of the 18th century, Friedrich I became King and kept Berlin as capital of his Kingdom, which for the first time saw Berlin become a centralized political power, resulting in massive growth of the city's borders. Upon his death, Friedrich I's son, Friedrich II came to power, and would be known as Friedrich der Große (Frederick the Great) until his death. During his reign, Berlin became the continental center for Enlightenment following his personal interest in music, philosophy, and the arts. He continued his father's legacy in promoting tolerance and harmony among his constituents, while organizing his military, and
adding new land to his Kingdom. Friedrich der Große was succeeded by his nephew, Friedrich Wilhelm II toward the end of the 18th century, who was seen as the antithesis to his uncle. Friedrich Wilhelm II was quite indulgent and his reign only lasted one year, during which Prussia’s military weakened significantly. Succeeded by his son, Friedrich Wilhelm III guided Prussia through the Napoleonic Wars, strengthened the military, and saw the expansion of Berlin’s borders into neighboring towns and suburbs. He also guided the city through the age of the Industrial Revolution, transforming it into a hub for railway expansion and economic growth. His son and successor, Friedrich Wilhelm IV continued his legacy of expansion and growth. His brother, Wilhelm I succeeded him as the first Emperor of the German Empire after the unification of Germany, which resulted in the vast expansion of Prussian territory. This caused a heightened sense of nationalism among Prussians, and a sense of overprotectiveness of their language and traditions. At the same time, the Empire’s rail network continued to grow, making travel faster and cheap, and making the exchange of ideas easier. Wilhelm I is most notably remembered for passing the Anti-Socialist Laws of the Empire which meant to curb the growth of the Socialist Democratic Party (SPD) in Berlin. Wilhelm I’s grandson Wilhelm II would become the last Emperor, before the monarchy was abolished in the aftermath of the First World War.
1.5.2 First World War and Weimar Republic

At the end of the First World War, the Weimar Republic was established with Berlin as its capital. The Weimar Republic sought to replace the authoritarian rule of the German Empire that preceded it and instill democratic parliamentary values in its system of governance. During the Weimar years, the Groß-Berlin-Gesetz (translation: Greater Berlin Act) resulted in the incorporation of districts, suburbs, and towns to the city's outskirts into its state borders, which resulted in the massive expansion in Berlin's area and an increase in its population to 4 million. The Weimar Republic was short-lived however, as the new SPD faced severe criticism from both the left and the right, in addition to various strikes across the Republic from Berlin to Munich, hyperinflation, post-War reparations, and political extremism. The left felt that the SPD was abandoning its socialist ideals and support of the working class, while the right wanted to revert back to a more authoritarian system that supported the rich and nobility. Times in the Republic weren’t always turbulent, however. Between 1924-1929, the so-called Roaring Twenties, the Republic enjoyed a period of stability, and economic growth, as a result of foreign assistance from American banks. In Berlin, the period saw an engaging cultural and social renaissance, where cinema, theater, literature, and fine arts flourished. It also brought the Bauhaus movement to the capital, reflecting the ideas of the time of impressionism and expressionism, a condemnation of the excesses of capitalism, Americanization, and a cultural revolution. Of course these favorable circumstances didn’t last long, as the onset of the Great Depression in the United States of America sent shockwaves across the world, especially in the Republic which relied on monetary assistance. With increased loss of jobs and rising support for the National Socialists, Hitler was eventually appointed as Chancellor in what marked the beginning of the Third Reich.

1.5.3 Third Reich and Second World War

The rise of the Nazi Party to power, which resulted in the extermination of Jews and other minority groups in Berlin, marked a period of destruction in the city, both physically and culturally. The city’s population dwindled as the government

13 Overview is based on the timeline provided by the Berlin city website: http://www.berlin.de/berlin-im-ueberblick/geschichte/weimarer_republik.de.html
15 Overview of the Third Reich is based on the timeline by the Berlin city website: http://www.berlin.de/berlin-im-ueberblick/geschichte/nationalsozialismus.de.html
16 Overview of Berlin after 1945 is based on the timeline provided by the Berlin city website: http://www.berlin.de/berlin-im-ueberblick/geschichte/1945.de.html
practiced high levels of censorship against anyone who deviated from its message, whether verbally, through writing, and even through film. The Nazis also encouraged anyone to speak out against citizens whom they knew were being “disloyal” towards the regime, thus creating feelings skepticism and guilt that marked the average citizen’s daily life. The government’s book burnings, destruction of “degenerate” fine art, and expulsion of many renowned writers and thinkers completely transformed Berlin from its golden days of intellectualism in the Twenties. At the same time, Berlin continued to suffer from inflation carried over from the Weimar years, and was struggling largely because of Hitler’s spending on his military and other projects, such as Weltheauptstadt Germania. By the time the Second World War began, Berlin was already culturally fragmented and physically disjointed; the War accentuated the death and destruction in the city, wiping out entire areas, and rendering many uninhabitable. At the end of the War, Germany was ruled by the Western Allies and the Soviet Union based on the agreed upon zonal divisions after the War. While Berlin fell in the Soviet sector, its status as the former capital of Germany made it too important to remain under the control of one entity. Thus, it was divided into four zones, each governed by a nation, whereby the entire city would be led by a new power each month on a rotating basis. By 1947 however, tensions had deepened between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies, with each taking a different approach in managing the city’s rebuilding and the large number of refugees that kept pouring in from the East. The Soviet Union ultimately withdrew from the coalition and managed its zone independently, setting the stage for the creation of two German nations by 1949. While West Germany was governed by the Americans, British, and French, still on a rotating basis with its capital in Bonn, East Germany under the Soviets chose East Berlin as its capital. This was heavily rejected by the Western Allies who viewed Berlin as a neutral city, one that couldn’t be the political headquarters of any nation. The Soviet Union also placed a blockade on Berlin for months, forcing the Western Allies to deliver food by helicopters. Such policies increased the rift and created various power blocs in Berlin, setting the stage for the Cold War.
Figure 3: Division of Germany after World War II into GDR (red) and West Germany (blue, green, and yellow)

Figure 4: Division of Berlin after World War II into East Berlin (red) and West Berlin (blue, green, and yellow)
1.5.4 Cold War and the Years of the Berlin Wall

As the Soviet Union and the Western Bloc engaged in psychological warfare for decades, the political, economic, and cultural statuses of East and West Germany differed greatly, and were embodied through the divisions in Berlin for the four decades that followed. For starters, the wealth of the Western ruling powers along with their capitalist approach to reviving West Germany economically lead to economic prosperity in West Berlin. On the other hand, East Berlin suffered greatly from being politically and economically isolated from the West, which resulted in mass migration from East to West. In fact, it is estimated that about 4 million GDR residents migrated to West Berlin from 1945 – 1961, which accounted for 20% of the total population, many of whom were young educated intellectuals. This caused a “brain drain” phenomenon in East Germany, causing the Soviet Union to demand the withdrawal of the Allies from West Berlin in order to take over governance of the entire city. The Allies denied the request, resulting in the eventual construction of the Berlin Wall, its first manifestation being a barbed wire fence along the East-West Berlin border on August 13, 1961. The Berlin Wall ended citizens’ freedom of travel between the GDR and FRG, resulting in the immediate and shocking separation of families, friends, and loved ones. The Wall eventually surrounded all of West Berlin, with a series of checkpoints primarily placed along the East-West Berlin border. The two parts of the city were completely cut off from one another also since all public transportation routes would end at the Wall. In fact, several of Berlin’s largest and oldest underground train stations were non-functional during the years of the Wall because they lay along its path, dubbing them as “ghost stations”. The Wall deepened the strife between East and West Berliners, who lived under completely different circumstances, with each group adopting its own lifestyle, wealth, culture, values, and even dialect. Generations of Ossis and Wessis, as they later came to be known, increasingly suffered not only from the physical division of the Wall, but also from a “Wall in the head” (Mauer im Kopf), or a mental division. By the year 1989, the Soviet Union could no longer sustain its influence in Europe and upon increasing pressure from the international community and from East Berlin residents, the Berlin Wall was torn down on the eve of 9 November 1989. What has followed since then has been a period of political, economic, and cultural recovery in the nation as a whole, and particularly in Berlin.

17 Overview of the Cold War and Berlin Wall is based on the timeline on the Berlin city website: http://www.berlin.de/berlin-im-ueberblick/geschichte/1945.de.html
18 Overview of the years before the fall of the Berlin Wall: http://www.berlin.de/berlin-im-ueberblick/geschichte/mauerfall.de.html
Figure 5: Map of the Berlin Wall and its checkpoints
Figure 6: Structure of the Berlin Wall as a barbed wire fence along the East Berlin border, a concrete wall around West Berlin, and checkpoints throughout the death strip
1.5.5 Post-Wall Berlin and German Reunification

After the fall of the Wall, Germany as well as Berlin sought to reunify itself as part of the Deutsche Wiedervereinigung (translation: German Reunification.) The reunification of Germany was made official on 3 October 1990, almost a year after the fall of the Wall, and today it is celebrated across the country as the day of German unity (German original: Deutsche Einheit). Under the terms of the reunification, East Berlin and West Berlin were reunited and Germany became known officially as the Federal German Republic. Members of the German Parliament quickly voted to move the capital from Bonn to Berlin, legislation that wasn’t fully enacted until 1999. The reunification resulted in a new constitution that incorporated Eastern and Western ideals, and was largely sensitive to the differences in lifestyle, beliefs, and core values of Easterners and Westerners. It also resulted in the reunification of currency, education, health care, social security, and transportation, among others. After the Reunification, Germany was able to become once again a part of Europe, leading to its highly influential status in the European Union today. In Berlin particularly, since it served as the nation’s capital, great goals were set in place for its economic recovery and political unity after the Cold War. Berlin, in other words, was set to serve as a stepping stone for the nation’s reunification. This was largely applicable to the then divided physical landscape of the city, whether in reference to the buildings, streets, cars, or public transportation system, the differences were stark. Thus, the mission of the new German government and the state government in Berlin was to reunite the fragmented city into a setting in which former Easterners and Westerners could simply become Berliners. The process of the reunification of Berlin has been labeled as the “inner reunification” is still very much an active process more than two decades after German Reunification. This inner reunification has been embodied through various efforts, and this thesis will primarily focus on the urban design methods that were implemented to reunify the city’s landscape at one particular junction at the Brandenburg Gate, and their impact on the city’s landscape and cultural identity.

Chapter 2: Evolution of the Brandenburg Gate as a Politicized Space

2.1 Chapter Overview

“The Brandenburg Gate is not only a symbol of division and reunification; it was also the site of many other events in German history, a history characterized by so many peaks and troughs.”

The Brandenburg Gate has been a trademark symbol of Berlin since its early construction in the 1730s by Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm I. Throughout its history, the Gate was used by the various ruling powers and political parties in the Kingdom of Prussia, the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, East and West Germany, and modern day Germany to represent the various political and social circumstances of each time period. While the location of the Gate hasn’t changed since its early days, its scale, details, and symbolism have been diversified immensely. In post-Wall Berlin, the new government sought to recreate the city’s physical identity by bringing back certain features of Berlin’s traditional landscape, and abandoning many remnants of the Nazi and Soviet eras. The government also rebuilt or restored many of the city’s political buildings, monuments, and structures that would be fit for a returning capital. These redevelopment projects aimed to transform Berlin into a unified global metropolis, one that could compete with other European cities like London or Paris. The site of the Brandenburg Gate and its immediate surroundings was one of the government’s key redevelopment projects towards achieving reintegration on every level.

