Community and the Site of Memory: The Effect of Internationalization on Community-Museum Relations

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Community and the Site of Memory:
The Effect of Internationalization on Community-Museum Relations

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honors in History from the College of William and Mary in Virginia,

By: Chelsea Bracci
4/12/2013

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Letter to The Reader

Dear Reader,

I began this journey two years ago when I first interned at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The project has changed so much that my first proposals seem unrecognizable. What began as a research endeavor has turned into an extremely personal experience. Now every night like clockwork I am drawn to my computer at four in the morning to see if I have received an email from a teacher in Germany or Poland who has a new set of surveys or a question from a student. There are names, faces, and towns now. Seeing the students’ handwriting and reading their responses has made it very real to me that this thesis addresses issues and topics that are extremely personal to many people.

Throughout the process of writing this thesis I began to agonize over offending one of the many students or teachers I have formed relationships with because I failed to address a detail or issue they felt was fundamental to the discussion. I realized that the anxiety I was feeling, this fear of offending students living in Poland and Germany in some way, was another level of this complex relationship I am attempting to explore. There is a certain level of anxiety and walking on egg shells associated with addressing the Holocaust, particularly in communities where camps were located. Now with the rise of social media a simple statement could be headlining globally in a matter of hours. If I had such strong concerns while writing an undergraduate thesis, which to be realistic fewer people will read this thesis than a tweet by the “Auschwitz Cat,” then I can only imagine the pressure these communities are under on a day-to-day basis.
In order to finish this thesis I had to place this anxiety aside. If anything, this research endeavor has shown me how much has yet to be explored. I in no way mean to offend any individual, community, or institution. I have nothing but the utmost respect for the memory and history of the communities discussed. I feel I have approached this project with an open mind and allowed myself to be led where the scholarship and data indicated. There is not the space to address every theme to its fullest extent, but I hope what this thesis does showcase the complexities of the forces at play in these communities. It is my hope that after reading this thesis that you will not only have a deeper understanding of how international involvements have affected the development of museum-community relationships in Germany and Poland, but you will see that these students have a valid voice that needs to be recognized within the discussion of Holocaust memory.¹

Thank you,

Chelsea Bracci

¹ I want to take a moment to acknowledge the professors, friends, and family who have been integral to the completion of this project. To my roommates, Laura, Rhiannon, Meagen, and Rachel, thank you for supporting me throughout the year. Thank you to Sophia, and the rest of the senior class, who bonded over our passion for learning. I want to thank my family for always supplying words of encouragement and sharing in my excitement every step of the way. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has been integral to this project and I would like to thank the National Institute for Holocaust Education for connecting me with teachers across Poland and Germany. Lastly, I need to thank my advisor, Professor Tuska Benes, for being a constant source of inspiration and support. Without her guidance this project never would have been possible. Thank you to everyone who has supported me throughout this journey and I hope to continue this project into the future.
Introduction

Internationalization and a Stray Cat

Nothing escapes international attention at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oświęcim, Poland. Not even a cat. In 2010, a small conflict over a shelter for a cat who had taken up residence at the Museum quickly turned into international news after local outlets picked it up. Soon newspapers from Israel to England were running stories, and animal blogs around the world were talking about Bruno. With titles like “Fur Flies Over Shelter for Auschwitz Cat” and “Poland Refuses to Build Shelter for Auschwitz Cat,” Bruno the cat created an international stir. Bruno even had her own fake twitter account, and a Facebook group was created to support building a shelter for her.

All of this media attention was for a cat. However, Bruno represents a larger trend within small towns like Oświęcim. The international focus placed on communities affected by mass violence and atrocities against humanity is a double-edged sword. Towns across Poland and Germany, like the town of Oświęcim that houses the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, have dealt with international attention since World War II. How Poland and Germany chose, or at times were forced, to deal with the international community differs greatly. The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum is, and has been since its founding, an international site of Holocaust memory. Poland’s focus on the internationalization of the site has forced the small town of Oświęcim to become a matter of international discussion, as well. Dachau, a town of comparative size to
Oświęcim, has experienced a much different fate. Germany never sought to internationalize Dachau, or any site of Holocaust memory, rather Germany seemed to shun international influence in Dachau.

Dachau, Oranienburg, and Oświęcim are different towns with distinct pasts, but they serve as a comparison point for how international involvement in a museum can affect the community around it. By extension, and central to this project, this comparison can speak to how international influence in a museum effects how local students interact with the institution. In the case of Holocaust museums and memorials, the late twentieth century surge of international attention focused on the sites spilled over into the communities. Small towns in Poland and Germany were suddenly subject to a global commentary. The towns are still trying to find a balance between moving forward and respecting the memory housed within their communities - all while the international community produces a running commentary. While dialogue already takes place among international groups, Poland, Germany, and the local communities there is a specific group that has not been brought into the discourse. Youths, particularly high school students who live in these communities, do not have a voice in the discussion surrounding Holocaust memory and how it affects their communities. Their relationship to these sites has been shaped by the level of international interaction present within the community. The museums and memorials located in these communities have a dual identity. While they are institutions dedicated to preserving Holocaust memory they are also a member of these communities. Students, as a member of these communities, face the unique challenge of
separating their relationship to Holocaust history from their relationship to these museums and memorials. This thesis sets out to prove that the attitudes of Polish and German youths are being shaped by the level of internationalization that has taken place at Holocaust museums and memorials located within their communities.

The Sachsenhausen concentration camp in the town of Oranienburg has been brought in as a third comparison point for its similarity to both Dachau and Oświęcim. Oranienburg and Auschwitz both faced difficulties coming to terms with the Nazi and Soviet history of the sites of memory, and both underwent the process of memorialization while under Soviet control. Like Dachau, Oranienburg was a Nazi concentration camp that was established in a small German market town. These communities had histories reaching back to medieval palaces and were economically prosperous after the war. Sachsenhausen is also the site most of the German student participants have visited. The community faces the same challenges as Auschwitz and Sachsenhausen and has made international headlines on multiple occasions. In many ways Dachau, Oranienburg, and Oświęcim represent three separate but overlapping cases. Dachau is a German town that was incorporated into the Federal Republic of Germany while Oranienburg was a German town brought under Soviet control in the east. Oświęcim and Oranieburg both experienced the censorship and governmental control associated with Stalinism, but Oświęcim was memorializing a site of German creation on Polish soil.
The Power of Students' Voices

In all three communities I feel that an important group has been left out of the discussion on the future of Holocaust memory. High school and college students should be involved in the dialogue taking shape around the future of their communities. I have seen what students can achieve when empowered by museum leaders and educators to speak out. This thesis was inspired by a project I interned on at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC. “What You Do Matters: A Leadership Summit on Propaganda, Hate Speech, and Civic Engagement” brought together almost one hundred and fifty students from across the country and around the world during my time at the Museum. The students were challenged to address the question “How do we create environments in which hate cannot flourish?” I met amazing activists, scholars, and students, all of whom were dedicated to creating positive change in their communities. During the second annual WYDM Leadership Summit that took place this past summer I decided that my campus community needed to be exposed to this event and its message. In August I brought together a group of six students and we formed the student organization WYDMCollegiate. We were awarded a grant from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum that fully funded our William and Mary Leadership Summit.

It is important to understand that our communities and the environment we grew up in shape how we think about ourselves, our families, our ethnicity and culture, and our global engagement. Listening to WYDM attendees speak about their personal experiences and the challenges in their communities I couldn’t help
but think about the students growing up in communities across Germany and Poland. Had anyone ever honestly asked them how they felt about the Holocaust museums and memorials in their communities? After searching for the answer and finding no research focused on how students relate to the institutions that house the memory of the Holocaust, not the history of the Holocaust, I felt that this thesis could serve as the first step in filling the gap. I began the process of creating a student-driven dialogue about the future of Holocaust memory. I emailed teachers across Poland and had the opportunity to meet two Fellows at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum who teach in Berlin.

I designed the questions so that the survey was oriented as a typical class exercise that would be familiar to the secondary school instructors as well as the students. The study specifically examined how these teenage students view these sites of memory and how large of a presence within their life, and the community, these sites of memories have. The project included gathering first-hand responses from these adolescents about their feelings towards the Holocaust memorial site. This was achieved by asking secondary school English classes to participate in an exercise consisting of a series of short-answer questions. This activity provided them the opportunity to speak about their community in the English language as well as interact with an American student on issues within their community. The identities of the students who participate in this study remain anonymous. No names were connected with the responses; all I know is the school they attend.

The Polish students attend a public school in Warsaw and have traveled to sites of

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2 Appendix A
Holocaust memory across Poland. The German students attend a public school in Berlin and went on a fieldtrip to a site of Holocaust memory in the weeks before participating in this study.

The survey I designed builds from simple questions like “Do you like learning about history?” to more probing questions about how their communities would be different if Holocaust museums and memorials weren’t there. In designing the worksheet I drew on museum education journals, activity guides, and worksheets I had designed in the past for museum education programs at the College. I wanted to ease participants into answering more probing questions by first gauging their interest in the subject, moving into their experiences at the sites, what they connected to most, and then move into their feelings about the sites overall and how the sites fit into their communities. The questions were also worded simply so that students could understand and answer them to the best of their ability in English. Part of the process of obtaining these responses, before I could begin reaching out to teachers, was being granted human subject approval. Asking minors about potentially controversial topics required the creation of a parental consent form. A second series of revisions were also made to the worksheet after I met with two German secondary school teachers who were currently Fellows at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The next step was reaching out to teachers. A colleague at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum had recently traveled to Poland to attend a conference on teaching about the Holocaust. She shared with me the list of participants and I cold emailed teachers asking if they would be willing to open
their classroom to me. I received responses from almost every teacher, classes of three of whom fit the requirements of the study. The two Fellows I met at the Museum had their classes participate supplying the German perspective.

The WYDM Summit and this undergraduate thesis are in many ways a joint venture. While the Summit strives to empower U.S. students to be change agents in their communities, this thesis is attempting to begin the same process with students in Germany and Poland. I have learned through this summit and research that knowledge and understanding of the past is the only way to be fully informed and begin the process of moving forward. Students in Germany and Poland experience an intense and very emotion-driven education about the Holocaust. These students understand, in an almost painful way, why their communities are in the position they are today. However, this does not eliminate the tension that exists between site of memory and community. By examining the development of these communities and the sites of memory they house it becomes clear that international involvement has dictated how these communities have grown to interact with Holocaust sites of memory. From Bruno the Auschwitz cat to the installation of a controversial exhibit, these communities have had to exist within the memory of a global human atrocity.

The methodology of this thesis draws on the principles of the WYDM Summit. Day one of our William and Mary WYDM Summit focused on the power of personal stories. Not until we understand how we have gotten to the situation we are in today can we begin to work to change it. The same is true in the context of Europe. This project examines how Dachau, Oświęcim, and the
sites of Holocaust memory they house and have developed since 1945, and the role of the international community within each of these communities. International influence can be exerted through the media, diplomatic situations, financial support, as well as tourism. In Dachau, Oświęcim, and Oranienburg it is apparent that the international community’s presence within the site of memory has altered the community.