This chapter will focus on the Brandenburg Gate itself, and its evolution from a humble city Gate in the 18th century, to a symbol that embodied political and cultural change in Berlin throughout its tremulous history. Each section will focus on a particular period in the Gate’s evolution: section 2.2 will discuss the Gate’s inception in Prussia, section 2.3 highlights the Gate’s growing political symbolism in the Weimar Republic, section 2.4 covers the Gate’s transcendence into a global icon under the Nazi regime, section 2.5 discusses the Gate’s stagnation as part of the Berlin Wall during the Cold War, and finally section 2.6 explores the Gate’s restoration efforts in post-Wall Berlin and their impact on the reintegration process.

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2.2 The Gate of Peace in the Prussian Kingdom

As the Kingdom of Prussia grew in size and power in the late 17th century, King Friedrich Wilhelm I commissioned the construction of the Berliner Zoll- und Akzisemauer (Berlin Customs Wall) around the kingdom’s capital, in order to control the levying of taxes, as well as the flow of imports and exports. The Akzisemauer formed a ring around the city, with 14 gates originally constructed around it, with the later addition of 4 more gates a few decades later. These 18 gates were destroyed and rebuilt many times in the 17th and 18th centuries, yet today, the Brandenburg Gate is the only one that remains standing. The original Gate of the early 18th century was quite humble in its appearance and consisted mainly of pylons which housed the guard houses. Yet its importance lay in its location in the city, at the western end of Unter der Linden, one of the city’s main avenues covered in linden trees, which led up to the Prussian Kings’ palaces. The Gate was later commissioned for reconstruction by King Friedrich Wilhelm II to represent peace, at a time when Prussia was struggling with religious and social conflict between Calvinists, Lutherans, Catholics, Jews, Mennonites, and members of the Enlightenment.

Figure 7: The Brandenburg Gate as one of the 18 gates of the Berlin Customs Wall (Brandenburger Thor)

Overview of the Gate at different historical periods: http://www.pegasus-onlinezeitschrift.de/erga_1_2004_demandt.html
Baroque and classical architect Carl Gotthard Langhans spent three years to create the basis of all future designs of the Brandenburg Gate. He drew his main inspiration from the Propylaea: just as it was the entry point to the Athenian Acropolis which housed the Parthenon, the birthplace of democracy, the Brandenburg Gate would be the entryway into Berlin, the greatest city in the great Kingdom of Prussia. The basic design of the Gate consisted of twelve symmetric Doric columns, which formed five entryways. At the time, citizens were only allowed to pass through the two outermost entryways, with the middle one reserved for members of the royal family and its guests. Sitting atop the Gate at its center was the Quadriga: a chariot drawn by four horses, in which sat Eirene the Greek goddess of peace joined with Nike, the Greek goddess of victory. It was unidirectional and faced toward the center of Berlin. Along the relief beneath the Quadriga were images of Eirene standing on a chariot driven by four cupids, holding a palm branch in one hand, a laurel wreath in the other, described as the “train for the goddess of peace” (German: Zug der Friedensgöttin). On the far right of the relief, a winged Nike is holding a tropaion. Present were also personifications of themes like friendship and statesmanship, as well as arts and sciences, to highlight the virtues that would strengthen the city at its great time of peace and as a continental leader. There were also other reliefs which depicted Hercules and Minerva, that highlighted the city’s wars, reconstruction efforts, trade, and crafts. Inscribed on the Gate was the word “Friedestor” (Peace Gate), the name by which it was known at the time. The reconstruction of the Brandenburg Gate gave Berlin the nickname “Spreeathen” (Athens of the Spree River), and thus established the city’s relationship with Antiquity, democracy, knowledge, power, and greatness.
Friedrich Wilhelm II was succeeded by his son Friedrich Wilhelm III, who was engaged in one of the century’s most influential battles, the Battle of Jena-Auerstedt against the French Emperor Napoleon I, which resulted in the conquest of Prussia by the French from 1806-1812. Upon achieving victory, Napoleon paraded his troops into Berlin and used the Brandenburg Gate for a military procession down Unter den Linden. He also instructed his troops to take the Quadriga, Prussia’s symbol of peace and victory, back to Paris as a spoil of war, where it lay in one of the city’s museums for the eight years that followed, alongside other looted artworks. Napoleon interestingly was the first person responsible for the appearance of the Brandenburg Gate on minted coins (or any other product), placing it on a French medal in 1806 to commemorate his capture of the city.
Following their victory over Napoleon in 1814, Prussian troops traveled from Paris to Berlin to return the Quadriga to the Brandenburg Gate. During their ride through the Kingdom, they were greeted with joyous demonstrations and triumphal cheers from the public. The Quadriga was then redesigned to signal a new age in Prussian politics. While many of its original features were restored, there were three main alterations intended to symbolize Prussia’s renewed place in the continent. First, the joint statue of Eirene and Nike was replaced with that of Victoria, the Roman goddess of victory. Then, Eirene’s laurel wreath was replaced with a Prussian eagle carrying the Iron Cross, a tribute to the bravery of the Prussian soldiers. Finally, the Quadriga was installed so that it faced away from Berlin towards Prussian’s neighboring states. The Gate of Peace became known as the Gate of Victory.

After its restoration, the Brandenburg Gate became a highly celebrated monument in the Kingdom. On anniversaries, it was lavishly decorated in garlands and flags, and on days of mourning, it was draped in black. Newly-wed Prussian princes would parade their wives through the Gate, even if they resided outside of Berlin. Heads of state, kings, queens, emperors, and distinguished guests could not enter Berlin without passing through the Gate. Military parades for soldiers returning from battles and conquests became a tradition, always attracting citizens in large numbers. Thus, the Gate achieved an elevated status as a

24 This detail regarding the Quadriga’s renewed orientation is not agreed on by the record books. Non-German (British) sources state the orientation of the Quadriga was reversed after its re-installment, while German sources state that it was reversed to send a message to Prussia’s enemies that the Kingdom was powerful, victorious, and should be watched out for.
highly-regarded royal monument, similar to the Arc de Triomphe de L’Étoile in Paris.

As the Industrial Revolution swept through Europe’s largest cities, it successfully transformed Berlin into the economic, intellectual, and transportation hub of Prussia. With the advent of railway transport and the expansion of the city’s borders into neighboring towns and suburbs, the Akzisemauer became insignificant and was destroyed. By 1871 Berlin became the capital of the newly formed German Empire and continued its ascendance towards becoming an economic and intellectual powerhouse. The Brandenburg Gate remained largely unchanged during those years, and confirmed its status as one of the city’s most iconic landmarks.

![Figure 14: State funeral at the Brandenburg Gate in the German Empire](image)

2.3 Political Turmoil in the Weimar Republic

By 1918, following the First World War and the abdication of the Kaiser Wilhelm II which marked the birth of the Weimar Republic, all five entryways of the Brandenburg Gate became open to all the city’s citizens. This marked a new era in German politics, in which the aristocracy was stripped of its previous ruling-class powers. As a result, the new government of the Weimar

25 The Arc de Triomphe was commissioned for construction by Napoleon in 1806 at the height of his victories in European battles, including those against the Prussians. It was the primary site for French military parades, royal parades, and public gatherings for demonstrations.
Republic faced strong opposition from the several right and left-wing parties that coalesced at the time. The Brandenburg Gate became the site for party quarrels, rallies, marches, and strikes, and received many beatings in the process. In one of the most significant attempts to overthrow the government in 1920, known as the Kapp-Putsch, the aristocrats and conservatives organized a massive protest on March 13, 1920. On that morning, 5000 German soldiers marched through the Brandenburg Gate to occupy Berlin, and faced little resistance from the Weimar military. Protesters also occupied all government buildings and declared the Weimar constitution null. As a result, members of the Weimar Republic's government fled the city, and the aristocrats seized control of the government for five days, during which the people protested against them and rejected their rule. The Brandenburg Gate, having been the site of military coups and public protests, embodied the deep political and social turmoil of the time.

While the Weimar Republic thrived economically in the Golden Twenties, it suffered severely upon the onset of the depression in the United States in 1929. This led to various changes in the political structure of cabinet ministers, ultimately resulting in the election of Adolf Hitler to the chancellery in January 1933, ushering Berlin into a new era of politics, with the Gate at its center.
2.4 The Gate as a Party Symbol in Nazi Germany

Upon the appointment of its leader to power, the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP/Nazi) celebrated its Machtergreifung (seizure of power) with a torchlight parade across the city. The parade terminated with the passage of Nazi troops through the Brandenburg Gate, effectively signaling the end of the short-lived Weimar Republic and the advent of the Third Reich. The role of the Brandenburg Gate as a symbol of German power and autonomy would become larger than ever under Hitler’s rule in the years that followed.

One particularly significant event for the city during the years of the Third Reich was the 1936 Summer Olympics. Berlin was chosen as the host city in 1931, before Hitler’s ascendance to power. However, by the time he was chancellor, he had already planned on using the Olympics to promote his agenda of racial supremacy. For example, he wrote in the Party’s official paper that Jews and blacks should not be allowed to compete in Berlin. The Nazis hung signs at the city’s main attractions, such as the Brandenburg Gate, that read “Juden sind hier unerwünscht” (Jews not wanted here). The police was also instructed to arrest Berlin’s Romani residents, and send them to special camps in the eastern district of Marzahn. Hitler also commissioned the reconstruction of the Olympic Stadium into a grand structure that could fit 110,000 spectators, with a special seating area for the Party. He also commissioned a German filmmaker to shoot the events at the Olympics, which later became the film “Olympia”, thereby eternalizing the event as a Nazi success. After several boycott threats from the international community, Hitler allowed Jewish and black athletes to compete in the Games from other countries, but still maintained the racial bans in Germany. Yet still, the Olympics were boycotted by several countries that opposed the Nazi’s propaganda, including Spain under the left-wing Popular Front and the Soviet Union. In addition, many top athletes chose not to participate in the Games due to their personal opposition to Hitler’s agenda. The Olympic Games also brought plenty of attention to the Brandenburg Gate and its surrounding area. The Games resulted in the expansion of a north-south tram line towards “Unter den Linden” near the southern portico of the Gate, thus increasing the site’s accessibility and exposure to citizens and guests. When the Olympic torch parade reached Berlin, the runners crossed the Brandenburg Gate on their way towards the Stadium, placing the Gate in the global sphere.
Figure 17: The Brandenburg Gate covered in Nazi flags and symbols

Figure 18: The Brandenburg Gate featured on Hitler’s 100 Reichsmark coin

Figure 19: The Olympic torch parade through the Brandenburg Gate towards the Olympic Stadium in 1936

Figure 20: The Brandenburg Gate used to propagate the Nazi’s agenda during the Olympics
Under Adolf Hitler and his architect, Albert Speer’s redevelopment project for Berlin, impossibly titled Welthauptstadt Germania (world’s capital Germania), the Brandenburg Gate fell on the eastern end of a proposed east-west axis. By 1939, the seven kilometer stretch between the Brandenburg Gate and the former Adolf Hitler Platz (Theodore-Heuss Platz today) was completed and named Charlottenburger Chausee. In addition, the plans intended for the two porticoes on each side of the Brandenburg Gate to be removed so that vehicles could enter Charlottenburger Chausee by passing through and around the Gate, yet this was never achieved. Hitler and Speer also proposed a north-south axis that would intersect the east-west axis near the Brandenburg Gate that would be called Prachtallee (Avenue of Splendors) and would serve as a parade ground. The intersection of these two axes highlighted the importance of the Brandenburg Gate as a landmark in Nazi Berlin, and in Hitler’s future Germania.