We learn most from the words of those experiencing a situation on the ground. No amount of factual knowledge can replace witnessing someone sharing his or her memories. The personal connection the citizens of Dachau, Oświęcim, and Oranienburg have to sites of Holocaust memory manifests itself in the primary sources collected and in the survey responses. Throughout the summit we discussed the need to be critical consumers of the messages we are receiving on a daily basis. By looking beyond the surface-level analysis we, as consumers, can begin to form our own opinions and perceptions of what is happening within and outside our communities. In communities like Dachau, Oświęcim, and Oranienburg it is particularly important for the global community to look beyond the day-to-day reports and examine how we have gotten to this point. We cannot begin to address the tensions that have formed in Auschwitz until we begin to unpack the persisting assumptions that exist about these communities.

The Evolving “International Community”

The “international community” as an entity incorporates a variety of contradicting interests, voices, and countries. The international community is not
a homogenous body with a single united will. It is made up organizations and individuals from all around the world. In terms of governments, England, France, Israel, and the United States are the most vocal participants in the international community. All offer financial aid, and in many instances, the international community complicates local situations by inflating them to international discussions of religion, politics, and societal norms. In the past we have seen the international community divided by religion, such as in the case of the convent at Oświęcim. Belgium was raising funds to remodel the convent while a rabbi from the United States was protesting in the convent’s garden. It took the Vatican stepping in to resolve the issue. Three different entities, two different religions, and all three groups advocated for different outcomes. In the case of the disco it was Jewish groups from Israel and the United States which protested the loudest. Such organizations as the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale and the Wiesenthal Center serve as the Jewish voice in the international community.

The international community is not only divided over religion, but by political beliefs as well. During the Cold War the pull between democracy and communism greatly shaped the political landscape of Europe. Now there are radical leftist and rightist groups advocating for nearly opposite goals. Another constituent of the international community is businesses. Businesses invested in the industries and factory spaces within these small towns have affected how museums and memorials have developed over time. While some towns like Oranienburg have prospered since the war, others like Oświęcim have had difficulty bringing businesses to the area. International museums and memorials
are also incorporated into the international community. The United States
Holocaust Memorial Museum is the United States’ memorial to the victims of the
Holocaust and its interactions with other institutions is a reflection on the United
States government. In the past decade, as organizations such as the Human Rights
Campaign and LGBTQ allyship has grown, LGBTQ organizations and leaders
from all around the world have advocated for the memorialization and recognition
of those prisoners who wore the pink triangle. It was the international community
spurning on the movement, not the local communities where the sites of memory
were housed. At the most basic level, “international community” will be used to
reference those groups outside the country. From the point of view of the local
community, the international community has been transformed into the “them,”
the outside force that interacts with these communities.

The European Union, while not the primary actor, is a member of the
international community. European Union was established in 1948 in response to
World War II and is comprised of twenty-seven European countries, with the
United States as a mission country. The European Union is comprised of three
institutions. First, the Council represents the national governments of each
member. Second, the European Parliament represents the people and their
interests. Last, the European Commission is an independent body that represents
the collective interests of Europe. These three bodies work to promote stability
and economic cooperation between member states and deal specifically with

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4 Ibid.
matters that involve European interest.\textsuperscript{5} One such matter is legislation to end Holocaust denial. The European Union has supported legislature that would make denying the Holocaust illegal in Europe.\textsuperscript{6} This legislature and the Union’s studies of Holocaust and human rights education in European classrooms parallels the European Union’s purposeful relationship to Holocaust memory.\textsuperscript{7} In the aftermath of World War II, the European Union began to cast itself as the institution that could ensure the Holocaust would never happen again. No highly developed European country would spiral down such an extreme path if there was European integration. The European Union maintains a close relationship with Holocaust memory because the Holocaust was a large reason for the creation of the Union. The European Union utilizes Holocaust memory as a means of legitimization. If Holocaust memory were to wane, the argument for the need to integrate Europe politically would fade as well.

I feel it is important to note I am a member of the international community. By embarking on this undergraduate thesis I am a part of the force acting upon these communities. Not all international involvement and influence is negative. International involvement within these sites has ensured their preservation and increased international education initiatives to end hate speech and genocide in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. If the international community ignored these sites, and by extension these communities, the promise of “never again” would ring empty because we would not be learning from our past. Confronting memory is painful.\textsuperscript{8}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid. \\
\end{flushright}
It is my hope that this thesis serves as a positive international interaction with these communities that highlights the need an international dialogue that incorporates students.

A Review of the Literature

Researching a contemporary issue presents the challenging of establishing a foundational body of literature that was published since the turn of the century. There is not a definite and defined school of thought within which to situate this research within. The Holocaust as an event has been researched extensively, and there is a solid network of scholarly discourses. However, there is a lack of scholarship on how community-Holocaust museum relationships have developed over time, how youths, not related to Holocaust survivors, living in these communities are affected by the Holocaust, and how internationalization has affected the communities surrounding these museums. While certain authors touch on one of these issues the connection between these three points has yet to be made.

In his section dedicated to a review of the available literature, Adi Marom who completed a dissertation in the Department of Philosophy at Adelphi University in 2010, spoke to the absence of scholarly discourse surrounding how the “third generation” has been affected by the Holocaust.

The long term effects of the Holocaust on survivors and their children have been elaborately discussed in the literature. There is still much to explore and to comprehend regarding these impacts; However, there is a constant attempt to further add to the existing understanding of the psychological impact of the Holocaust on the generation of survivors (first generation) and the generation of their children (second generation). … Nonetheless, it is not clear what impact the
Holocaust has on the generation of grandchildren of Holocaust survivors. To this date, the research on the third generation is sparse. There are some publications and some dissertations that have tried in different ways to answer the question of the meaning of the Holocaust for the third generation. But there is no solid body of literature that one can rely on in order to better understand the psychological characteristics that can be found in grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, bearing in mind their family legacy.

Marom is particularly addressing the body of scholarly work surrounding how grandchildren of survivors relate to Holocaust memory. This is a specific collective memory group that has at least been defined by scholars and termed the “third generation.” The students surveyed for this research do not have the same distinction; they have not been recognized as a distinctive memory group by scholars.

A context must be established, and to do so surrounding fields must be pulled in to create at least a framework within which to situate this research. This research utilizes studies conducted on the current state of Holocaust Education in Poland and Germany in order to address the relationship of students to Holocaust memory within the classroom. One particular study conducted by the European Union entitled *Discover the Past for the Future: The Role of Historical Sites and Museums in Holocaust Education and Human Rights Education in the EU,* offered comments from teachers and students and surveys focused on examining the current practices of incorporating museum visits into the learning experience. These studies stopped short of breaching the issue of how students relate to the sites themselves as contemporary institutions. This may be attributed to the study

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being conducted by the Union. The survey has an extremely positive outlook on how students relate to Holocaust education and builds up the system as being successful.

In terms of an evaluation of community-museum relations in Poland and Germany there is minimal scholarship available that examines beyond the 1990s. Of the sources available that address the development of Holocaust museums and memorials in Poland and Germany, none fully addresses the relationship between community, museum, and the international community.

Jonathan Huener’s book *Auschwitz, Poland, and the Politics of Commemoration, 1945-1979* has proven to be one of the most prominent and recognized texts concerning the development of Auschwitz since the liberation of the camp. Huener at times touches on the unique situation of Oświęcim. What is missing is another force that needs to be addressed. As described by Geneviève Zubrzycki, a professor at the University of Michigan who reviewed the book:

> however, it seems to me that Huener does not sufficiently emphasize here that the memory wars at Auschwitz and the various controversies attending them are not solely the result of (instrumental) Polish representations of the past. They also result from the parallel developments of drastically different narratives, including the increased international attention to the Shoah and the location of Auschwitz as its epicenter.  

Huener doesn’t fully address how the internationalization of Auschwitz affected the site and by extension the community. He does point out that the fall of the Berlin wall led to greater access to Holocaust sites of memory for the West, but

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Huener does not take the next step to examine how this changed the sites themselves. He keeps touching on this second narrative without fully addressing it. While he sets up a conversation around the internationalization of the State Museum he does not fully tease out the implications of internationalization for the Polish people and Polish memory.

Another source that has been instrumental in the development of the historical context is *Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp, 1933-2001* by Harold Marcuse. *Legacies of Dachau* chronicles the development of the camp site at Dachau into the museums and memorial it is today. The book examines the social, political, and cultural trends taking place within the Federal republic of Germany and how the country interacted with the international community. Marcuse builds an extremely detailed description of how Dachau develops as a memorial site. In doing so, without explicit purpose, Marcuse includes how each party interacted with the site of memory over time. Due to this attention to description, it becomes possible to tease out how international groups interacted with the site, as well as how the community itself was involved in its development. Martin B Miller, who reviewed *Legacies of Dachau*, wrote:

> What I found particularly enlightening in Marcuse's book, and what could be said to constitute one of its theses, was ... his notion that sites such as Dachau "must change to keep pace with the changing prerequisites of present and future visitors" (p. 406). In other words, commemoration, like memory, must be allowed the freedom to evolve. ¹⁰

Marcuse and Huener are unique in their presentation of museums and memorials as changing and evolving institutions that are shaped by outside forces. While both authors touch on the role of the international community and the local community, they do not choose to explore further the depth of the influence internationalization had on the museum and the surrounding community. In both of these books students were treated as passive audiences for which the experience had to be shaped, not a group of individuals possible of contributing to the site itself. Youths are only considered within the context of learning through the museums and memorials, not as being affected by them as a member of the surrounding community.

It is difficult to find sources removed from the explicit religious or ethnic discussion dedicated to sites of memory in Poland and Germany. *Germany, Poland, and Postmemorial Relations: in Search of a Livable Past*, by Kristin Kopp and Joanna Nizynska focus on how relations between Germany and Poland have developed since the war and touches on the effects of other international communities on how these two countries relate to the Holocaust. The book evaluates how certain international interactions have shaped these two countries’ relationships to Holocaust memory at a macro level. Emma Klein’s, *The Battle for Auschwitz: Catholic-Jewish relations under strain*, speaks to the influence international groups exerted over the sites within specifically religious conflicts. The examples provided within these two books compared side-by-side provided specific examples to examine how international attention affects sites of Holocaust memory in Poland and Germany.
Articles that address specific examples or memory trends have been instrumental in developing a context for this study. Eric Langenbacher, a professor of government at Georgetown University, addresses the changing nature of national memory in Poland and Germany over the course of the twenty-first century. He provided a framework of the memorial discussion during the first part of his article and addresses the memory regimes in Germany and Poland. He discusses the challenges the countries face which originated with the growing field of Holocaust studies and reexamination of Holocaust memory. He addresses the issue of having multiple competing memories at the local, national, and international level.

Shelia Watson’s collection of articles addressing the relationship between museums and their communities helped provide a context and vocabulary to discuss how Holocaust sites of memory relate to the communities that house them. Watson’s collection acknowledges that these relationships can be strained at times to the point of frustrations turning into resentments. The collection entitled *Museums and their Communities* begins a conversation about how these resentments can be perceived outside the immediate community. However, much of this conversation happens outside the context of Holocaust memory, making its application minimal.

While many of these sources acknowledge the effect Holocaust memory has on these communities, no one has directly addressed the issue. At this point in time, a critical analysis of how museums and memorials interact with their local communities in Poland Germany is not readily available. This only strengthens
the claims put forth by this study. The voice of youths within communities like Dachau and Oświęcim have been excluded from the conversation surrounding the sites located within their communities. The influence museums and communities exert on each other and the relationship formed between them shapes the development of both parties. It is recognized that the international community has a substantial amount of influence on the museums. However, how these communities have been changed over time by the internationalization of local Holocaust museums has yet to be fully explored. Much of the support for these claims came from primary sources.