The Brandenburg Gate was popularized in the 1930s when the German 100 Reichsmark coin depicted it on one side, with an image of the swastika replacing the Quadriga, and Hitler’s face on the other side, surrounded by his name and another
swastika. Perhaps this signified a new order that Hitler and his party would bring to Germany, utilizing the symbols of the great Prussian past to inspire a new and powerful Nazi party. On the actual Gate itself, Hitler covered both sides of each of the five entryways with Nazi party flags; each hung from the top until about halfway down. Such propaganda transformed the Brandenburg Gate from a city landmark to a party symbol, and reinforced the status of the Nazis as the ruling power in Germany. The Brandenburg Gate was also the chosen site for Hitler’s 50th birthday parade and celebrations in 1939. By the 1940s however, as the Third Reich began to engage heavily in battles during the Second World War, the frequency of victory parades decreased significantly, and the Gate was transformed from a symbol of political power to a WWII ground zero.

2.5 A Symbol of Division

During the years of the Second World War, Berlin was heavily bombed by the Allies, and the Gate suffered a great degree of damage all around. Still yet, the Quadriga remained sitting atop the Gate, and was a symbol of German perseverance during uncertain times. In fact, in anticipation of potential damage to the Quadriga, it was molded in plaster and the cast was stored in the small town of Dahlem in the western part of Germany. In the final days of the Battle of Berlin which led up to the Soviet victory in April 1945, German troops created a roadblock around the Gate and used it as an inner defensive ring. The Gate was the final site of battleground between the Germans and the Soviets, and suffered intensely from the crossfire between the two sides. When the German troops finally surrendered, the Soviets planted their red flag with the hammer and sickle at the Gate and began their celebrations, a scene that was equally victorious and melancholic. Footage from July 1945 shows the total destruction of both porticoes, bullet holes in the roof of the Gate and over 10,000 throughout, and severe damage to the Gate’s columns. In addition, the relief of Eirene “train of the goddess of peace” was riddled in bullets, the horses of the Quadriga were heavily damaged, and the statue of Victoria was destroyed, along with the Prussian eagle and Iron Cross. And just as the Gate was in ruins, so was the state of German and global affairs to a larger extent.
Figure 22: Destruction of the Brandenburg Gate in June 1945

Figure 23: Soviet troops planting Red Army flags on top of the damaged Quadriga
Upon victory, the Soviets turned their attention to the construction of monuments and memorials across the city to commemorate the war and their fallen soldiers. They had no interest in restoring the war-battered German buildings and landmarks, as they perceived them to have Nazi connotations as a strong part of Nazi history. Instead the Soviets focused initially on ridding Berlin of its Nazi associations and rebuilding the historic landscape of the city by leaving their architectural mark. Many existing monuments, statues, buildings, and plazas were moved from their original locations, partially redeveloped, or poorly tended to. The growing rift between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies, which increased after the currency reforms in the Western part of Berlin and the blockade on access routes to and from West Berlin imposed by the Soviets, resulted in economic shortcomings for the East. In 1948, Ernst Reuter, the then-mayor of West Berlin stood in front of the Brandenburg Gate and famously spoke to 300,000 people against the Soviet blockade, “Ihr Völker der Welt ... Schaut auf diese Stadt und erkennt, dass ihr diese Stadt und dieses Volk nicht preisgeben dürft, nicht preisgeben könnt!” (People of this world, look upon this city and see that you should not, cannot abandon this city and this people)\(^{26}\). Thus, the bullet-covered Brandenburg, still in shambles, was once again center-stage to the ushering of a new era in German politics. A year later, when the GDR and FRG were officially established, the Brandenburg Gate was part of the GDR, within Soviet jurisdiction. It was surrounded by Red Army flags, decked out in hammers and sickles and flags of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), which replaced the destroyed Quadriga. Years later well into the Cold War, 300 East Berlin workers went on strike to protest pay cuts in the famous protests of June 1953. News of

\(^{26}\) http://www.berlin.de/berlin-im-ueberblick/geschichte/historische-reden/ernstreuterde.de.html
these events quickly spread through East Germany, sparking protests across East German towns and villages. Citizens of the GDR marched towards the Brandenburg Gate, burning Soviet flags, and replacing them with black, red, and gold German flags. This resulted in major clashes between citizens, GDR police, and Soviet troops, in which shots were fired, many people were killed, and others arrested and executed or sent to penal camps. Exact figures on the numbers of those killed and injured still remain uncertain, ranging from a mere 55 to 7575\textsuperscript{27}. In addition, it is estimated that 40,000 East Berlin residents migrated to the West in the immediate aftermath of the uprisings, an issue that would eventually lead to the construction of the Berlin Wall a few years later. In the aftermath of the uprisings, West Berlin renamed Charlottenburg Chaussee to Straße des 17. Juni (17 June Street), to memorialize the tragic events and protest against the Soviet Union’s actions. Once again, the Brandenburg Gate was the site of deep political turmoil, a contested identity, and a sad reality.

In response to the wide instability of the GDR, the SED sought to reiterate its status as the governing power in East Berlin. The Brandenburg Gate was draped yet again, this time with communist slogans, always written on red colored banners. This of course was deeply ironic, since it mimicked Hitler’s propaganda practices of the 1930s, which the Soviets were so aggressively trying to eliminate from post-WWII Berlin. The SED also eventually decided to restore and rebuild the Brandenburg Gate in September 1956, in collaboration with West Berlin, in a process clad in accusations by the East and West over the intentions and efforts of each government. The SED wanted to restore the Quadriga to its original design, and requested to loan the plaster mold which at that point lay in the district of Charlottenburg in West Berlin. The suspicious West Berlin Senate initially refused to grant the SED its request, but eventually gave in a year later, still mistrusting the restoration efforts. In the summer of 1958, after the

\textsuperscript{27} In the aftermath of the events, the Soviet Union reported that there were 55 known deaths after the uprisings. Other sources reported 125 deaths, and thousands of others injured and/or arrested.
Quadriga was partially rebuilt, it was unveiled in a public ceremony at the Brandenburg Gate and lifted to its original position. Overnight however, a scandal erupted across East and West Germany when the Quadriga was secretly taken back to an SED hiding place. This caused public outrage and accusations of malice against the Soviets. Die Berliner Zeitung, one of the GDR’s most prominent newspapers, accused the SED of secretly planning to paint the Quadriga red, replace the chariot and horses with a hammer and sickle, and labeled the event as the “second Napoleon” of Berlin. In a press conference held by the SED, it denounced the Prussian eagle, Iron Cross, laurel wreath, and swastika as “symbols of fascism, militarism and imperialism” and rejected their inclusion in the new Quadriga. After weeks of debate and public outcry, the SED returned the Quadriga to the Brandenburg Gate, and while the statue of Victoria, the horses, and the laurel wreath were restored, the Prussian eagle and Iron Cross were nowhere to be seen. In addition, a GDR flag was installed atop the Gate, replacing the Soviet one that was there previously. Nonetheless, the two-year 2 million dollar restoration process began, and continued to be marked with controversy until the Gate was officially inaugurated in November 1958 under its new title “memorial for the quest towards unity” (German original: Mahnmal für das Streben nach Einheit). At the inauguration, the SED stated that it hoped the new Gate could serve a higher purpose for Berliners, instead of simply being a boundary landmark that divides Germans in the East and West. This episode in the Gate’s history highlighted the strong association between Berliners and the Gate, and the deep rift that existed between East Berliners, the SED, and West Berlin.

Following the restoration and in another ironic twist, the SED began deploying tanks and policemen along the north-south axis of the Gate, as the earliest manifestation of the Berlin Wall. For the 31 years to come, the Brandenburg Gate would be transformed into a stark symbol of division. This was embodied in all aspects of East and West German life. For example, postage stamps that were circulated in East Germany after the restoration of the Gate showed an image of the Brandenburg Gate, the newly restored Quadriga, and German and Soviet flags on each portico. At the same time, postage stamps that came out of West Germany also projected an image of the Gate with the old Prussian design of the Quadriga that included the Iron Cross and the eagle. These two distinctly different narratives built around the restored Gate, a product of a supposed East-West bi-partisan effort, represent the power play that would culminate between the East and West in the decades to come, with each side claiming the Gate as its own representative of a version of “German” identity.

http://www.pegasus-onlinezeitschrift.de/erga_1_2004_demandt.html
Between the years 1958-1961, and in response to the mass migration of East Germans to the FGR, the GDR began creating stricter regulations for East Germans to cross into West Germany, often with the requirement of a special visa. West Germans and visitors were still allowed to cross more freely into East Germany. The Brandenburg Gate housed a GDR checkpoint during that period, one of several that were installed along the East-West Berlin border. On 13 August, 1961, Germans woke up to find that a separation barrier had been erected overnight along the Berlin border. The Berlin Wall, a combination of concrete walls, barbed wire, fences, and military posts and guard houses, was built by the GDR to create a “reliable surveillance and effective control” of the border with West Berlin. The next day, West Berliners were joined by their mayor Willy Brandt, and marched down Straße des 17 Juni toward the Brandenburg Gate to protest the erection of the Berlin Wall. In response to this “provocation” by the West, the GDR decided to close the checkpoint at the Brandenburg Gate “until further notice”, a sign which remained at the Gate until 1989.

In the months that followed, the Berlin Wall grew in length, height, and size. Since the Wall itself was in fact around both West Berlin, and the East-West Berlin border, it caused the Brandenburg Gate to fall in the middle ground, the no-man's land, the death strip (Todesstreifen). On the GDR side, the Wall was constructed around the Gate to form an arc, thus increasing the area of empty, open space in front of the Gate, occupied by warning signs, military men, and border guards. At the top of the Gate, a lookout post was created for the National Army members that would allow them to completely observe the “operations” on the other side. This would later be replaced by a surveillance camera, targeting enemy observation. In addition, the SED placed two Red Army flags at the feet of the Gate, on the Western side, to declare the full-on advent of socialism to East Germany. Such actions increased the rift between the East and West, as well as within citizens of East Berlin, whose opinions were divided on such actions.

29 http://www.pegasus-onlinezeitschrift.de/erga_1_2004_demandt.html

Figure 28: Postage stamps from the GDR (right) and FGR (left) after the restoration of the Brandenburg Gate
Figure 29: Map of the path of the Berlin Wall passing through the Brandenburg Gate

Figure 30: The Berlin Wall passing around the Gate on the west, barbed wire on the east, placing the Gate in the death strip
During the years of partition, and especially the years of the Berlin Wall, the division between East and West Berliners intensified from simply a geographic one, to a sociocultural, economic, and political one. Capitalist West Berlin was economically aided dramatically by the Western Allies following the Second World War. Wessis (Westerners), as they became known, lived in a “consumer paradise”. On the other side however, socialist East Berlin was economically struggling and Ossis (Easterners) lived under strict government censorship. While East and West Berliners developed their own distinct cultures and versions of a German identity, they shared their opposition to the construction of the Wall, and their view of the Brandenburg Gate as a symbol of German division. The Brandenburg Gate became known among the public as “Das Grenztor” (the border gate), diluting its Prussian legacy as the Gate of Peace. During President John F. Kennedy’s visit to West Berlin in 1963, the Soviets hung red tarps on the Gate from ceiling to floor to prevent Westerners from looking into East Berlin. Of course Kennedy’s visit aimed to reiterate the US’ support to West Germany after the construction of the Berlin Wall. His famous speech included such remarks as “lass’ sie nach Berlin kommen” (let them come to Berlin, in reference to East Germans) directed at the Soviets in opposition to the Wall, and “ich bin ein Berliner” giving the citizens of the West a strong morale boost. Perhaps then, the red tarps were meant to prevent East Berliners from any kind of exposure to Kennedy’s provocations, accusations, and outlook on Western freedom and support to West Berlin. 

http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/3376
Germany.

Figure 32: The Brandenburg Gate covered in red tarp during JFK’s visit to West Berlin in 1963

Figure 33: JFK visits West Berlin in 1963 voicing his stance against the construction of the Berlin Wall and division of land and people
Lamentations against the construction of the Wall continued after JFK’s visit. Decades after the Wall was built, then-mayor of West Berlin Richard von Weizsäcker stated that “as long as the Brandenburg Gate is closed, the German question is open.” Statements like this one clearly emphasized the strong symbolism that Gate holds when thinking about fundamental political issues like German unity. By 1989, the Gate was the world’s most strictly guarded national monument, which lay in an urban wasteland, between the world’s power blocs of the time. In 1989, U.S. president Ronald Regan addressed West Germans by speaking in front of the Gate. His famous speech urged Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to “tear down the Wall” and “open this Gate”. 1989 saw various demonstrations spring up in Soviet states, from Hungary, to Czechoslovakia, and East Germany, the public was dissatisfied with a poor economy and strict Soviet control and censorship. The GDR saw massive demonstrations take place in Leipzig (191 kilometers southwest of Berlin) that later spread to East Berlin between October and November, coinciding with the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the GDR. The period of demonstrations against the East German regime ultimately resulted in the reallowance of Germans to travel freely between East and West overnight, marking the end of the Berlin Wall.

2.6 Post-Wall Berlin: Hope and Unity

On the eve of 9 November 1989, hundreds of thousands of elated Berliners flocked to the Brandenburg Gate, and tore down the Wall with hammers and chisels, putting an end to a long period of division and oppression. However, while all other checkpoints in Berlin were opened for traffic immediately, the Brandenburg Gate remained officially closed in the aftermath of 9 November. Under the watchful eyes of world citizens, the Brandenburg Gate was opened on 22 December in a massive ceremony, in which thousands of people took to the streets marching towards the Gate. During the ceremony, then-West German Chancel-
lor Helmut Kohl and East German Prime Minister Hans Modrow walked through the Gate together, and stated to the public, “the burning stench of war must never be smelled here, it [the Gate] must be a gate of peace” and “the wall was built to help men, but it has hurt men very much. The opening of the wall is a new sign of our good will.” This event also marked the first time in over three decades in which a West German official had officially entered East Berlin, alluding to the reunification of the city and the nation that would soon follow.

The celebrations that marked the opening of the Gate extended much farther beyond the borders of Berlin. In Japan, the national television station broadcast the events live from Berlin for three hours continuously without a single commercial break, the first time ever in the history of Japanese television. World famous musicians and artists flocked to Berlin to partake in the celebrations. By the following week, hundreds of thousands would descend onto Berlin for the city’s New Year’s Eve party at the Gate, an event which would become an annual city tradition. Unfortunately, the next morning Berliners woke up to find a nasty and expensive surprise waiting at the Gate. In the aftermath of the raucous celebrations of the previous night, Berliners found the Gate vandalized: “Vive l’anarchy” (long live anarchy) was sprayed across the whole attic, the Quadriga was broken in different areas, names and dates were carved into the columns, pieces of broken glass were scattered throughout, and ultimately there was one dead person, and 271 injured. Within a larger context, this incident signified the transitory state of the political landscape and cultural identity that Berlin was undergoing. While a new unified government was being formed, a state of chaos and uncertainty filled the air in the city. And even though former East and West Berliners could now travel freely, it wasn’t until the German Reunification in October 1990 that a new identity for the Gate, Berlin, and the nation started to form. And so with the transformation in the political landscape of Europe, the Brandenburg Gate began reclaiming its long-lost legacy of hope, peace, and unity. The Gate, which for decades had served as a border station between two cities, and an edge to each city, became the center of a new city, a New Berlin, and a unified Germany on 3 October.

The Gate opened again in 2002 after undergoing a process of preservation and restoration that cost 3 million dollars, and has since regained its status as an icon of the city’s pride, becoming one of the Berlin’s and Europe’s top tourist attractions. Its original design featuring the Doric columns, porticoes, Quadriga with the statue of Victoria, Iron Cross, and eagle was reinstated.

The Gate of the new Berlin also houses a “Room of Silence” in its northern portico. The Room was installed in 1994 after it was

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32 http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/december/22/newsid_2539000/2539765.stm
33 http://www.pegasus-onlinezeitschrift.de/erga_1_2004__demandt.html
34 http://www.german-architecture.info/BER-010.htm
lobbied for by a group of citizens who wanted a place of peace to tolerance at the crossroads of hostile ideologies and opposing political views. The Room is nondenominational, contains no symbolism that affiliates it with any political, social, or religious group, and is modeled after a similar room of silence at the UN building in New York City. Its purpose is to, “provide an opportunity for everyone, independent of background, color, ideology, religion and physical condition to enter and remain in silence for a while to simply relax, to gain strength for the daily life, or to remember inside this historic place the dark but also hopeful events, to meditate, to pray.”

Today, the Brandenburg Gate features as the local icon for city merchandise, city-related websites, postcards, advertisements, and so on. The Gate continues to be center stage for local and state events in the 21st century. In 2009 at the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, German Chancellor Angela Merkel walked through the Gate with Michael Gorbachev, commended his efforts in helping bring down the Wall, and stated to the thousands of Berliners standing in front of the Gate, “Freedom must be fought for. Freedom must be defended time and again. Freedom is the most valuable commodity in our political and social system.” Merkel’s message of freedom and democracy has defined the spirit of post-Wall Berlin, and while the Brandenburg Gate today stands a symbol of a reunited city, its role and monumentality are best understood when viewed in relation to its surroundings.

2.7 Chapter Summary

The Brandenburg Gate is one of Berlin’s most treasured landmarks. Its tremulous history and evolution under the different political regimes has reflected the circumstances of the time in the city. It first gained a widespread reputation when it was reconstructed in the late 18th century into a grand gate of peace, at a time when Berlin was struggling with rising tensions among its ethnic and religious groups. Over the following century, it would grow in stature among members of the royal family, as well as the public due to its location and functions. This is exemplified by the events that surrounded Napoleon’s capture of the city, looting of the Quadriga, and the strong sense of public jubilation upon its return. The Gate went from being a Prussian symbol of victory to a one of deep conflict and political instability in the Weimar Republic. As various opposing political groups tried to take control of the Republic’s affairs in its short-lived history, the Gate was center stage for protests, demonstrations, and fatal exchanges with the police. At a time of political uncertainty, the Gate served as a place of unity for people, and a symbol for hope and power. The end of the Republic and the advent of the Third Reich saw the transformation of the Gate to a party symbol used by Hitler to propagate his agenda to the global audience. What followed was a long period of destruction and isolation, in which the Gate was badly damaged in World War II, was the site of protest and demonstration against the Soviet Union, and a part of the Berlin Wall. While Western powers tried to use the Gate as a backdrop to voice their support for the FRG, the Soviet Union used is to spread communist propaganda. With each side claiming the Gate as its own, the divisions between Berliners grew. Ultimately, as checkpoints were opened and the Berlin Wall fell, the Gate was restored and became the city’s symbol of hope and unity. In order

to better understand the significance of the Gate in the reintegration process, it is important to understand the changes that took place in its immediate surroundings in the last 23 years.
Figure 40: The Brandenburg Gate on the back of the 50 Euro cent coin in 2002

Figure 42: The Brandenburg Gate as the logo of the official Berlin city website, berlin.de

Figure 41: The Brandenburg Gate featuring Obama ’08 during Obama’s visit to Berlin in his first presidential campaign
Chapter 3: Pariser Platz, East of the Brandenburg Gate

3.1 Chapter Overview

Pariser Platz is one of Berlin’s most historic public plazas, lying east of the Brandenburg Gate. Throughout its history, it has experienced extended periods of growth and prominence, destruction and redevelopment, while bearing witness to many of the city’s most focal political and cultural events. As was the case with the Brandenburg Gate, Pariser Platz was a deserted site during the Cold War, and was destroyed by the Berlin Wall as it passed right through it. Since German Reunification, the city has identified the plaza as one of its key locations for redevelopment, to achieve physical connectedness of the city at its center. Today the plaza is an attractive spot in the city that serves a multitude of functions on a daily basis, and has in many ways regained its prominence over the centuries past. Its location, right at the foot of the Brandenburg Gate, further accentuates its function and services it provides. This chapter will explore the history of development of the plaza, its relationship to the Brandenburg Gate, and its redevelopment over the last twenty three years.

In section 3.2 the thesis will provide a historic overview of the plaza from its establishment until the fall of the Berlin Wall. Section 3.3 will examine the redevelopment process and outcomes of the plaza after the fall of the Wall. Section 3.4 will highlight the importance of the relationship between Pariser Platz and the Brandenburg Gate as part of reintegration.

3.2 Historic Overview of Pariser Platz

Pariser Platz has been located east of the Brandenburg Gate since its early development in the mid-18th century. Friedrich II, King of Prussia at the time, ordered the construction of an architectural city-scape around the Brandenburg Gate, which had been built a few decades earlier. Friedrich II wanted to create a plaza in which buildings would be placed along both sides of Unter den Linden, the main avenue that cuts through the Brandenburg Gate, in order to accentuate the grandness of the Brandenburg Gate. The plaza’s name changed from simply “Platz” to Pariser Platz in 1818 to commemorate the Prussian troops that

37 Overview is based on the archives of the Senate Department for Urban Development and the Environment: http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/planen/staedtebau-projekte/pariser_platz/de/geschichte/index.shtml
captured Paris after Napoleon was overthrown. During the construction of the plaza in the 19th century, buildings were built and oriented towards the Gate, with their facades and entrances overlooking Unter den Linden.