When it came to finding news stories, press releases, and other materials that spoke to how the people living in these towns felt, I had to turn to the web. Accessibility to information has exploded with the popularity of the internet and social media. No longer does it take a journalist to report on an issue. Any individual can write whatever she or he so chooses and make it available to the entire world. While it is liberating that individuals can express themselves freely, it is difficult to be a critical consumer of messages when we are being constantly bombarded. Today it is not just international leaders and the foreign media that are affecting these communities, a blogger, or an individual or group who chooses to create a fictional persona can comment and generate interest. The rise of the internet age has created a new international online community. Dachau, Oświęcim, and Oranienburg have become accessible, and at times vulnerable, to increasing international interaction through the World Wide Web. Much of the information gathered for this thesis came from the internet precisely for the
reasons outlined above. I pulled from news sources from around the world, press releases and annual reports I never would have had access to, and most importantly the words and thoughts of those living within these communities. Without the internet I never would have been able to correspond quickly enough with teachers across Poland and Germany, and collect the candid comments that have fueled this research.

These communities and the students are surrounded by the legacy of the Holocaust. Their countries, communities, and families have been changed by it. When the only stories about Oświęcim and Dachau focus on their lack of sensitivity to the memory of the Holocaust, comments such as

*It is difficult to put into words the level of rage felt by the victims of the Nazis and world Jewry at both the owners of the discotheque and a political establishment in Poland that would validate the mocking of the victims of Auschwitz.*

made by then associate dean at the Wiesenthal Center Rabbi Abraham Cooper perpetuate the conception that the inhabitants of towns like Dachau, Oświęcim, and Sachsenhausen resent Holocaust memory. This quote comes from an inflammatory chain email. While mainstream news sources do not make such statements, quotes like

*A scantily clad girl gyrates to techno music atop a podium as bartenders in white shirts and bow ties serve up drinks. Nothing special as discos go, except this one has sparked a furor because of its location: a former tannery where Auschwitz concentration camp inmates worked and died.*

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In a purposeful manner the author is insinuating the community has become calloused to the history of the site. The teachers, students, and government officials who participated in this study prove this is not true. However, there is a mounting frustration with the treatment of these communities by the international community. The attention, which is at times extremely critical, has affected these towns as well.

I did not expect teachers to instantly be open to their students participating in the study, especially after reading the waiver the students’ parents would have to sign. However, every teacher, professor, government official, I spoke to did everything they could to support this endeavor. The German teachers whom I met with in Washington DC aided in the development of the final survey, as well as brought their own students into the project. Every teacher I emailed in Poland responded and if they could not help directed me to someone who could. One teacher, due to the language barrier, had a friend translating our correspondences back and forth for weeks. University students from Germany began passing the survey along to their secondary teachers in hopes their classes might be able to participate. This thesis was made possible by the openness and willingness of these communities. Just the fact that these students, teachers, and community members trusted me, participated, and were enthusiastic about the project, speaks volumes.
Chapter One: Moving Beyond The Brochures: Examining the Towns

“Some of the tourists who come here don't know there is [even] a town” reported Peter Malarek who works for his family's Oświęcim-based tour company. Directly after the war the need to separate humanity from the events of the Holocaust translated into a need to believe that the camps were physically distant from humanity as well. The immediate response to distance the town from Holocaust memory has only strained the modern relationship between town and museum. The memory and identity of the town is at once separate and entwined with the history of the Holocaust. These towns need to be established as a community outside the memory of the Holocaust for the purpose of this study. The unique identities of these towns can be lost when examined within the context of international Holocaust memory. It is important to begin at the most concrete unit, the community, and build towards an examination of the abstract force acting upon it.

1.1: Communal Memory Leading Up to World War II

The collective memories of Dachau, Oświęcim, and Oranienburg go back hundreds of years. The towns have an international past predating modern Europe. Dachau began as a king’s summer residence in the 1500s, but Napoleon’s army reduced the palace to ruins in the early 1800s. During the 1890s Dachau was known as a medieval Bavarian market town whose soaring views of the Alps
attracted a rich artistic tradition. Artists from across Europe came for the views and then decided to make the town their home. Carl Peterson, a famous Swedish artist who traveled to Dachau, explained why he chose to relocate to Dachau:

*I first heard the name Dachau from the Swedish painter and writer Ernst Norlind in Malmo. ... I always listened enthusiastically when Norlind described the venerable old market that dreamed of its former days of glory on a sunny hill on the Amper river, when he told about the great wide expanse of the moor that stretched to the Alps on the distant horizon.*

Dachau was the vision of a romanticized medieval community.

Like Dachau, Oranienburg began as a medieval town that developed from a settlement surrounding a local palace. Originally named Botzow, the area was a prosperous medieval town, dominated by guilds and craftsmen in the late 1400s. The thirteen year war and the Plague ravaged the town. During the seventeenth century the town along with the surrounding area was “gifted” to the new princess Louise-Henriette because it reminded her of her Dutch homeland. A castle modeled after the Dutch style and the town was renamed “Oranienburg” in 1652. During the nineteenth century trade, commerce, and industry began to grow rapidly in the region. The processing of metal and wood became the primary industry of the area as companies began opening factories. With industrialization

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came a surge in population. Railroads and waterways allowed for greater freedom of travel and transport of goods.

While Dachau thrived through artistic exchange, Oranienburg through industry, Oświęcim was established as a trade town. Oświęcim was first home to thousands of Germans who migrated east. By 1300 Oświęcim had become the central market town of the region. Located directly on the trade route between Vienna, Olmutz, Ostrau, and Cracow, Oświęcim was well-placed to profit from the economic boom of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.\(^{17}\) When the Bubonic Plague decimated Europe, German emigration east halted. As Germans moved away, Poles moved in to take their places."\(^{18}\) While Jews had been present within the region since the eleventh century, Polish kings during the late fourteenth century began actively inviting Jews to immigrate to these towns in hopes they would form an entrepreneurial middle class. When the Swedes invaded Poland during the thirty years war a garrison occupied Oświęcim, and after an unsuccessful protest by local populations the Swedes burned the town. The town never fully recovered from the devastating fire. In 1918 the Hapsburg Empire incorporated the Galicia province which had absorbed the town. The town was not fully rebuilt until the end of World War I.


\(^{18}\) Ibid, 30.
International war hurt all three communities during the twentieth century. During World War I Dachau’s reputation as an artists’ colony faded.\(^\text{19}\) The town needed a new source of funds; the city leaders welcomed the opportunity to build a factory that processed munitions and gunpowder.\(^\text{20}\) When the war ended the market completely dried up and the factory was forced to close. During the war, Oranienburg retained its industrial prominence within Germany while the affected in the wake of World War I. During the interwar period, Germany faced economic and political upheaval. The terms of the treaty of Versailles shocked Germans, compounding frustrations over social and economic issues. Debilitating inflation brought the country to a halt, but rather than addressing the domestic issues Germany faced, political leaders focused scorn on the unfair terms of the treaty. The Allied powers continued to take a hard line in terms of reparations, creating further resentment within Germany. Dachau held the highest unemployment rate in Germany, double the national average, at six and three-fifths to nine and one-fifth percent over the course of 1926 to 1928.\(^\text{21}\) In Oświęcim the average wage of a Polish worker had dropped to eight percent below the prewar level. Poland’s borders were redefined after World War I creating tensions within the region. Poland struggled to maintain a competitive military while attempting to industrialize. At the brink of World War II both Dachau and Oświęcim were facing soaring unemployment. The once prosperous market towns sunk deep into economic depression. All three of these towns had


\(^{20}\) Ibid.

developed a strong communal identity founded in a shared memory of prosperity and cultural exchange. The identities of these towns were tied to the international nature of their development. However, by 1939 Dachau and Auschwitz, and to a certain degree Oranienburg, were in a state of economic crisis.\textsuperscript{22} The moment Germany invaded Poland the identities of these three towns changed forever.

1.2: Dachau

Today, Dachau is a small country town of forty-thousand inhabitants located in Upper Bavaria, thirty-three kilometers from Munich. Tourist guides talk about the breathtaking beauty of the town and its rich artistic history. In the 1820s the town had developed into an impressionist artist’s colony. Dachau retains its reputation as one of the cultural centers of the region. The Dachau Painting Gallery, the largest museum in the town, houses a permanent collection of impressionist and genre paintings from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The museum is located within the historic area and remains popular among tourists. Visiting Dachau is easily done in a day when traveling from Munich so many visitors do not stay over in the town. However, many do visit the town. Bavaria is one of the wealthiest German states, and Munich is one of the most prosperous cities.\textsuperscript{23} In terms of the residents, Dachau has developed into a suburb of Munich. Many of the residents of Dachau commute to Munich to work. The town continues to grow through its younger population. There are eight


elementary schools, two high schools, and two business schools. Mixing old with new, there is small-scale industry in Dachau, but the town has struggled to attract international investors. The old town center of the town remains primarily tourist driven with a restaurant and cultural center in the remains of the Bavarian castle.\textsuperscript{24}

In Dachau there is a strong local government. The Mayor serves over the city council and other departments housed within the District Office. The Office is responsible for the maintenance of the public institutions that are instrumental to the economic, social, and cultural well-being of the town.\textsuperscript{25} At a local level the authority is responsible for tasks related to the preservation and maintenance of local sites of memory, natural conservation, youth services such as child care and schooling, senior support and social assistance, and immigration. There is the castle and garden management office which is responsible for the preservation of the Bavarian castle, the office of education which works closely to develop youth programs. In terms of working with the camp site, the Department of Culture, Tourism, and History partners closely with the museum and has developed joint tours that go through the camp and the town.\textsuperscript{26} The Tourist Information Center is located within the town and is meant to encourage joint tourism.

Youths ages six to twenty-seven make up twenty-one percent of the population of Dachau.\textsuperscript{27} There is an entire administrative department within the

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
town’s infrastructure dedicated to young people. The department’s mission is to inspire self-confidence, self-reliance, and life skills while promoting tolerance and equality. The department’s goal is “helping young people to go their own, independent path.” The town is also focused on its aging population and in 2007 established the senior council to take care of the needs of older residents. The senior council then submits ideas and requests to the city council for review. The city of Dachau is religiously diverse, with Protestant and Catholic churches partnering with the site. This local government interacts with the camp site museum through tourist guides religious memorials, and the international youth guest house, which are all connected to the government of Dachau and the memorial museum.

1.3: Oranienburg

Oranienburg is the capital of the Oberhavel district. Today the town’s population is about 30,200 residents, a sharp increase since the 1900s when the population was a mere 8,000. The town is just thirty-five kilometers from Berlin, and serves an escape from city life for many Berliners. During World War II, the town became a target of Allied bombings because of its chemical and armament factories. Large sections of the city were destroyed, and the town still struggles with the task of completely rebuilding. During the Cold War,

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29 Abteilung Jugend, Stadt Oranienburg, last modified 2013.
32 Ibid.
Oranienburg was partitioned in the German Democratic Republic and was cut off from much of the city that had provided the economic lifeblood for the town. It was only after the wall fell that the city-town relationship was reestablished in the area. Today, extensive urban regeneration programs are underway, including the revitalization of the castle and the area around it. Oranienburg industries focus on pharmaceuticals, adhesives, tires, and plastics. Over 2,000 businesses are located in Oranienburg. Three-quarters of the population is employed by the service sector as well. The town caters to growing families with youth centers, a large number of schools, and multiple playgrounds all highlighted on the town’s website.