Over the next century, Pariser Platz expanded its borders into one of the main attraction points of Berlin, becoming a global hub. It housed the U.S., French, and British embassies, international and renowned local hotels, international banks, offices, residences, and the Berlin Academy of the Arts. Unter den Linden, the avenue around which Pariser Platz developed, was itself famous for its tall green linden trees stretching along both of its sides. In fact, the name Unter den Linden directly translates to “under the linden”. One of Berlin’s major transportation hubs as well was at Pariser Platz as an underground subway station.
During the Nazi period however, Pariser Platz was completely transformed and stripped of its function and status. In 1933, Nazi troops marched along Unter den Linder into Pariser Platz and the Brandenburg Gate to highlight Hitler’s ascension to power and instate their powerful position in Germany. During Hitler’s years, the linden trees along the avenue were cut down on both sides after Hitler remarked that they blocked the view of the troops during military processions, and were instead replaced with Nazi flags. Many buildings were closed or torn down altogether, such as the embassies and the hotels, the underground railway station was closed and turned into a ghost station, apartments became uninhabited, and consequently, the plaza lost its vibrancy and sense of activity.
By the end of the Second World War, Pariser Platz was almost entirely destroyed as a result of the fighting and the Allied bombs that were dropped on the city. Since the plaza fell in the Soviet sector of Berlin, the Soviet Union was responsible for its rehabilitation. The Soviet Union attempted to rebuild some parts of the plaza, yet without much success. Much of construction was completed with poor building materials and with little care that some buildings would collapse shortly after they were built. This left the plaza looking deserted and it served mostly as a meeting point for Soviet troops. In 1961, the eastern strip of the Berlin Wall which was built around the Brandenburg Gate passed right through Pariser Platz, destroying the little that was left of it, and turning the area into a military checkpoint. Many of the changes that the Brandenburg Gate underwent at the time were reflected in the state of destruction and desertion in Pariser Platz. By the end of the Cold War, Pariser Platz had lost its legacy as a global hub and become consumed by the death strip.
3.3 Post-Wall Redevelopment of Pariser Platz

After the fall of the Wall, Pariser Platz was regarded as an important part of the city that had to be redeveloped. The Berlin Senate Department on Urban Development and the Environment was the governmental branch in charge of handling redevelopment and planning projects in the city. The Senate was concerned with physically reconnecting the city at its center in order to create a medium of interaction between residents of the former East and West Berlin. It also sought to reinvigorate the city’s economy by attracting similar business to the ones the plaza housed in previous decades when activity was at its prime. At its time, Pariser Platz embodied all the elements that had made Berlin and world-class metropolis. In trying to restore its legacy, the Senate decided early on that the “new” Pariser Platz would be a replica of the “old” plaza at its height of activity in the 1920s, in order to recreate a sense of connection between Berliners and their city’s united past. As Ladd notes regarding the redevelopment of Berlin’s barren center, “a physical void at the center had to be filled, but so did a psychological void left by political, economic, and cultural forces pulling East and West apart. To re-create a sense of wholeness, leaders looked for points of orientation” (Ladd,
Ladd also suggests that the government’s fear of drawing architectural references to a Nazi or Communist past resulted in mimicking the traditional past as the only viable option for the plaza. And so the Senate looked to its past, and through a series of planning, design, and policy decisions, the redevelopment of Pariser Platz began in 1993. The discrepancy between the German and English sources is most evident in this case. Here it can be noticed that the German sources stated much of the fact behind the redevelopment of Pariser Platz, yet provided little reasoning for it. The English sources on the other hand were more speculative and drew connections between process, policy, and history, thereby placing the outcome of development into a larger context physically as well metaphorically.

The guidelines for the redevelopment of Pariser Platz focused primarily on recreating an authentic experience for Berlin’s citizens towards the plaza. Since the plaza was heavily destroyed after the bombings of the Second World War, the Senate’s first task was to revive the plaza’s old borders. With the help of archeologists, the former boundaries of Pariser Platz were reinstated as the first step towards redevelopment. The Senate’s goal in rebuilding public space in post-wall Berlin was to create spaces that would allow for the physical reintegration of the city, in order to bring residents of former East and West Berlin to the new city center. By creating open spaces for interaction, the Senate ultimately aimed for the reintegration of the city’s fragmented identity and that of its people. The design aesthetic that marked the redevelopment of the plaza focused on reviving the architectural styles that are most resonant with those of Berlin. The overall consensus was to reestablish the importance of the plaza as a city landmark by redeveloping it as it once at its peak, before the Second World War. The Senate thus decided to rezone the plaza, allocating 20% of the developments for residential uses, in order to ensure human traffic at the plaza at all times, and to “have eyes on the street”. The redevelopment should also adhere to a mix of conservative and modern design standards as per Berlin’s design traditions. For example, buildings could not exceed 22 meters in height, and the color range of the sandstone had to correspond with that of the Brandenburg Gate. This ensured that the Quadriga would tower over all the buildings in the plaza. Horizontally, the buildings had to be symmetric along a central axis, all facing inward towards the plaza. Such uniformity in design specifications ensured that all the buildings share the same appearance, creating a unified look that gave off an impression of physical integration and a single identity. In addition, the linden trees on Unter den Linden were planted once again in a similar layout and a new underground subway station was opened a few years ago in the heart of the plaza, called “Brandenburg Gate”, since it is the first structure anyone sees ascending upon the plaza. The original 11 parcels of land and those attributed to the Brandenburg Gate, remained under the control of the federal government. Combined with a new zoning ordinance for the plaza, as part of the
rezoning initiative in Berlin, the Senate was able to resurrect many elements of the “old” Pariser Platz that would complement the newly reintegrated Berlin.

Figure 51: The rezoning of Pariser Platz in 1993, with 20% of the land allocated for residential uses

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Figure 52: Design specifications of the buildings relative to the Brandenburg Gate

Figure 53: Design specifications of the northern (top) and southern (bottom) wings on the plaza
The table below is based on data collected about individual parcels from the Senate’s website that chronicles the development of the Plaza. It includes the main use of each parcel in the plaza before its destruction of in the Second World War, alongside its current use. The red-colored parcels represent those whose use was fully restored, the gold-colored parcels represent those whose use was partially restored, and the grey-colored parcels represent those whose use was completely changed. As can be observed, in only two cases out of twelve, the pre-1945 building uses were abandoned. In the rest of the parcels, the building uses were resurrected in some way, maintaining the sense of authenticity and connection to the plaza’s glorious past.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARCEL</th>
<th>USES BEFORE 1945</th>
<th>CURRENT USES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1, 7</td>
<td>Porticoes</td>
<td>Porticoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Embassy of the United States of America</td>
<td>Embassy of the United States of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Department of Roads, Ministry of Armaments and Munitions</td>
<td>Residential and office Building, Conference center, D2 Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Workshop center, Berlin Academy of the Arts</td>
<td>Berlin Academy of the Arts, Land Berlin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Embassy of France</td>
<td>Embassy of France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5a, 6</td>
<td>Town homes for ministers, Department for Roads Inspection</td>
<td>Dresdner Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a</td>
<td>Residential building</td>
<td>Residential building, Allgemeine Hypotheken Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70, 70a → 70, 71</td>
<td>Embassy of Great Britain</td>
<td>Embassy of Great Britain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70b, 71 → 72</td>
<td>Ministry of Food, Corporations for coal and steel industries, Hotel Adlon, Treasury of the Third Reich</td>
<td>Hotel Adlon (extension)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75, 77 → 75-77</td>
<td>Ministry of War, Adlon Hotel</td>
<td>Hotel Adlon-Kempinski, Real estate management group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8a, 80 → 78</td>
<td>Presidential chamber and offices</td>
<td>Residential and commercial building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82 → 80</td>
<td>Trade corporation, Bank</td>
<td>Residential and commercial building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chronicle of each parcel overtime: http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/planen/staedtebau-projekte/pariser_platz/de/chronik/index.shtml
By rebuilding Pariser Platz with such strict traditional standards, the Senate managed to recreate a historic center in the heart of a newly integrated Berlin, creating a link with the past and city’s days of glory. The redevelopment of the plaza also fortified the position of the Gate as a gateway to the city; in this case a gateway to a rich history, and promising future, embellished by strong diplomatic relations, cultural hubs, and economic centers, that attract both citizens and visitors to the city.
3.4 Pariser Platz Today in Relation to the Brandenburg Gate

Currently Pariser Platz serves a political-cultural sector in Berlin, conveniently located at the foot of the Brandenburg Gate. Politically, the plaza officially houses the three embassies of the former Allies that lie within 250 meters of the Brandenburg Gate. Across the street from Pariser Platz to the east is the Russian embassy (400 meters from the Gate), and the Hungarian Embassy (200 meters away from the Gate). The plaza also houses an office building representing the Canadian region of Quebec (year, 100 meters). Pariser Platz also houses the Bundesanstalt für Immobilienaufgaben (German Institute for Federal Real Estate), a government agency which provides real estate management for other federal government entities, under the Federal Ministry of Finance. Established in 2005, the institute oversees the sales and management of federal real estate properties, and in many ways, behaves like a government landlord. The plaza also includes the Europäisches Parlament Informationsbüro für Deutschland (German Information Center of the European Parliament). Visitors to the center can find the latest information on meetings and events related to the European Parliament in Germany, and how they can participate. The office also has a youth initiative which focuses inter-European education, career, and volunteer opportunities for Germans under the age of twenty six.

Culturally, the plaza houses many centers and buildings that seek to promote Berlin’s culture to the world, and bring global culture to the city. For example, the Akademie Bildungs und Sozialwerk (Academy for Culture and Social Work) offers personal and professional training in areas ranging from citizenship participation in public policy issues to trade unions or political education. The plaza is also host to Berlin’s Akademie der Künste (Berlin Art Academy) offering courses in fine arts, music, and design, among others, and staging events that display its student’s work that are open to the public. It also houses the Bundeskanzler-Willy-Brandt-Stiftung (the Willy Brandt forum), a museum space with a permanent exhibition dedicated to the life of former president Willy Brandt and his service to his country throughout its fluctuating political history. In addition, the Berlin branch of the famous Madame Tussauds Wax Museum lies at Pariser Platz. There are also a number of private-sector businesses that have established offices at Pariser Platz in recent years, such as branches of the Allianz Bank, DGHYP Bank (Deutsche Genossenschafts Hypothekenbank), DZ Bank. The plaza also houses the Kenndys-Museum near the French Embassy, before it’s

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40 All distances are provided by Google Maps
41 http://www.bundesimmobilien.de/
42 http://www.europarl.de/view/de/index.html
43 http://www.dbbakademie.de/
44 http://www.adk.de/
45 http://www.willy-brandt.de/
relocation to the northern part of the city in 2012.

Today and as it once was, Pariser Platz is one of the most attractive spots in Berlin, whose redevelopment initiative has gained widespread approval, and at times, controversy from the public. In 2006, a Starbucks café opened in the Kennedys-Museum building, drawing plenty of disapproval from Berliners. While the museum has relocated, Starbucks remains in its location, and the public still contemplates about the necessity of Western intrusion in a deeply historic site, across from a major city landmark, surrounded by the embassies of the world’s superpowers. In a similar incident, a Starbucks coffee house that was located in the Forbidden City in China was eventually forced to close in 2007 after 7 years in business, due to the public’s dismay with Western popular culture infiltrating Chinese tradition, history, and sovereignty. This begs the question as to whether Berliners would ultimately drive away Starbucks and other imported chains to protect the city’s sense of local identity, or whether Berlin’s new identity is embedded in new investment and western popular culture.

In 2009 on the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the city hosted a “Festival of Freedom” at the Brandenburg Gate in which Irish music band and UN Amnesti International Ambassador U2 was the highlight performer. The event was marked with much controversy however, since the city constructed a 2 meter high barrier around the Gate to prevent those who had not purchased tickets from attending the concert. This was viewed with much irony and harsh criticism from the public.

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47 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/8344776.stm

Figure 56: Underground subway station in Pariser Platz, called Brandenburger Tor, inaugurated in 2010
Figure 57: Starbucks in Pariser Platz
considering that the festival took place to celebrate the fall of the Berlin wall and the end of division. During the summer of 2011, Pariser Platz hosted the Berlin Fashion Week for the first time. This relocation was inspired by the idea that a new generation of fashion designers should showcase their work somewhere that defines a new age in Berlin and in many ways, a new generation of Berliners. All of these events and many more are a reflection of Pariser Platz’s changing role and usage over time. The plaza which had set out to physically reintegrate Berlin and reestablish a new and common identity for all Berliners has managed to reinstate its physical appearance and reputation as a global hub since its redevelopment.
3.5 Chapter Summary

Pariser Platz is a site of a long history of construction and development in Berlin. Since its establishment at the order of the Prussian King Friedrich II, it underwent a cycle of destruction and repair, in the process reflecting the turmoil that Berlin underwent. Pariser Platz was at its peak during the 1920s, as it was renowned for being a global hub in Berlin and Europe. The downfall of the plaza began under the Nazi rule and was completed by the end of the Second World War when it was destroyed. A brief and unsuccessful period of reconstruction by the Soviet Union followed the War, yet once again the construction of the Berlin Wall caused the complete destruction of the plaza. It was only until the fall of the Wall and the German Reunification did the redevelopment efforts of Pariser Platz truly succeed allowing the plaza to once again become Berlin’s global stage. By adhering to strict redevelopment standards that accounted for zoning and land use, architectural design, building specifications, and even color tones, the plaza was redeveloped to replicate its old self.

After twenty three years of redevelopment projects, building preservation, and plaza reconstruction, Pariser Platz has successfully reconnected a once fragmented Berlin at its center. It has also become a popular point of interaction and a meeting spot for many of the city’s residents of former East and West Berlin, thereby contributing to the reshaping process of Berlin’s local identity. Thus, Pariser Platz has not only achieved the goal of spatial re-connectedness, but it has also created a platform for a new
generation of ideas, residents, and popular culture to grow and prosper. As the number of events that Pariser Platz hosts annually continues to rise, the plaza’s development and status become more prominent. Much like the rest of Berlin, today Pariser Platz is equipped to overcome the challenges of the 21st century and continue to reinforce itself as a global destination. The changes that took place in Pariser Platz have reinforced the importance of the Brandenburg Gate as a city landmark. By placing so much emphasis on its redevelopment process, the plaza has embodied the message of hope and unity that the post-Wall Gate aimed to propagate.
Chapter 4: North-South Axis of the Brandenburg Gate

4.1 Chapter Overview

The status of the Brandenburg Gate as a symbol of unity in post-Wall Berlin was accentuated by the construction of two landmarks along its north-south axis, where the Berlin Wall passed. To the north, the Senate reconstructed the German Parliament building, the Reichstag, in the same location where it had been standing since the 19th century. To the immediate south, the Senate commissioned the development of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe after much controversy surrounding the design and location of the memorial in the city. These two landmarks represent the many faces of post-Wall Berlin, one that strives to be more democratic and politically transparent by engaging the public in the decision-making process. The other is a Berlin that seeks redemption from a dark chapter in its history; a Berlin that acknowledges its misgivings, and finds a way to recover and move forward toward a path of unity. Both landmarks have embodied the same message of hope and unity in politics and culture that the Brandenburg Gate stands for in the new Berlin, and their redevelopment in their particular locations speaks volumes about the Senate’s vision for the city’s future.

This chapter will shed light on the history and development of the Reichstag and the Memorial. Section 4.2 will provide a historic overview of the Reichstag during its early construction in the late 19th century, its use and function from then on, its long period of destruction and desertion in the 20th century, and its redevelopment after German Reunification. In section 4.3, the thesis will examine the process of building the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and the controversies that surrounded it.
“The Reichstag is where history, politics and memory intersect.”

The Reichstag is located 500 meters north of the Brandenburg Gate and is the building that houses the German Parliament and Chancellery. It was first commissioned for construction in 1871 after the first German Unification. Prior to that, members of the Parliament in Prussia did not meet in a centralized location, but rather conducted their affairs in various smaller buildings throughout the city center. Upon the Unification of German, Emperor Wilhelm I commissioned architects across the Empire to design a new building that would house the Parliament. The building would be constructed on the site of the palace of a Prussian prince, which was eventually bought out and torn down. The Reichstag was completed in 1894, with its dome a symbol of grandeur and prosperity. More than two decades later, as the Empire was collapsing amidst the First World War, the words “Dem Deutschen Volke” (To the German people) were inscribed into the building’s main façade. The Kaiser Wilhelm II strongly opposed that action due to the democratic values it implies to the people. After his abdication, the Weimar Republic was declared a nation at the Reichstag, which continued to serve as the seat of the Parliament, one with continually changing members due to the shifts in political power. While protests and clashes with the police took place at the Brandenburg Gate, the Reichstag was still looked upon to maintain a sense of political hegemony in the Republic.

Historic overview: http://www.berlin.de/orte/sehenswuerdigkeiten/reichstag/
Overview is also based on the chronology provided in The Reichstag Graffiti p.122-126
http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/176439.article
Upon the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor, the Reichstag caught on fire in an act of arson under inexplicable circumstances, to this day\textsuperscript{51}. Most of the building was burned to the ground rendering it unusable. Hitler used the fire as a pretext for gaining more political power in Berlin. He accused certain senior members of the communist party from the Soviet Union and from within Germany of carrying out the act to protest the Nazi rule. Consequently, Hitler was able to pass the Reichstag Fire Decree which essentially stripped citizens of most of their civilian rights and granted Hitler more power as chancellor\textsuperscript{52}. During Nazi rule, the building was largely unused, since the Parliament was stripped of its power and convened ever so rarely. Instead Nazi meetings were held in various other buildings and the Reichstag building was used for propaganda presentations and military purposes.

\textbf{Figure 64: The Reichstag after the Second World War}

\textsuperscript{51} The Nazis believed that the fire was a Communist plot, started by a Dutch bricklayer, Marinus van der Lubbe, who was 24 at the time, to encourage a workers’ uprising against the Nazis. However, some historians argue that the Nazis were also involved in the fire. Van der Lubbe was guillotined after he was found solely responsible for the fire. The Nazis used the fire quite effectively in spreading fear and propaganda against Communist values. In 2008 however, Van der Lubbe received a pardon since he was convicted under Nazi law, which the Germans deemed as unjust.

\textsuperscript{52} http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jan/12/secondworldwar.germany
By the end of the Second World War, the building was heavily damaged, similar to the Brandenburg Gate, and was one of the key areas for capture by the Red Army in the Battle of Berlin due to its perceived political significance. Soviet troops planted their hammer and sickle flags on top of the destroyed dome, as they did with the Quadriga, and inscribed graffiti and markings on the walls of the building, declaring their ownership of Berlin’s politics. Some of the messages left behind in Cyrillic included statements like “death to Germans” and “serves you right, you sons of dogs”. 

During the years of the Cold War, the Reichstag building lay in West Berlin, with the Berlin Wall running right around the back of the building. Since the capital of West Germany was Bonn, the Reichstag did not serve as a parliamentary building in West Berlin. The building was restored in 1956, around the same period that the Soviets initiated the restoration of the Brandenburg Gate. The famous Reichstag dome however was severely damaged was demolished during the restoration process. The restoration process was eventually completed in 1964. Still though, the building was not used for political assembly, instead it was reserved for temporary events such as representative meetings or exhibitions until the end of the War.

After the fall of the Wall and the symbolic gesture between East and West Berlin mayors at the Brandenburg Gate, the Reichstag hosted the official Reunification ceremony in 1990. A day later, members of the united German parliament assembled in the Reichstag for the first time in over eighty years, thus restoring the building’s intended use. After plenty of debate, the Parliament voted in favor of restoring Berlin as Germany’s capital, with the Reichstag as the official seat of Parliament. The reconstruction process lasted until 1999 and was marked with some controversy. British architect Sir Norman Foster was awarded the project, yet his initial design, which proposed a baldachin roof to cover the entire building, and gave up the dome of the original building, was rejected by the Parliament in 1995 because it was not conservative enough. While Foster worked on a new design, the Reichstag was fully wrapped in fabric for two weeks, as part of an exhibition by a pair of Bulgarian artists, attracting many visitors to the area. Shortly after, construction began on the new Reichstag building. The building was first completely gutted out on the inside, but much debate ensued over whether the Soviet graffiti on some of the walls should be preserved. In The Reichstag Graffiti, Lipstadt argues that “the debate about covering up the graffiti was ostensibly a debate about one aspect of the design of the rebuilt Reichstag. In fact, it was about something far more significant: inconvenient history.” Some German lawmakers found the graffiti “morally offensive” and inappropriate for the Reichstag building to serve as a constant reminder to the new Parliament of their ancestral errors. They also believed that more than sixty years after the end of the War, the city needed to “move on,” expressing their concern over how the younger generation of citizens could develop a “normal national
identity." Finally, they thought that the graffiti could burden the relations between Germany and Russia. Lipstadt, along with some German legislators, argued however that erasing the graffiti would “erase a part of Germany’s past”, and that the markings left behind were those of the “common person” and were thus a human trace more so than a legislative one. Legislators in Germany ultimately voted in favor of preserving the graffiti, a decision that was hailed by Foster and Lipstadt as a sign of new Germany’s intentions and outlook, “they chose to let the graffiti stand as a silent memorial to the horrors that were perpetrated by a previous German regime.” The controversy that surrounded the graffiti is a compelling representation of the insider (legislators) and outsider (Foster, Lipstadt) perspectives on the role of the Reichstag as a monument in Berlin, and as a functional Parliament building. While German legislators were divided on the issue, their insider perspective on the nation’s rebirth, and the symbolism of the graffiti with regards to foreign relations or future sense of nationalism is largely different from the outsiders’ point of view. Lipstadt, Foster, and others continued to regard the building as a local monument with the power to “inspire emotion”, and not simply a building that would be reconstructed to serve a pragmatic policymaking use. As was the case with Pariser Platz, these two different mindsets represent the way Germans and non-Germans (mainly Westerners) have approached this intersection of politics, culture, and memory, as Foster described it, and the extent to which they regard their impact in the new Berlin as well as the new Germany.