Oranienburg’s municipal government is broken down into three sections. At the top is the office of the Mayor. The mayor is the “chairman” or leader of all the town councils from surrounding areas and committees. Located below this department in the hierarchy is the department of public relations and economic development. This office is responsible for the public relations and press interactions involving the city of Oranienburg. From maintaining the website to developing tourist materials, the public relations office is the primary point of contact between the city and the rest of the world. There are also two position dedicated to maintaining equality and tolerance within the city.

Under the mayor’s office is the office of Central Services. This office of Central Services is the city council which serves on the “town of Oranienburg Affairs committees” and is the governing body under the mayor. The members are elected members of political parties and are responsible for running the town of Oranienburg.\footnote{Ämter und Mitarbeiter, Stadt Oranienburg, last modified 2013. http://www.oranienburg.de/texte/seite.php?id=41185.} The committee appointments are decided by the city council based on strengthens, and local residents can be brought in as advisory members to the committees.\footnote{Ibid.} This primary council is known as the “senior council;” there is also a youth advisory council at this higher level.\footnote{Ibid.} Below this level are the local town councils. In the districts of Friedrichsthal Germendorf, Lehnitz, Malt, Sachsenhausen, Schmachtenhagen, Wensickendorf, and Zehlendorf all have local town councils which are consulted and heard before the City Council makes a decision affecting the region.\footnote{SG Zentrale Dienste, Stadt Oranienburg, last modified 2013. http://www.oranienburg.de/verwaltung/einheit.php?id=1508.}

The second section of Oranienburg’s government is comprised of institutions dedicated to taxation, budget, and monetary issues. Under this office are the fire station, police services, as well as school and day-care facilities. The last arm of the government is dedicated to the landscape of the city.\footnote{Ämter und Mitarbeiter, Stadt Oranienburg, last modified 2013. http://www.oranienburg.de/texte/seite.php?id=41185.} The city planning department is in charge of the urban redevelopment initiative. Due to an economic boom over the last decade, the city is undertaking massive renovations which include the rebuilding of certain buildings as well as improvements to the public
roads. There are efforts to modernize certain parts of the city while preserving the rich culture of the town in order to attract suburban residents and tourists.

Currently the population of Oranienburg is growing at a much faster rate than the rest of the Brandenburg state. The primary body in charge of the running and maintenance of Sachsenhausen is the "Board of Curators for the Building of National Memorial Sites at Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, and Ravensbruck." In 1961 sites across Eastern Germany were declared "National Sites of Admonition and Remembrance."

In terms of population, there is a focus on creating a city environment that is attractive to families leaving the city and looking for a more suburban, yet stimulating, life-style. The main website of the town includes links about child day care, children and youth activities, playgrounds, and how to get involved in social activities. In terms of the population of the town, children and youths are valued members, and there is a distinct focus on developing a tight-knit social community. The website's focus on attracting young families, looking for housing, good schools, and a family environment speaks to the town’s tagline of “Oranienburg is different.” There is a focus on preserving the past of the town while moving forward and attracting a younger community. Other groups include businesses, the elderly, and vacationers that come from larger German cities.

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They are not coming for the Holocaust memorial but for the quaint town and landscape. There is not a great focus on the history of the town as a site of the Holocaust. It is a commercial hub that is being redefined as a place attractive to new families. The two groups that seem to be of most interest to the town are potential business partners and youths. Both come across as priorities of the town.

1.4: Oświęcim

Oświęcim is a small town with a population of forty-three thousand inhabitants. The town is located on the banks of the Sola River. Oświęcim has a rich agricultural history that developed over the course of the last century. After the war the chemical factory was reclaimed and given a new identity and continued to be one of the largest employers in the area until production waned. However, the Soviet Union then reassembled the factory from materials being sent from Germany, and it became the primary employer of the town. The memory of the Holocaust was completely erased. There is no memorial to the prisoners who died on the marches to the factory or died due to the slave labor they were forced to complete; nor is there mention that IG Farben was enticed to Auschwitz by Himmler to exploit the large supply of slave labor. For Oświęcim the “future lay … with the chemical plant.” The plant became one of Poland’s most important synthetic chemicals producers and played a central role in the structuring of Oświęcim’s economy, employing twelve thousand of the fifty-five

47 Ibid.
thousand members of the community. However, Oświęcim faced the same fate as most post-industrial communities as the plant began to decline in production. Today, many residents commute out of Oświęcim to cities like Cracow to work, while others are involved in agriculture or are employed by small businesses within the town.

The governing body of Oświęcim is broken down into two main parts. The mayor and the departments underneath the office hold most of the power, and if citizens of the town have questions or concerns there are specific office hours when anyone can come to the mayor. Other departments include the department of municipal property, which deals in housing and real estate, the organization department which is what the city council falls under, department of city promotion which deals in public relations, and the department of civil affairs. The city council plays a lesser role in Oświęcim than in Oranienburg, with citizens having direct access to the mayor rather than the council.

There are many projects associated with the government to preserve the local history of Oświęcim. The Oświęcim Cultural Center was formed in 1996 through funding from the Chemical Plant in Auschwitz and the Municipal Center of Culture. The Cultural Center organizes concerts, festivals, events for children, youths, and adults. Oświęcim received the title of Messenger of Peace –

48 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
Peace Advocate by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in 1998 for its work to bring world peace.\textsuperscript{52} The Auschwitz-Birkenau Death Camp Victims Memorial Foundation was founded in 1990 by the local community. The mission of the organization is to

help preserve, maintain, and conserve the buildings, records, and archival holdings of the former Auschwitz death camp... financially support ... cooperate with Polish and foreign circles and institutions interested in cultivating the remembrance of the victims of Auschwitz Concentration Camp.\textsuperscript{53}

This foundation is one of the primary organizations dedicated to preserving Auschwitz-Birkenau in the town. The vice-mayor and other local government officials are included in the meetings of the International Auschwitz Council specifically when there are issues involving the town or surrounding areas. When the Auschwitz Disco controversy was at its height in 2001, the International Auschwitz Council held a meeting with local officials as well as the Polish foreign minister.\textsuperscript{54} In 2003 it was the mayor of the town that made the decision to move the Municipal Tourist Information Point from the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum to the newly built commercial Maja Tourist Service Center. The decision was controversial because it was built so close to the camp site.\textsuperscript{55} In this instance it was the local official making a choice that did affect a state museum.

Local officials primarily through the city council and the mayor’s office, serve as the connection between the town and the Auschwitz-Birkenau state museum.

Youths and pensioners make up less than half of the population of Oświęcim. About sixty percent of the population is of working age. The town demographics are not focused on youths, and there is not the same emphasis on family and growing the population of the town. There is no website link for clubs and organizations, but there is an emphasis on trying to bring in new businesses and working with international partners. In Oświęcim youths are a secondary group to the work force and the town’s initiative to build economically.

These small communities with local governmental bodies resemble towns across Europe. Each has its own personality, own ways of governing, and own demographic makeup. The Holocaust was an international human atrocity that affected these communities at the most basic level: identity. The histories of these towns extend far before and after the Holocaust, but the event has come to define them to the rest of the world. This tension between micro and macro, between local and international, puts museums and memorials in the middle of a tug of war. The same is true for these communities. While trying to retain their local identity, these communities have had to adapt to their international identity.

Chapter Two: Defining Memory

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57 Ibid.
Two summers ago I was eating lunch with Nesse, a survivor I had become close to at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, when she suddenly looked up from her sandwich and said “I don’t like it when people say ‘thank you for sharing your story’ because I don’t tell stories. I share my memories and those are not stories. Stories are not true, what I share with them is true.” Nesse’s words have stayed with me. This chapter is dedicated to creating a foundational understanding so that confusion in terminology, such as that which offended Nesse, does not occur. To fully understand the language and setting, the first step is to break down the terms and their relationships. The assertions and definitions being put forth in this section should be recognized as a narrowing down of a collection of ideas and arguments, and not indisputable. Each scholar manipulates and adjusts definitions to meet her or his needs, adjusting the meaning of terms to better fit a purpose. However, it is important to recognize the need when approaching any work to place aside preconceived definitions in order to embrace the scholar’s intentions. This instance is no different.

2.1: Memory

There is no exact definition of memory, and even those scholars in seeming consensus provide slight variations. In order to completely unpack the nuanced nature of memory a foundation must be built. Pierre Nora, known for his writing and scholarship on French identity and memory, has broken down the

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58 Nesse (Galperin) Godin, conversation with author at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, July 2011.
topic of memory through the lens of French culture. Pierre Nora begins at the very

basic of levels: the distinction between history and memory.

Memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in
fundamental opposition. Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its
name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering
and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to
manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and
periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always
problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually
actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a
representation of the past.59

According to this definition, it is memory that is the living organism of the two,
adjusting and growing with each generation. History is the static markers of
memory, in which an attempt is made to accurately put down all the detail into a
linear account. This comparison is not to undermine the importance and value of
history, but there is intrinsic value in both, and each complements the other.

Halbwachs asserts that history belongs to “everyone and no one” binding itself to
temporal continuities and the relations between things.60 It is immaterial and not
bound to the physical. Memory, on the other hand, is rooted in the concrete,
images, objects, and in physical sites.61 In this comparison, Halbwachs is creating
a dichotomy in which history and memory create a balance of fluid and static,
living and constructed, emotional and objective. For the sake of this work the
focus will be placed on memory, and the different types of memory that will be
discussed throughout the rest of this thesis.

59 Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire,” *Representations* no. 26
Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring, 1989), 8.
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0734-6018%28198921%290%3A26%3C7%3ABMAHLL%3E2.0.CO%3B2-N.
60 Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, translated by Lewis Coser (Chicago: University of
61 Ibid.
It has been argued that memory is as transitive as the recollections and experiences it refers to. If you ask a group of people to describe what a museum is, each will offer a different definition because they are invoking different experiences, different memories. Ask that same group of people to describe what a memory is and you will once again receive a variety of answers. What seems like such a simple concept has spurned an entire field of research and scholarship.

Pierre Nora states,

_Memory, insofar as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it; it nourishes recollections that may be out of focus or telescopic, global or detached, particular or symbolic-responsive to each avenue of conveyance or phenomenal screen, to every censorship or projection._

Within this definition, the nature of memory, which we have defined as transitory and subjective, is the same at every level of memory organization. Eric Langenbacher in his article “Twenty First Century Memory Regimes in Germany and Poland,” seeks to expand upon Pierre Nora’s and Halbwach’s attempts to differentiate between history and memory by breaking down memory into subcategories and variants. Langenbacher breaks down memory into two main strata, personal and shared. From there he begins to make the distinction between public and private which then led him to further divide memory into communicative, generational, collective, and cultural types. Each has its own set of qualifiers and boundaries.