54 http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/176439.article
55 http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/176439.article
The Reichstag building’s most impressive feature visually and technically is its glass dome. The dome is modeled as a vast central glass cylinder with several levels serving as viewing platforms that provides a 360 degree view of Berlin. The glass dome also lies above the parliament floor, letting in natural light and improving ventilation, and allowing visitors to the dome to observe Parliamentary proceedings. The Reichstag building, originally built to serve as a meeting spot for policy-makers in the German Empire has now become a cultural landmark in Berlin. Much like the Brandenburg Gate and Pariser Platz, the political roots of the Reichstag are now being utilized to influence an aspect of Berlin’s newfound culture and identity, for citizens and visitors alike. While Berlin is capitalizing on representing its history through its physical landscape, it is also reshaping the use of some of these like the Reichstag building, which today is as much of a cultural icon and tourist attraction, as it is a contested place for policymakers to steer the city and the entire nation into a new global era. The Soviet traces of graffiti, the glass dome, and the Renaissance architecture are all still dedicated “to the German people” (Dem Deutschen Volke), and will serve as a reminder throughout history of the city’s mistakes, victories, and recovery.
Figure 69: Preserved graffiti in the Reichstag

Figure 70: The Reichstag building today
4.3 Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe

After the fall of the Wall, Jewish lobbyists in Berlin wished to create a central space to acknowledge the Holocaust. They began to push for a Holocaust Memorial and collect funds for it. A few years after Reunification, the Bundestag (legislative body) in Germany passed a resolution approving the project. The process too was marred with controversy surrounding the design and implementation of the project. In the mid-1990s, the Senate commissioned a competition, in which several designs for the Memorial were reviewed. Ultimately, the Bundestag chose a design by American architect Peter Eisenman, which consisted of 19000 square meters, covered with 2711 dark-colored concrete slabs, arranged in a grid. The slabs were 2.38 meters long, 0.95 meters wide, and varied in height. They were meant to induce uneasiness and confusion, with the slabs representing an orderly system that has lost touch with humanity. Below the Memorial, underground, an exhibition area called “Place of Information” would feature the names of all known victims of the Holocaust, provided by Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust museum. The Memorial was controversial before it was built, since many citizens found it to be unnecessary, including leaders within Berlin’s Jewish community, and also quite expensive, at a time when Berlin economy was still struggling after the Reunification. Some Berliners thought the Memorial was exploiting the collective sense of guilt, shame, and accountability in the nation. Others championed a memorial for all victims of Nazi crimes, not only the Jews. Supporters of the Memorial, such as distinguished historian Eberhard Jäckel, argued that “the murder of the European Jews was the essential goal of National Socialism.” Others found it disgraceful that the Memorial faced opposition, and considered it to be an obligation of the city towards its once-marginalized population. With opinions divided, the Federal Government expressed its support for the Memorial in 1992.

When it came to selecting a site for the Memorial, the discussion was quite heated. The Jewish lobbyists who had proposed the Holocaust Memorial targeted a location which lay 200 meters south of the Gate, “five acres of what was once a no-man’s land near the Brandenburg Gate... and is now the middle of town” (Jordan, 2006). In another proposal, German artist Horst Hoheisel suggested blowing up the Brandenburg Gate altogether, grinding its rubble into dust, scattering the remains over its former site, and replacing it with the Holocaust memorial. He acknowledged that such a proposal would never be approved by the German parliament, but that was too a part of his point (Jordan, 2006). The debate itself over the creation of the memorial,
and the process by which it was carried out was in itself a memorialization of the Holocaust. And in tying the debate so directly to the Brandenburg Gate, the Holocaust memorial became as central of a part in the debate of German identity, history, and memory. This was further illustrated by the graffiti left behind by Berliners on the Memorial’s construction fence which read, “the debate is a memorial!” (Till). The debate of course was not regarding the location of the Memorial, but its legitimacy to begin with. The location south of the Gate was ultimately selected as the site of the memorial, granting it the centrality and attention it sought to convey: for what better place is there to remember the atrocities of the Third Reich than near the Brandenburg Gate, a memorial to German history in itself. Eisenman had to review his design several times before the Federal Government approved it. Throughout the process, some citizens suggested leaving the plot of land south of the Gate empty, with a sign stating “Germany’s Holocaust Memorial. We debated it for twelve years and couldn’t find a solution” (Till, 2005).
As construction began on the 25 million Euro project in 2002, another scandal erupted, as a Swiss newspaper published a story criticizing the involvement of the company “Degussa” which supplied the paint for the project. Degussa had apparently strong ties to the Third Reich, as one of its subsidiary companies, Degesch, had produced the Zyklon B gas used to poison victims in gas chambers. This caused outrage amongst Jewish lobbyists, who in turn were also criticized for their hypocrisy, as they were aware of Degussa’s involvement from the start and didn’t seem to mind it until the news story was published. Other groups in Berlin believed that Degussa’s Nazi past was irrelevant to the present, since “the past intrudes into our society, we must live with the traces of the past,” and thus the company should be allowed to stay on the project. After a long halt in construction, the Bundestag ultimately decided in favor of Degussa and the project continued. Upon its dedication in May 2005, sixty years after the end of the Second World War, it attracted 3.5 million visitors in its first year, 40% of whom were non-German. The Senate viewed the project as a success, despite some cases of vandalism in its first year, in which swastikas were drawn on some slabs.

While the Memorial continues to attract visitors to the area, it still draws plenty of criticism from the public in Germany, and other entities globally. The objection of some Berliners against the dedication of the Memorial to only the Jewish victims of

59 http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/germans/memorial/cron.html
60 Original quote by Wolfgang Thierse, German politician, “die Vergangenheit ragt in unsere Gesellschaft hinein, mit diesem Spuren müssen wir leben.”
62 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4533463.stm
Nazism meant that other memorials would be commissioned across the city. In the last decade, monuments for those who were persecuted for their sexual orientation, for example, were constructed. Most recently, in October 2012, a Memorial was dedicated to the Roma victims of the Holocaust in front of the Reichstag building. And while memorials continue to appear throughout the city, each representing a side of Berlin’s history, the idea of commemoration and the constant reminder of a nation’s failures still has its opponents, who speculate whether the Memorial simply serves as a tourist attraction instead of truly creating a space through which Germans can confront their past.

4.5 Chapter Summary

The Reichstag and Holocaust Memorial have been two of the largest and most-talked about development projects in Berlin since the Reunification. The strong connection they share with the Brandenburg Gate, whether for historic reasons as is the case with the Reichstag, or for geographic ones in the case of the Memorial, speak volumes about the position of the Gate in the city’s contemporary history. The Reichstag did not experience a period of political “evolution” like the Gate; it was always

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-20050780
intended to serve a highly political purpose. Nevertheless it experienced much of the political turmoil that the city and the nation underwent, and saw itself rendered useless at times. Its reconstruction after the Reunification restored its sense of purpose and importance in Berlin, much like it enhanced the city’s image as the political hub of the nation. It also undertook a new role as a cultural center that attracts visitors; in a way, the Reichstag is a representation of a more open political arena, and a welcoming and transparent Germany. The idea behind the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe became a reality after the fall of the Berlin Wall. As Germany was struggling to collect itself into a unified government, some citizens found it necessary for the city to repent for its sins before it heals from its wounds. The Memorial took over a decade to become a reality, a process that was marred with controversy and is still widely discussed even after its completion and perceived success in attracting people to the area. The Reichstag and Holocaust Memorial are each an independent effort at reintegration in Berlin; yet both carry a strong embedded political and cultural message about the status of the new contemporary Berlin. The controversy that surrounded their development, especially in proximity to a highly politicized monument like the Gate, was in itself a part of the reintegration process of the city.
Chapter 5: The Brandenburg Gates

5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter will analyze the relationship between the Brandenburg Gate, Pariser Platz, the Reichstag building, and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, by treating the Gate as a gate to and from different spaces and time periods. It will explore the idea of reinvented traditions in Berlin today through this spatial and temporal network of monuments and buildings. In section 5.2, the thesis will explore the role of the Brandenburg Gate in relation to the city as a whole, behaving sometimes as an edge to Berlin, and at other times its center. Section 5.3 will focus on the network of reinvented traditions through spatial and temporal connectedness.

5.2 The Brandenburg Gate as a Unidirectional Edge and Center

When the Brandenburg Gate was commissioned for construction in the 1730s as a city gate, it was a part of the Customs Wall built around the city. At the time, the Gate was quite humble and pragmatic in its appearance; utilized mainly to monitor the flow of goods in and out of the city. It had no military function, and its presence was insignificant for the control of human flow. The Customs Wall marked the border around Berlin, and the Brandenburg Gate, like the other 17 Gates, served as an edge to the Prussian capital. It separated Berlin from all that lay outside its political border: neighboring towns, cemeteries, other municipal zones, and vast unused land. To pass through the Brandenburg Gate signaled one’s arrival to the capital; to exit meant leaving the capital behind. This was largely the case during the 18th century before the Brandenburg Gate was reconstructed into its grand appearance which it retains today.

By the end of the 18th century, the city borders had expanded into neighboring territory. As the city grew in size, the Customs Wall was adjusted and “moved” outwards, still serving as a marker of the city’s border. When the Brandenburg Gate was rebuilt at the end of the 18th century, it was transformed into the royal entry point of a growing capital. The location of the Gate as the western edge of Unter den Linden, with the Royal Palaces at the eastern end quickly placed it under the spotlight. The passage
of the kings and prices of Prussia had to represent the power and status of the Kingdom. While it was built with the intention of being a peace gate, it was elevated from its earlier very pragmatic business-oriented use, to a more sophisticated people-oriented one. For example, citizens who passed through the Gate in the early 18th century for non-trade purposes were not cause for attention. Yet by the end of the century, the Gate had become a local monument and an official entry point to the city, shifting the focus from the trade objects to the individuals who were traveling through it. This was really the first time that the Gate became a part of the citizen's experience in Berlin, whereby people turned their attention to the Gate and it suddenly mattered who was passing through it and for what purpose. This was further reaffirmed by the hierarchy enforced for passing through the Gate; that only royalty could pass through the middle column, with the edge columns reserved for the commoners. In addition, the state-organized traditions, parades, and events that took place around the Gate helped elevate its status as a landmark monument in the minds of the public.

It is also important to note that when the Gate was built, it faced towards “old” Berlin. The orientation of the Quadriga, the columns, the porticoes, along with the engraved detail and statues was all unidirectional, towards the city. By 1860, the city’s borders had grown past the Customs Wall, and while the Wall was torn down and several of the other gates were moved or transformed into other uses, the Brandenburg Gate retained its position and structural appearance. However, it was no longer an edge to the small old Berlin, but it had become the center of an expanding city. To its east, Pariser Platz, Unter den Linden, and the royal palace were the remains of the old Berlin, a reminder of Prussia’s glory and power. To the south and west were fragments of old towns and villages that joined the capital in creating the newer and bigger Berlin. To its north the Reichstag would be built by the end of century, the political hub of Berlin. Thus, the Gate fell at the intersection point where old and new Berlin and its old and new citizens met. Yet the Gate was still unidirectional, despite the city’s expanding border line.

After the end of the First World War and the abdication of the Kaiser Wilhelm II, the Gate was at the center of the social transformations that took place in the transition from a monarchy to a republic. By allowing all of Berlin’s citizens and vehicles to pass freely through any of the Gates' columns, the Gate became a central point of connection between different parts of the city. The process of moving from one neighborhood to the other across the city became less formalized and unburdened with the hierarchical and class constraints of the Empire. The Gate's centrality was also vital in transforming it to the meeting point of the culmination of anti-government political protests in Berlin during the Weimar period, a start or an end point to a political rally or
demonstration that brought Berliners together from the city's different neighborhoods.

In the years of Nazi Germany, the Gate maintained its status as a central icon in the city, and was largely militaristic and governmental in its usage. Hitler really propelled it to the global arena during the Berlin Olympics, and utilized it heavily for military parades and Nazi celebrations. Although the Gate was unidirectional, Nazi flags and propaganda which covered the Gate from head to toe was distributed on both sides. With the exception of the Quadriga, it was one of the few times where it was difficult to discern the orientation of the Gate without paying attention to the Quadriga. The Nazi's diverse usage of the Gate and the even neutrality they bestowed upon it ensured somewhat similar exposure by the public to the Gate, whether they lived in affluent Western neighborhoods or their poorer counterparts in the East.

Just as the Gate defined the physical landscape of Berlin's city center in the late 19th and early 20th century, it also stood for much of its destruction following the Second World War. After the war had ended, Berlin's physical landscape suffered immensely from the intense bombings and shootings. The city's center was badly destroyed, with the Brandenburg Gate as one of the few structures that was barely left standing. What would later ensue in the fragmentation of the city physically and culturally began much earlier than the Cold War or the years of the Berlin Wall. The bombing the city's center marked the earliest form of Cold War division. Berlin was left hollow at its center, its neighborhoods and citizens disconnected. For the decades that followed, the Brandenburg Gate served as both a unidirectional center and edge. While physically still at the center of Berlin, the political division and establishment of the two nations of East and West Germany resulted in the Gate as the edge of two different countries. The construction of the Berlin Wall and the resulting death strip also placed the Gate at the center, between two strips of the Wall on the East and West, but it also served as the edge of East Berlin and West Berlin, one which citizens could not cross. This was quite different from its early days when it was also a city edge and a part of a city wall, yet it could be crossed freely in either direction.

As a national border to the GDR, the Gate was used as a landmark for military checkpoints and bases, as well as a point of termination for political protests and civil unrest, such as the East German Workers’ Revolution. As a border to the FGR, the Gate served as the backdrop to the political struggle between the Western Allies and Soviet Union, and Western support to West Germans. As a central part of the death strip, it was the site of shootings against East Berliners who tried to escape to the West,
surveillance cameras to keep an eye out on the “enemy”, and military tanks and equipment to maintain order. It also embodied the state of a former city; divided, censored, and largely empty. Throughout all of those years serving as both an edge and a center, the Gate remained unidirectional, overlooking the death strip, its back turned on its city and people.

As part of the German Reunification and the physical reintegration efforts of the city, the Brandenburg Gate is once again being represented as the center of a united city, a new Berlin. Yet there is a generation of Berliners that was brought up in the years of the Cold War, and passing through the Wall might still carry with it a connotation of passing through to the other side of the city. For many people, the East-West Berlin division still exists and is still embodied by the unidirectional Brandenburg Gate, in the sense that when one crosses the Gate, one is entering another side of the city. This meaning is likely quite different for a group of younger Berliners who don’t see an invisible line cutting through their city. To them, passing through the Gate might not mean they are entering the West Berlin of the Cold War, but simply another neighborhood of their city to the west. Over the last 23 years, Berlin has attempted to recreate its local identity and rebrand itself as a European metropolis. The running theme has been “unity”, a united capital of a single Germany. By altering the physical landscape of the city at former division points like the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin is attempting to craft a fresh metropolitan identity and channel the collective memory of some of its citizens who might still consider the Brandenburg Gate as the edge of their city, and not its center. In fact, by 1991 at the time of the Reunification, Germany began producing minted coins that had the image of the Brandenburg Gate at their center. The coins read, “the Brandenburg Gate, symbol of German unity, 1791-1991”. This kind of popular advertising within the nation clearly signaled the political and sociocultural intentions of the new German government: this heavily contested landmark that underwent intense physical changes with changes in the political atmosphere was being portrayed as if it had been a symbol of unity and cohesion throughout 200 years of its existence. Ladd notes that, “the much-restored but never removed Brandenburg Gate, with its thrice-removed and twice-reconstructed Quadriga, is as authentic a symbol as Berlin can offer.”(1998). And while labels on city maps might still point out some of the city’s oldest landmarks in their historic locations, their themes and messages they embody have changed greatly since 1990.
5.3 The Gate to a Spatial and Temporal Past

A common theme across the restoration of the Brandenburg Gate, redevelopment of Pariser Platz, reconstruction of the Reichstag building, and construction of the Holocaust Memorial is the reinvention of tradition. Meaning that traditional elements from Berlin’s past, be they of political, cultural, or spatial significance, are repurposed to promote an agenda in the present. The Gate and its surroundings examined in this thesis represent a network of such reinvented traditions. In the same way that the Brandenburg Gate has served as a city edge and center throughout its history, on a smaller scale, it has served as a gate to its surroundings: an entry or exit point to or from physical spaces and time periods.

Traveling through the Brandenburg Gate to Pariser Platz, citizens are transported through time to a place of the past. The physical characteristics of the plaza today so directly replicate those of decades and centuries ago. As was previously highlighted, the plaza has retained its old borders, general parcel distribution, much of its buildings’ uses, architectural features, and design specifications of the early 20th century, when it was at its peak of activity. The redevelopment of the plaza as such embodied some of new Berlin’s intentions. For example, the reestablishment of political alliances through the embassies, the emphasis on cultural institutions as part of the Berlin experience, the introduction of the services industries to draw in visitors to the city. The Brandenburg Gate transports its visitors to a plaza of the 20th century, modified to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

A similar trend is observed in the case of the Reichstag. Passing through the Gate and traveling north, visitors to the area are welcomed by a large, imposing, and architecturally rich building. But the Gate also takes visitors on a journey of the city’s political past with the Reichstag. At its exterior, there are many elements that were imported from the Reichstag’s past. The architectural style, the engraving of “Dem Deutschen Volke,” and the dome are some features of the old building since its inception in the 19th century. On its interior, while the building was gutted out in the 1990s, some traces of the past remain, namely the Soviet graffiti on its walls from 1945. The building as it stands today thus retains some old structural features from old time periods, and combines with new elements to signal its intentions. The glass dome which attracts visitors to the building on a daily basis and grants them an intimate sense of exposure to national politics as they observe the happenings of the Parliament, is sending a message of the new and transparent political scene in post-Wall Berlin in Reunified Germany. By combining the old with the new, the Reichstag building has managed to established a renewed identity for itself in 21st century Berlin.
The case of the Holocaust Memorial is somewhat different, since it lacks a spatial past. Unlike Pariser Platz and the Reichstag building, the Memorial has only been in existence for eight brief years. In this case, the Gate serves as a portal to an emotional and psychological history, connected to a certain time period. The Memorial targets citizens’ collective sense of guilt and shame regarding the mistakes of their ancestors in Nazi Germany, and acts as a constant reminder of history’s failures. It provides a platform for them to come to terms with their history as a people, as they still grapple to understand it, and challenges them to recreate a better collective identity. Still though, the Memorial relies primarily on the same concept of old and new intersecting to produce an agenda for the present, perhaps not so much physically, but certainly culturally.

5.4 Chapter Summary

The Brandenburg Gate has served as a focal point for its surroundings as well as the city of Berlin since its early days. Its function has changed throughout its history, at times serving as a city edge to old Berlin, the GDR and FRG, or East and West Berlin, and at others as a city center in the German Empire, Weimar Republic, Nazi Germany, and present-day Berlin. In relation to its surroundings, the Gate has served a portal that transports those pass through it to a spatial, temporal, and even psychological history. Pariser Platz and the Reichstag building represent the reinvention of tradition by combining old and new features of their design and use to promote Berlin as a political and cultural hub in the 21st century. The Holocaust Memorial takes its visitors on a psychological and emotional journey, conjuring up memories of a dark past for the city’s present residents. The Brandenburg Gate thus has behaved like a set of gates that form the intersection of past, present, and future in Berlin.
Chapter 6: CONCLUSION

This thesis has focused on the Brandenburg Gate and its surroundings as a network of reinvented traditions in post-Wall Berlin, by examining their independent histories of development. The Brandenburg Gate is one of Berlin's most iconic and symbolic landmarks, with a long and rich history of construction, restoration, and redevelopment. On the Gate's monumental significance, Ladd notes, “unlike many nineteenth-century structures, it [the Gate] was not erected as a national monument. Its size and form made it much more than a utilitarian structure, but it was nevertheless a functional gate in the city wall, flanked by guardhouses. It may be an admirable work of architecture and sculpture, but that does not explain its symbolic resonance.”(1998) He goes on to remark that, “History has made the Brandenburg Gate a German monument.”(1998). As this thesis has shown, the Brandenburg Gate has been witness to Berlin's evolving political and cultural history. Its location in the city enabled it to surpass its intended purpose as a humble city gate as part of the Customs Wall, and its reconstruction in the 18th century propelled it to its iconic status that it has retained to this very day. Since then, the Gate has served as a fluctuating symbol of the city's unity and division, and at times, the nation's as well. In Berlin, the Gate united the citizens of Prussia and the German Empire at military parades and state events. However, social hierarchy also meant that the Gate separated the royalty from the commoners, courtesy of who could pass through the Gate's central aisle. In the Weimar Republic, the Gate continued its dual role of unity and division. Its iconic status made it a meeting point for the public to protest against the political party in power, however it also became the site of clashes between state police and protesters, thus dividing the city's citizens. In Hitler's Berlin, the Brandenburg Gate became a global icon as a result of the Summer Olympics in 1936. While it brought together the world at the heart of the city, it was used to spread Hitler's agenda of discrimination. By the end of the Second World War, the damaged Gate symbolized the state of affairs in Berlin, the nation, and the world: fragmented and chaotic. With the advent of the Cold War, it stood as a stark symbol of division for decades. It divided the cities of East and West Berlin, and it separated Berliners in the GDR and FRG. However, and interestingly enough, its status as such an iconic symbol united the GDR and FRG in its restoration of the 1950s/60s. It was also the point of attention for both nations when they tried to claim the Gate as their own after the restoration was complete. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Gate has been marketed as Berlin's symbol of unity: one Berlin, new Berlin, and a newly restored Gate.

The Gate's relationship with its surrounding spaces, which include other renowned local and national monuments is very informative of how Berlin is redefining its cultural identity since the Reunification. Reinventing certain spatial and temporal
traditions has enabled the city to pursue a new political, cultural, and economic agenda. It has mainly relied on the familiarity and understanding of its population of its history and significance, whether as a city in general, or as particular monuments or spaces. The redevelopment of the Gate’s surroundings, and using the Gate’s historic significance and present-day status as a symbol of unity has granted certain successes to the redevelopment. Certainly, the city’s center is physically connected, draws people from different parts of the city, if not the world, and provides a medium of interaction and the exchange of ideas. It has also opened up room for debate and criticism over some aspects of those redevelopment projects, and what they symbolize for the city as a whole. The Gate, being of its monumental significance, has only enhanced the debate, heightened the criticism at times, and provided support for projects at others. Its place in Berlin today has been further enhanced as the symbol of unity due to the successes and controversies of the redevelopment projects surrounding it.

The reinvented traditions of Berlin’s city center are part of a larger trend in the city, in which redevelopment projects today are still being viewed in light of their spatial and temporal histories. And while this theme has proven to be successful in some sense with the case of the Gate and its surroundings, it posits the question as to how much longer the city can continue to capitalize on its history to serve its present. The next generation of Berlin’s youth will have grown up in a reality where the Berlin Wall, Brandenburg Gate, Pariser Platz, Reichstag, and the Holocaust Memorial are remnants of a history they only experience through textbooks, and in their reality, are some of the city’s most popular tourist attractions. The next generation of Berliners will have grown up in a politically unified city, amongst an increasingly diverse population, in an economically stable city, and most of all, in a unified cosmopolitan city. There are still many spaces in Berlin today that are still heavily contested, and as the city continues to redevelop these spaces, it is vital to keep in mind how future generations will regards and interact with these spaces. Because in order to maintain itself as a unified metropolis, Berlin cannot allow the traces of its past to dictate the path of its future.
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