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62 Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," _Representations_ no. 26 Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring, 1989), 8.
Communicative memories, within the sphere of Pierre Nora, would be the memories of those who lived during the period in which a rift in history took place. Langebacher describes these types of memories, within the sphere of Holocaust memory, as belonging to affected groups such as witnesses, victims, and perpetrators. These straddle the lines of public and private, individual and group. These types of memory are confined to a certain time period, and while communicative memory can change over time, no “new” memories are introduced after the specific time period. In terms of this discussion, communicative memory refers specifically to those individuals who were alive during the Holocaust. Generational memory also has its own set of time constraints. Just as communicative memory is confined to the witnesses, generational memory is defined to a specific generation. One such example of generational memory would be that of children of survivors, or children of perpetrators. There has been extensive research done on this group which has become collectively known as the “second generation.”

Collective memory can be defined as a set of shared interpretations, or a collection of memories in reference to a specific event. In terms of this research endeavor, collective memory will be focused around specific communities introducing the idea of communal memory. Communal memory, for the sake of this argument, will refer to the shared experience and memories of communities

64 Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire,” *Representations* no. 26 Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring, 1989), 7-24.
throughout Poland and Germany. These communities have shared collective memories and a history that transcend time or generation. These are small communities that existed centuries before the Holocaust and have remained in existence since. The Holocaust represents a rift in their community’s rituals and normal routines which created a communal memory which is still fluid and changeable.

Communal memory is not to be confused with cultural memory. Cultural memory often referred to as institutionalized or national memory. In his introduction to his book, *Auschwitz, Poland, and the Politics of Commemoration, 1945 – 1979*, Jonathan Huener does not differentiate between the various types of collective memory but asserts,

> Collective memory can be socially mandated as an institution works to create a common mode of memory by selecting those aspects of the past that appear best suited to the exigencies of the present.\(^{67}\)

Langenbacher explains this intent to transcend generations as having no specific time period. Jeffery Olick defines this type of memory as that which has been validated by the elite or those currently in power.\(^{68}\) This research will combine these definitions of national collective memory of Huener, the official memory of Olick, and the cultural memory of Langenbacher. An example of cultural memory would be the narrative put forth at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. The Museum is under the control of the State and therefore the current cultural

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\(^{68}\) Eric Langenbacher, “Twenty-first Century Memory Regimes in Germany and Poland: An Analysis of Elite Discourses and Public Opinion,” 52.
memory is represented at the Museum. This example will be explored in greater depth in later chapters.

In his discussion of the societal dynamic of memory, Langbacher confronts the current lack of scholarly focus on the existence and influence of non-elite memories. It cannot be forgotten that the collective memory is the sum of individual memories. It is within this discussion that individual memory becomes relevant. Individual memory is just that, the memories of a single individual. When Nesse spoke in front of hundreds of people she shared her individual memories. They were her personal recollections, not that of a group, but hers. Every individual’s memories are different, and no two people experience an event in the same exact way. This provides the variation and at times disjointed nature of collective memory. In the process of streamlining individual memories into communal, communicative, generational, and cultural types, distortions can appear. With a foundational knowledge of memory and the types of memory that will be referenced throughout this work, the physical nature of memory needs to be addressed. Three different types of physical sites exist which will be discussed: museums, memorials, and sites of memory. While overlap and gray area exists between these three categories, each serves a distinct purpose.

2.2: Sites of Memories, Museums, and Memorials

Collective memories can be associated with a certain place or site. Pierre Nora defines a site of memory, or as he refers to them in French a *Lieux De Memoire*, as
where memory crystallizes and secretes itself has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists. There are lieux de mémoire, sites of memory, because there are no longer milieux de mémoire, real environments of memory.69

A site of memory is the physical space attached to a certain collective memory. It could be a building, an open field, or even a bench. The site of memory is the location to which a memory is affixed. A museum and memorial is not defined by location but by the memory it houses. A museum and memorial can be located on a site of memory, a site relevant to the collective memory, but a museum or a memorial could be located anywhere. For example, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is not located on a site of memory related to the Holocaust. The institution memorializes the Holocaust without being located at a site relevant to Holocaust memory. Sachsenhausen is a site of memory because it is the connecting point for a group of memories. Sachsenhausen serves as the tether of the survivors, officers, and locals’ memories about the Holocaust. However, Sachsenhausen is not just a site of Holocaust memory. Sachsenhausen served another purpose as Soviet special camp No.7 and then No.1 directly after the war. The camp held thousands of Nazi officers and political opponents to the Soviet regime. In that way the once abandoned factory is a dual site of memory, connected not only to Holocaust memory but to Soviet occupation collective memory. Even when there was no museum or memorial at Sachsenhausen it was still a site of memory. Even when there was no statue, plaque, museum, or physical marker of memorialization of the events that transpired at Dachau it

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69 Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire,” Representations no. 26 Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring, 1989), 12.
remained a site of memory. Memories were still attached to that site despite the lack of a museum or memorial.

The difference between a museum and a memorial is the focus on education and disseminating information. At the most basic level a museum is a space that displays objects and artifacts. While a museum is focused on imparting information about a series of events, a memorial is specifically focused on commemoration. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is at once a memorial and museum. The museum is the four-story exhibition that takes visitors through the rise of the Nazi Party to the liberation of the camps. It is about introducing people to the history and material evidence of the Holocaust. The memorial is located across from where visitors exit the exhibit. The Hall of Remembrance is the museum’s living memorial to the victims of the Holocaust. It memorializes a group of people in relation to a specific event. It is meant to be a space of reflection and commemoration, not educational. Just like the statue of the unknown prisoner at Dachau is not meant to be educational or inform the viewer, but supposed to serve a physical marker of a collective memory group. Holocaust memory blurs the line between site of memory, museum, and memorial, but it is important to understand the difference when embarking on a study such as this.

John Huener states “The transformations of memory at Auschwitz reveal that the line between history and memory, or between the ‘real’ and ‘imagined’ Auschwitz was inevitably blurred.” 70 While recognizing that memory is constantly in flux and subject to change due to a variety of forces, to call memory

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imagined is an over-simplification. Memory is comprised of real experiences and real people’s memories. While memory might be subject to all the forces and groups detailed above, it is a common conception that history is written by the victor. History is just as fragile and susceptible to corruption as memory. The difference lies in that memory at its very core and basic level is the collection of memories surrounding a shared experience; everyone contributes. From child to national leader, every individual’s human consciousness is drawn upon. How memory has been addressed within Germany and Poland will remain fodder for scholarly discourse for decades to come. This thesis addresses how international interaction affects the relationship between sites of memory and the communities that house them, specifically students living within these communities who are usually omitted from any form of discussion.
Chapter Three: Living Institutions

Huener identifies the four main forces acting on memory as Political, International, Religious, and Social. Within Dachau and Oświęcim conflicts over politics, social change, and religion are shaped by international forces. When it comes down to it, most issues of contention in these two towns, specifically in Oświęcim, are international in nature. In Germany and Poland, how the Holocaust is memorialized has been greatly influenced by international memory. Down to the simplistic roles of perpetrator and victim, how the international community defines these two countries within the narrative of the Holocaust guided how museums and memorials were developed. At the most basic level, foreign attention forced the towns of Dachau and Oświęcim to recognize that Holocaust memory was a part of the towns’ collective memories. Since the liberation of the camps, international attention has prevented the fading of Holocaust memory within these towns. In these towns Holocaust memory, which is being pushed by the international community, is overwhelming the local communal history that existed before World War II.

International influence is one of the primary factors that has shaped the development of Holocaust museums and memorials around the world. How the international community relates to a site of memory greatly affects the narrative being presented, as well as how that site interacts with the local and national community. At Auschwitz, despite the iron curtain, the site of memory was oriented towards the international community since the establishment of the museum. The Federal Republic of Germany resisted internationalization and
mementization even while under Western control. In West Germany “it was the survivors who initiated the preservation and memorialization of concentration-camp sites- often against the objections of the government authorities and a decade later than in the GDR.” Sachsenhausen serves as a middle ground. While developed under Soviet control, the site went through a drastic transformation after the reunification of Germany. It has developed under Soviet and German conditions. Examining these sites and how they interacted with the local, national, and international community over time exposes the role internationalization played in the development process of the surrounding communities.

Museums and memorials serve a specific purpose, such as to commemorate an event, a group, etc. They are not infallible institutions that from the moment they were created presented accurate and effective history. Museums and memorials are living institutions that grow and develop just like the communities that house them. The “life” of a museum, just like any other institution, is a part of the current identity of that museum. To fully comprehend community-museum relations today there must be an understanding of how the relationship has developed over time.

3.1: The Creation of Concentration Camps

The Nazi Party rose to power during the interwar period by playing on the frustrations and emotions of German citizens. Led by the charismatic Hitler, the Nazi regime started World War II when it invaded Poland. Part of the Nazi

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71 Farmer, “Symbols that Face Two Ways,” 100.
agenda included the eradication of lesser races and asocials, specifically the Jews, Sinti and Roma, homosexuals, and the medically handicapped. The systemization of this process required the creation of concentration camps to hold these undesirables. However, as time went on the purpose of these camps went from containment to extermination.

Bavaria was quickly incorporated into the Nazi regime, and the abandoned factory at Dachau became the first “collection camp for political prisoners” as defined by SS Commander Heinrich Himmler. The camp opened in March of 1933 and would later become the model for Auschwitz. On March 20, 1933, SS Commander Heinrich Himmler sent a letter to the Bavarian government requesting a police task force to guard the “collection camp.” Most historians agree the residents of the town were aware of what was happening within the walls of the compound. Harold Marcuse, in his book *Legacies of Dachau*, cites newspapers which described Dachau citizens lining the street on March 22nd, the day the first transport of 200 prisoners arrived, to try and get a peek.

At this point the camp was not completely sealed off to the world. In the early weeks of the camp’s existence the Nazi commanders due to time constraints resorted to short-term measures such as maintaining the police task force. During these first weeks prisoners were not shaved, tattooed, forced to work, or abused. However all this changed as soon as Himmler gained control of the “auxiliary political police” which was the SS branch of the state police. Hundreds of

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thousands of people were murdered between 1941 and 1945 just down the road from this picturesque town. The majority of the prisoners who lived and died at Dachau were Christian. It was primarily a camp for political prisoners, German criminals, and Christian clergymen who opposed the Nazis. When the camp was liberated, over 32,000 people had perished in the Dachau concentration camp. While at first the town hoped to gain economically from the establishment of the concentration camp, short-term gains were minimal and in the long run the presence of the camp in the sole industrial space in the town hindered long-term economic development.

Much like at Dachau, the Sachsenganger migrant housing site in Oświęcim caught Himmler’s attention. Like the camp in Dachau, the camp was originally designated as an overflow concentration camp for the growing number of political prisoners, primarily Polish prisoners.74 Auschwitz concentration camp was officially established in April of 1940 after it had been inspected by Nazi officers. The Germans organized the camp along the lines of the prewar concentration camps as well as the Dachau model. At first the high prevailing death rate resulted from hunger, sickness, and murderous labor.75 However as time went on Auschwitz became both a death camp and a slave labor camp. A camp at Birkenau, called Auschwitz II, was established in 1941 to accommodate the increasing numbers of Soviet prisoners of war, and in 1942 the first transports

of Jews, Roma and Sinti from across Europe began arriving. About 197,000 Jews were deported to Auschwitz in 1942, about 270,000 the following year, and over 600,000 in 1944, for a total of almost 1.1 million. Only 200,000 were considered capable of slave labor, the rest of the prisoners were sent to the gas chambers. In this same period, from 1942 to 1944, about 160,000 Poles, Gypsies, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, French, and others were registered as prisoners and given numbers. There were also more than 10,000 people, mostly Poles, Soviet POWs, and Gypsies, not entered in the camp records or given numbers. By the time the Red Cross reached the camps, over 1.3 million people had passed through the gates of Auschwitz.

The Sachsenhausen concentration camp was established in 1936 as the principle concentration camp for the Berlin area. However before Sachsenhausen opened, there was a small concentration camp located in the center of Oranienburg. From 1933-34 there was a concentration camp located in an old brewing factory at the heart of Oranienburg. Describing the camp, one prisoner wrote,

_The building was amply sized, with a gate at the front and back and divided from the outside world by anti-tank barriers. It was surrounded by Oranienburg's houses which meant that the camp was actually located in the middle of town._

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77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
The camp was closed in 1934 but kept as a reserve site in case it was needed. Sixteen prisoners were killed at this camp. Oranienburg concentration camp is the only camp located at the center of a town, and many prisoners labored within the town. The Oranienburg concentration camp was the first in Germany but is overlooked today, and Dachau has been labeled the first full-scale concentration camp in Germany. In contrast to the highly improvised organization of Oranienburg concentration camp, the SS designed Sachsenhausen. Sachsenhausen concentration camp is located on the outskirts of Oranienburg and began as a prison for political opponents, but quickly other groups were brought to Sachsenhausen. A year after opening, the camp held 1,600 prisoners, but numbers began to rise as Jews, homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Sinti and Roma, and Soviet civilians began to arrive.  

Sachsenhausen served as the administrative headquarters and housed the concentration camp inspectorate. The camp also served as the training grounds for the SA from 1938 to 1945. An SS complex was built in Oranienburg which included large living areas for SS officers and their families. In contemporary publications, Oranienburg was known as "the town of the SS." The camp became a site of executions, particularly those of Soviet prisoners of war. A large number of prisoners were forced to work in the nearby brickworks. In the beginning, prisoners were forced into a trench where they were shot or they were hung. However, in 1943, gas chambers and crematoria were built at

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81 Ibid.
Sachsenhausen like those built in Dachau and Auschwitz. From 1936 to 1945, about 140,000 people passed through Sachsenhausen, many of whom were sent to Auschwitz. At Sachsenhausen, between 30,000 to 50,000 inmates died of exhaustion, disease, poor living conditions, execution, medical experimentation, and gassing.\(^{82}\)

### 3.2: Liberation and Beginnings of Memorialization

On June 5, 1945 the Allied powers took control of Germany which was basically in ruins and unable to function. Germany was divided into zones to be governed by each Allied power.\(^ {83}\) The three western zones united to become West Germany, or the Federal Republic of Germany. The zone controlled by the Soviet Union to the East became known as The German Democratic Republic.\(^ {84}\) Poland also came under Soviet control in the aftermath of World War II and faced very much the same fate as Eastern Germany. In the East there was an immediate push to memorialize certain elements of the Holocaust, particularly the narrative of resistance and Soviet liberators. The Soviet regime saw Holocaust memory as a political tool to be used to address the international theatre. However, in Western Germany the focus of the Western Powers was on ridding Germans of Nazi inclinations. This meant radical re-education programs and assigning blame. Both zones of Germany and Poland were under foreign control and the process of

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\(^{82}\) Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp 1936-1945, Brandenburg Memorials Foundation, last modified 2012.


\(^ {84}\) Ibid, 258-260.
memorialization within each of these regions was greatly shaped by international influence.

American troops liberated Dachau on April 29, 1945. Dachau became the eye of the storm in a series of international and domestic disputes over the proper use of Holocaust sites of memory because it was available to the West. Sites such as Auschwitz and Sachsenhausen were swiftly taken under Soviet control. At the same time the town was beginning the process of coming to terms with the Holocaust while trying to navigate conflicts over the use of the camp site. Directly after liberation journalists accompanying the liberating army units began sending back written and photographic reports of the decaying corpses and atrocities. Suddenly the entire world was interested in what had taken place within the concentration camps, and groups of foreign dignitaries began touring the camps. While Auschwitz quickly became the symbol of atrocities during the Holocaust, Dachau became the name associated with complicity and war crimes. Lorenz Reirmeier, then mayor of Dachau, said “A catchword was needed that briefly would sum up the entire barbarity of concentration camps and that catchword become Dachau.” As the global community began asking “how did this happen?” international attention became focused on making these towns answer the question “how did you not know?” Directly after the war foreign troops forced citizens of Dachau to tour the camp, aid in the burying of bodies, and serve the

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85 Topographies of Terror Foundation and The United States Holocaust Research Institute, An Overview of the Work, 12-13.
survivors still living in the camp. The fire storm of media attention and forced labor by foreign troops led to a gut reaction to deny any involvement in the atrocities that had taken place. International memorial narrative cast the town as the “perpetrator,” which bred resentment within the town for the international community as well as the camp site. From 1945 to 1949 Germany underwent “re-education” and “de-nazification,” neither of which inspired German citizens to embrace the legacy of the Holocaust. In Dachau this led to decades of delays and roadblocks in the creation of a proper museum-memorial.

Soviet forces liberated Sachsenhausen on April 22, 1945. The soldiers found about 3,000 ill and week prisoners in the camp. In the weeks following liberation, 300 ex-prisoners died and were buried in six mass graves near the camp’s exterior wall. It was not until 1995 that these graves were excavated and rediscovered. After the war, a Soviet military tribunal was set up in Berlin. Former Nazi functionaries were put on trial and convicted of war crimes. One month after liberation, Sachsenhausen was converted into a Soviet internment camp. The once Nazi concentration camp took on a new set of collective memories, becoming a dual site of memory. It is estimated that fifty thousand to sixty thousand men were interned at Sachsenhausen. In 1948, Sachsenhausen became known as Soviet Camp Number 1. Inmates included Nazis, political

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88 Ibid., 88.
89 Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp 1936-194, Brandenburg Memorials Foundation, last modified 2012.
90 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
prisoners, as well as individuals convicted by Soviet tribunals. Over 60,000 people were interned over a five year period within the camp. The camp was isolated from the outside world. While separated from the West, the site was under foreign Soviet control. Families were not informed of the whereabouts or the fate of the prisoners. When the camp was closed in the spring of 1950, the remaining inmates sentenced by the Soviet tribunals were sent to Soviet Russia to serve out their sentences. At least 12,000 detainees died at Sachsenhausen during this period of disease and poor living conditions. Sachsenhausen housed not only an international memory of suffering at German hands, but a memory narrative of Germans and international prisoners suffering under Soviet control.

Poland, which felt like it had been abandoned to the Soviet Union, was devastated after the war. Economic and political turmoil bred unrest, and stereotypes associating Jews with communism began to regain prominence. Poles came to blame the Jews for Russian dominance, and they became the target of Polish frustration. Between 1945 and 1949 there were outbreaks of violence against the remaining small Jewish communities throughout Poland. It was at this moment of turmoil and backlash that the first steps of memorialization were taken at the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp site. Western Europe through the iron curtain and the USSR exerted great influence over the development of Holocaust memory and memorials. While the West began embracing a Holocaust narrative

93 Ibid.
95 Huener, Auschwitz, Poland, and The Politics of Commemoration, 39.
which included Jews, the USSR supported a narrative that highlighted the bravery of the Soviet heroes and left Jewish victims out completely.  

3.3: Defining Official Memory

In August 1949 the past literally resurfaced at Dachau when a sand mining operation uncovered a communal grave during Dachau’s annual beer festival entitled “The Other Dachau.” The festival was meant to reassert the identity of the town as a historic Bavarian village to an international audience. In response to inquiries made by the French government on behalf of Holocaust survivors about Germans not treating graves of foreigners on German soil with proper respect, the three survivors in the city cabinet were assigned the responsibility of quieting the controversy and finding a solution. While back and forth ensued, it was not until December that the Bavarian government realized it needed to take immediate action and made plans to re-landscape the site and rededicate it in a ceremony that foreign dignitaries, both houses of Parliament, and the entire cabinet, along with local leaders, the police, and forty-one photographers and journalists were invited to attend. The Bavarian government sent out a total of over one hundred and forty-nine invitations. This was the largest commemoration to take place in Dachau. Not only did it target a large international audience but it sought local support as well. The internationalization of Dachau was pointed and was pursued only to the degree to prevent conflict and foster a positive image of the town and Germany.

96 Ibid, 47.
98 Ibid, 147
In comparison to Dachau, the process of memorialization in Oświęcim and Oranienburg was rapid. The State Museum at Auschwitz opened in 1947, just two years after liberation. Under Stalinist rule Auschwitz became a “political weapon” wielded to manipulate how the past was remembered in order to legitimize the rise of communism in Poland. In Oświęcim, the reason for memorializing the Holocaust so quickly was not for the sake of memory, but for political gain. The museum came increasingly under state control and the exhibits were adjusted to highlight socialist heroes and Polish valor rather than the atrocities that occurred at the site. Events, commemorations, and demonstrations focused on the bravery and honor of the socialist liberators and how under Stalin’s firm guidance, Poland could become a true socialist country. A tension emerged between the orchestrated state narrative being put forth and the local, Polish, and international collective memories. Local Polish narratives focused on the victimization of the Poles and the heroes that emerged. However the international narrative was beginning to recognize that Jews were specifically singled out for persecution by the Nazis. These two narratives complicated the story told at Auschwitz. While Poland saw Auschwitz as a Polish site of memory and later heroism, the West along with the United States very much saw Auschwitz as the ultimate site of Jewish suffering.

A decade after the Holocaust, Dachau was engaged in an explicitly Western dialogue over the memorialization of the Holocaust while Auschwitz and Sachsenhausen were communing explicitly with the Soviet Union. East Germany and the People’s Republic of Poland were tightly under Soviet influence. There was economic and social instability as the Stalinist regime used force to bring people under control. In West Germany the region was stabilizing economically and regaining a semblance of functionality. Dachau, Oświęcim, and Sachsenhausen were experiencing the intensifying of the Cold War through increasing international interaction in how the Holocaust was memorialized. In the West democracy as the last line of protection against human atrocities and became key to how international groups chose to remember the Holocaust. In the East the focus continued to be on the heroism of resistance fighters and Soviet liberators who fought against fascist capitalism. At certain points the west rebuked international pressure to create a narrative focused on the suffering of specific groups because it undermined the national narrative of German resistance. In the East the community butted head with Soviet officials forcing Soviet memory upon local sites. At certain moments the local community was able to derail the conscripted national narratives. However, there were instances that the community was overpowered by international influence coupled with the official national narrative.

100 Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*, 142.
The German and Polish governments were both interested in using the sites of memory as media tools. After the controversy over the Leiten burial site Dachau embarked on a public relations campaign in 1950. The Bavarian government created the Dachau Association in 1951. During this time the local community, and Germany as a whole, became increasingly frustrated with the emphasis of Holocaust memory and saw the prominence of Holocaust survivors in society as the cause. The Dachau Association became a target of these frustrations since it was primarily at the behest of survivors that the association was established. The Association’s first task was to plan a joint commemoration with Munich on April fifteenth to recognize the liberation of the concentrations camps. However due to its association with survivors and partnerships with survivor organizations, the local Dachau authorities prohibited the Dachau Association from assembling and therefore forced the commemoration to be canceled. By blocking this event, Dachau authorities effectively stopped any government endorsed commemoration from happening at the camp site until 1953. It was up to small independent organizations to organize their own commemorations.

When Auschwitz and Dachau proved not to be the public relations phenomena the German and Polish governments were hoping for, discussion began of leveling the sites. From 1946 to 1950 the Bavarian Castle and Gardens Administration took steps to remove the crematorium exhibition and close the building to the public. On May 5th 1953 the cabinet of the town decided to remove

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the exhibition and close the building to the public without prior notification to the curator of the exhibition.\textsuperscript{105} The Museum was closed, printed materials developed to accompany the exhibition and the Leiten cemetery site were prohibited, all tours of the sites were stopped, and all public relations and commercial activity at the site was banned. Foreign and German survivors strongly vocalized their outrage at the removal of the exhibition. The Bavarian government submitted a proposal in 1955 to block public access to the crematorium and eventually tear it down.\textsuperscript{106} However intense international condemnation of the measure overruled domestic support. While international pressure removed the threat of bulldozing the site, the local community made the decision to remove all directional signs. While the West fought for the preservation of the site, the town of Dachau was attempting to remove the camp from the visual and memory landscape of the community.

In Poland, by the 1950s the importance of the site as propaganda had diminished the power of the camp site as a wartime site of memory. In 1948 there were calls to demolish the entire site, wiping away the memory, and using the site for more economic purposes. However unlike at Dachau, the Polish public shot down the measure.\textsuperscript{107} Poles saw themselves as victims of Nazi crimes, and felt that Auschwitz supported the national narrative of Poles as victims and heroes. However, Germans saw sites like Dachau as counter-productive to the German narrative which at this point in time focused on a rich historical past and an

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid, 178.
\textsuperscript{106} Marcuse, \textit{Legacies of Dachau}, 179.
\textsuperscript{107} Huener, \textit{Auschwitz, Poland, and The Politics of Commemoration}, 90.
industrial future. In autumn of 1948 there was an out-pouring of letters, editorials, and articles that appeared in Polish publications in support of the museum and its mission.\textsuperscript{108} This is not to say that all of Poland supported the Auschwitz museum unconditionally, but Polish people were not receptive to the idea of “plowing under” a site of Polish memory. International opposition to the measure also aided in closing the matter. Instead of closing the site, the Polish United Workers’ Party asserted its right to intervene directly in the development of memory at Auschwitz.\textsuperscript{109}

The process of memorialization at Sachsenhausen began much later than in Auschwitz because the camp was serving a practical purpose beyond being a tool of propaganda. In 1952 The Nationale Volksarmee, the national people’s army of Germany, and the KVP demolished the “Station Z” where hundreds of Jews had been shot and the crematorium was located.\textsuperscript{110} The offices once used by the SS became office space for the KVP. While ex-prisoners called for the preservation of the site, the area that had once housed prisoners was historically sanitized. Not until 1956 when a group of foreign prisoners came to view the site did the Soviet regime allow visitors to enter the site.\textsuperscript{111} Domestic and international groups criticized the regime for neglecting the site. In 1956, the East German government established Sachsenhausen as a national memorial, but the site served

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[108]{Ibid, 91.}
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primarily military purposes until 1961. In 1961, Fritz Cremer’s sculpture “Der Anklangende” was erected during a ceremony in Oranienburg.\textsuperscript{112} It was the first statuary memorial to the victims. In 1961, the GDR opened the site of Sachsenhausen as a \textit{Nationale Mahn-und Gedenkstatt}.\textsuperscript{113}

\textbf{3.4.1: Keeping International Audience At Arm’s Length}

International interest, coupled with domestic support in Poland, protected these sites from being bulldozed. This emboldened international groups to assert greater influence and pressure on the German and Polish governments. As the local community of Dachau attempted to erase Holocaust memory from the town by removing visible signs, the Stalinist regime of Poland was attempting to corrupt the history of Auschwitz in order to fit a political agenda. Foreign countries and international groups who were a part of the memory housed at these sites began pushing even harder for the protection of these sites. Germany and Poland both wanted to forget the horrific side of Holocaust memory, but the reasons for the omission differed. Germany was focused on rebuilding Germany and using Dachau as a means to rewrite German memory, while Poland looked to Auschwitz as a means to showcase Poland’s strength to the international community. In early 1949, under pressure from the regime, Auschwitz began to take an internationalist stance on the theme “struggle and victory” at Auschwitz.\textsuperscript{114} While the site was beginning to be recognized as a site of

\textsuperscript{113} Farmer, “Symbols that Face Two Ways,” 108.
\textsuperscript{114} Jacek Lachendorf, From Liberation to The Opening of The Memorial, Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau w Oświęcimiu, last modified 2013.
international suffering, the actual burden of designing and funding exhibitions about specific groups was left to the countries from which the victims came. This decision internationalized the site to an unprecedented level.

At Auschwitz international involvement was welcomed by the Polish government to a degree. This internalization of the site was subsequently taking place as there was a “closing of the ranks.” The Central Committee became increasingly concerned with the museum staff and the direction the museum was taking. In 1950 the party ordered the museum to undergo renovations and dismissed the museum director, Tadeusz Wasowicz.115 No longer was the emphasis on Polish struggle and heroism. The museum would be centered exclusively on the “persistent foreign policy concerns by noting ‘attempts by Anglo-Saxon imperialists to revive fascism.’”116 The Soviet Union was cast as the defender of peace in this global attack. The renovations took place during October and November of 1950. The regime seemed to fail to understand that such blatant orchestration of history and memory cheapened Auschwitz as a legitimate site of memory. As one observer articulated, the Stalinist years were a period when the State Museum at Auschwitz appeared to be “dying a slow death.”117

International and domestic dissatisfaction with the state of Sachsenhausen led to the site being turned into a memorial. Bending to pressure from survivors, the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED), which translates to the Socialist Unity Party, established a committee dedicated to establishing a memorial at

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116 Ibid, 100.
117 Ibid, 102.
Sachsenhausen, Ravensbruck, and Buchenwald. Support for the creation of a memorial was widespread. In 1955, after the board asked for donations in order to build the memorial, in a matter of two months two million marks were collected. Ludwig Deiters, Horst Kutzat and Kurt Tausendschön, all architects who had worked together on a memorial for Ravensbruck, were charged to design a memorial for Sachsenhausen in 1956.\textsuperscript{118} The architectural landscape of the site was rearranged, and a large obelisk with a red triangle mounted on it was meant to remind visitors of the political prisoners, specifically the Soviet Prisoners of War, who were imprisoned at the site.\textsuperscript{119} This memorial became the backdrop for large-scale commemorations, rallies, and gatherings meant to highlight the bravery of Soviet soldiers and the Soviet liberators. Like at Auschwitz the focus was on glorifying the Soviet hero and anti-fascism.

\textbf{3.4.3: Internationalization and the Cold War}

In 1956 Stalinist control over Poland came to an end. Poland was plummeted into economic and social instability. However Poland still remained distant from Western Europe behind the Iron Curtain until late in the twentieth-century. East Germany did not experience the same drawback in Soviet control. The German Democratic Republic remained tightly under the control of the Soviet Union until its collapse. West Germany was experiencing economic prosperity and social stabilization while the East continued to struggle financially.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
After the death of Stalin and the loosening of the Soviet Union’s hold on Poland the necessity for a museum at Auschwitz came under fire once again. The construction of a blatantly ideological narrative over the past decade had done immense damage to how the Auschwitz site was viewed by the West as well as Poles. By late 1954 Auschwitz was no longer a propagandistic political tool, and new efforts were made to transition the site towards documentation and objectivity. The Polish government began to plan for a new permanent exhibition. Political ideology was still evident in this new exhibition. In a return to the 1947 commemorative agenda, the themes of Polish resistance and heroism reigned supreme. A new International Auschwitz Committee was established by the Ministry of Culture. The IAC planned to hold an international event at the site commemorating the ten-year anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz in April of 1955. The museum staff was given much greater freedom than ever before to renovate the site for the event. The main force pushing these renovations forward in the face of minimal funds was “Warsaw’s desire to appear as a good steward of the site” to the international community. This meant doing away with the propagandistic exhibitions and preserving the physical integrity of the site. The Central Committee ordered Auschwitz to be transformed into a research center and commemorative museum worthy of international approval. Auschwitz was being turned into a symbol of the strength and international prominence of post-Stalinist Poland. The site was once again a site of international attention.

121 Jacek Lachendro, From Liberation to The Opening of The Memorial, Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau w Oświęcimiu, last modified 2013.
122 Ibid.
In 1954 plans began for the creation of a permanent exhibition. Most of the six-thousand square-foot exhibition is still in use today at the site. Of utmost significance, party leaders were not in control of the planning for the building and design of this site. Instead survivors, museum staff, and individuals who had been heavily involved in the affairs of the Auschwitz museum were asked to head the project. Ideology took a back seat and the newly formed committee was challenged to depict the history of the Holocaust in a transparent and historically documented manner. The exhibition was finished by April 17, 1955 and while political ideology was not absent from the exhibition, it brought the site closer to historical reality.124 From the presence of international media to the massive number of attendees, April 17 was an internationally focused event. The small community of Oświęcim could barely accommodate the swell of visitors. Of the utmost significance is the fact that the keynote speaker was not Polish. Marie Normand, the head of the French Auschwitz Committee, spoke on behalf of the foreign delegation of the valor and bravery of those who resisted Nazi barbarism.

While Poland was an experiencing a loosening of Soviet control, East Germany was still tightly held by the Soviet regime. On April 23, 1961, over 100,000 people came to the opening of the Sachsenhausen national memorial opening ceremony.125 Adolf Eichmann was on trial in Israel, and the Berlin wall had been finished just months before. The German Democratic Republic used the opening of the memorial to make a statement to the international community. East

Germany was anti-fascist and committed to the spread of this belief. At this moment, in the East, it was the government pushing along memorialization for political gain, while in the West, Dachau was not opened until 1965. The SED controlled the use and remembrance that took place at the site and used Sachsenhausen for its own political and ideological agenda.¹²⁶

In the Federal Republic of Germany there had been resistance to international involvement at Dachau. The government and local advocacy groups, including those of survivors, were the major forces behind the development of the museum. The Bavarian government was slow to relocate the refugees who had come to inhabit the former camp. Even under pressure from the organization of Dachau survivors, the Dachau Working Group, it took ten years for the last refugee to move out of the camp. The first segment of the camp to be restored was the roll-call square, but how the camp had evolved with its various uses made this task overwhelming. One survivor at its opening in 1966 stated “it means nothing as it is.”¹²⁷ Many survivors wanted to model the exhibitions on the Auschwitz museum, different exhibit spaces sponsored by specific countries. Before a permanent exhibition was designed and constructed, a temporary exhibition was installed in the crematorium building in 1960. It contained many of the elements that would later be incorporated into the permanent exhibit which was opened in

1965, such as the model of the prisoner’s compound of the concentration camp which had been commissioned in 1957 in anticipation of permanent museum.  

3.5: Coming to Terms with International Narrative

Before the permanent exhibition at Dachau was opened, Auschwitz had been transformed into an international site of commemoration. By the mid-to-late 1960s Poland began to realize that Auschwitz could no longer espouse an overwhelming Polish story of valor without inspiring foreign criticism. Poland began to make a concerted effort to “internationalize” the site. As mentioned earlier, the International Auschwitz Commission was established to serve as a supervising body which brought international visibility and interaction. It was comprised of survivors, leaders of organizations, journalists, and foreign leaders. The IAC also served as a body that could ensure Poland continued to be dedicated to the future of Auschwitz. While the attention assured that Auschwitz would receive funding from abroad and be an international site, it also meant increased scrutiny on what remained a site under Polish control. By extension Poland, and the people of Poland, experienced backlash whenever a decision was made that was not popular abroad.

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Not until 1968 were steps taken by the AIC, the museum, and the Polish government to reestablish Jewish memory at the site. This memorial was supposed to invoke the political prisoner, not the Jewish prisoner even though it was located on the site which should have been associated with Jewish victimization. There were Jewish survivors and leaders on the AIC, but at this point in time the Jewish narrative did not fit with the official narrative being pushed by the Polish government. International pressure during the 1960s forced Poland to put aside its aversion to representing the massacre and victimization of Jewish populations. The Polish government bent to international pressure when it became politically prudent, but only to a certain degree. The first exhibit to Jewish suffering, the “Martrydom and Struggle of the Jews,” was installed in Block 27 in Auschwitz I in 1967, twenty years after the museum opened. The opening of the exhibit was only minimally attended because invitations were sent out late and foreign Jewish delegations were refused visas. If it were not for the internationalization of the site, it is hard to say when, if ever, Jews would have been incorporated into the narrative presented at Auschwitz.

The Sachsenhausen camp’s museum was built in the prisoner’s kitchen. The exhibitions touch on daily life in the camp, resistance, and the camp’s liberation – much like the exhibitions at Auschwitz. Like Auschwitz, the Sachsenhausen museum was built on an anti-fascist narrative that minimized to

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130 Jacek Lachendro, From Liberation to The Opening of The Memorial, Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau w Oświęcimiu, last Modified 2013.
132 Ibid, 195.
133 Ibid, 194.
the point of exclusion the suffering of Jewish and Gypsy populations.\textsuperscript{134} Installed at the height of Cold War tensions, the exhibition presented West Germany as the direct successor of National Socialism, equating capitalism and Nazi war crimes. The German Democratic Republic was portrayed as the new Germany. Foreign groups, on the model of Auschwitz, designed their own exhibits to be housed in the “museum of the European people’s antifascist struggle for freedom.”\textsuperscript{135} Nineteen countries participated in the exhibit. The Soviet Union and Germany received twice as much exhibition space. The Jewish narrative was only included after the “Union of Israeli antifascist resistance fighters” protested.\textsuperscript{136} The government built the “museum of the resistance fighter and the suffering of Jewish citizens” from reconstructed elements of the site in barracks 38 and 39.\textsuperscript{137} However, the exhibition contained little information about the Jewish population that came through the camp, and there was little to no mention of groups imprisoned for any other reason besides resistance.

3.6: Sites of Emotional Education and the End of the Cold War

In 1989, the socialist regime collapsed after forty years primarily due to economic instability. Europe, which had been divided for nearly half a century had to come to terms with two very different recent pasts. With the reunification of Germany, two distinctly different memorial narratives had to be rectified. Germany became one of the most prominent countries within the European Union

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
and helped eastern European countries such as Poland gain admittance to the European Union. With the reunification of Europe came the need to educate the new generation about the Holocaust which led to new educational initiatives across Europe. This time the pressure was coming from the local communities working with international groups to press the national governments of Poland and Germany to act.

In many ways the mounting internationalization of Auschwitz undermined the regime’s ability to pursue a government-conscripted narrative of Holocaust history. In 1979 Auschwitz was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, establishing the site permanently as a global site of genocide memory. Auschwitz more than any other site of Holocaust memory, including Dachau, had become a symbol of international memory. International influence in Auschwitz quickly overflowed into other matters beyond the exhibition spaces. Since the 1980s the community of Oświęcim has been catapulted into international headlines, a fate Dachau has been able to avoid due to a lower level of internationalization of the area and camp site. While Dachau was able to retain a certain level of separation in the media, Oświęcim was pushed into the international arena by controversies that bridged the gap between Auschwitz and the community.

During the 1990s there was increasing pressure from local community members and international organizations to meld the educational and memorial aspects of the Dachau camp site. Dachau was beginning the process of becoming an international site of memory, but on the terms of the local community. Domestic and international groups agreed that the emphasis needed to shift to the
emotional side of the learning experience in order for visitors, particularly students, to develop a personal connection to the site and Holocaust memory. By 1996 there were specific guidelines laid out for the renovation of the Dachau site. However, many of the original buildings had been destroyed hastily by the Bavarian government, and little remained that spoke to the day-to-day life of the prisoners of Dachau. The challenges now standing in the way of creating the museum memorial showcased the degree to which ideology had changed within the community. The Bavarian government which had supported the demolition of the crematoria in the 1950s was now taking steps to preserve and memorialize the site.

In a distinct change of opinion from the residents of Dachau in the 1930s the residents of Dachau in the early 2000s have spoken up loudly that they do not want changes made to the entrance of the site, which would include returning the original entrance. Concerns of the local community had to be balanced with concerns for how the site would be perceived by visitors coming from all over the world. Their perceptions and understanding were necessary to the success and at times would outweigh the concerns of the community. Up until the 1980s the focus had been on the desires of the community and the government, and it took international political pressure to move most commemorative initiatives forward. From the 1980s through early 2000s internal dialogue and measures pushed along the renovations. It took a new generation to spur on a revolution in how Holocaust

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139 Marcuse, Legacies of Dachau, 401.
memory was addressed in Germany. Once this change in thought and approach had commenced, domestic government and populations began taking on the burden of creating these museums and memorials, such as the museum memorial at Dachau, without the goading of international groups.

Compared to Dachau and Auschwitz, visitation to Sachsenhausen had been declining. In 1992, the museum’s administration was grasping to find a way to present the double history of the site and of Germany. With the fall of the Berlin wall and the reunification of Germany, two memorial narratives came head to head. Both West and East Germany had attempted to find a narrative of resistance after the war, but due to international influence and the Cold War these narratives did not match up. At Sachsenhausen the administration was dealing not only with the disjointed nature of collective German memory, but a site that housed two different sets of collective memory.

In 1990 and again in 1992, the state government of Brandenburg announced that excavation had uncovered mass graves at locations around Sachsenhausen. The interim director of the site from 1991 to 1992 sought to add the story of Sachsenhausen as Camp No. 1 to the memorial narrative at the site. While pursuing this project, Gerhard Emig erected a large sign just inside the entrance of the memorial that read:

*Dear Visitor! This memorial site was built and designed by the Communist power holders before perestroika and the turning point [of 1989] in order to commemorate the victims of Nazi criminals. The end of Communist domination, and the unification of our country in peace and freedom, makes it possible also to commemorate those who, under the Soviet occupying power and under the lawless GDR state after 1945, sacrificed their freedom, health, and their lives in*
This sign undermined the site’s use as memorial to those who died at and survived Sachsenhausen. There is no mention of preserving the site as a site of Holocaust memory, and by labeling the “Communist powers” outside aggressors Emig insinuates that Holocaust memorialization was forced on the site by a foreign force. The sign also represents all the detainees in the Soviet camp installed at Sachsenhausen as resisters to the Soviet regime, which was not the case. Sarah Farmer in her article, “Symbols that Face Two Ways: Commemorating the Victims of Nazism and Stalinism at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen,” examines the process of creating a balanced memorial at Sachsenhausen. She wrote, “Paradoxically, this sign recapitulated the anti-fascist rhetoric of the GDR by tacitly denying that the German population bore any responsibility for Nazism or that German aggression had led to occupation by a foreign power.” Emig represented a larger trend within eastern German memory to view themselves as victims of Nazi and Soviet crimes. Many Germans during this period saw Nazis as outside aggressors perpetrating crimes against East Germans.

In 1993 Gerhard Emig was replaced by a new director, and the first act of this new director was to remove the sign. The Sachsenhausen site was to be taken in a much different direction. The site had come under the government of the local Brandenburg historians’ commission and was absorbed into the Foundation for Brandenburg Memorial Sites. The museum was redesigned and would be comprised of two memorials that are separated physically, down to the two

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140 Farmer, “Symbols that Face Two Ways,” 110.
141 Ibid, 110.
memorials having separate entrances. Brandenburg's minister of science, research, and culture, when speaking on the new design said "[One] who wants to remember can do that without feeling disturbed by someone else."142 The museum was designed to be decentralized. As described on the museum website:

_Thirteen exhibitions on different sites examine the particular history of each and link it to a thematic presentation that sets it in a wider context. These are complemented by temporary exhibitions, held in the New Museum. There are also exhibitions by school groups, resulting from educational projects, as well as workshop exhibitions to present new acquisitions from the archives and depot._143

The site was transformed into a memorial that could accommodate domestic and international memory by creating a museum that incorporated the memory of the Holocaust and of the GDR. Internationalization came through actions taken by the local government to remodel the site so it could house two collective memories. Internationalization was achieved on the terms of the town. The last set of renovations to the site was completed in 2001. The museum exhibit entitled “Soviet special camp No.7/No.1” was opened in December 2001 and preserves the sites and memory of those interned within the Soviet camp, resisters and convicted war criminals.

Internationalization of Auschwitz occurred during the internet and media boom. During the 1990s as Auschwitz became fully accessible to the West and the rest of the international community the global community was discovering new ways of communicating. Local news could be catapulted into late-night headlines as the rate at which information was disseminated dramatically

142 Ibid, 110.
increased. Dachau’s internationalization was gradual, while the same control was not exerted over the introduction of Auschwitz to the international community. The over-exposure of the museum spilled into the community; the town was not prepared for such intense attention.

Beyond the official memorialization that takes place at Sachsenhausen there are signs and forest grave markers in the forest surrounding the site where many were shot and buried. These memorials are placed without official sanction, and the number continues to grow. Sarah Farmer argues that these memorials are “a reminder that although politicians, civil servants, and academics may be the official custodians of public memory, the families of those who suffered or died form an enormous and powerful constituency in shaping how these events are conceived of and remembered.”144

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144 Farmer, “Symbols that Face Two Ways,” 114.
Chapter Four: Financial Internationalization

The level of internationalization of Dachau, Auschwitz, and Sachsenhausen is evident in how these institutions interact financially with the international community. None of the sites charge admissions, which means revenue must be brought in through other means if visitation is not supplying an annual budget. Dachau and Sachsenhausen are German sites, supported by German federal funds and local funding. Auschwitz experiences a greater push to bring in foreign monetary than Sachsenhausen and Dachau, and because of this Auschwitz interacts with the international community more. Auschwitz is the most internationalized site, and was so throughout its development. Auschwitz does seek out funding from abroad, and it is a core part of its budget. Compared to Dachau and Sachsenhausen, monetarily Auschwitz is an international site funded by countries, organizations, and individuals from all around the world. This leads to a greater level of international investment in the future of the site which correlates with a greater level of international attention. Increasing international funding leaves the local community unable to compete for influence, creating greater distance between museum and community as the museum orients itself to the international community.

The process of obtaining the financial records of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum and the Dachau Museum differed drastically. With a simple internet search a person can have access to the annual reports of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum for the past six years. However, after months of searching the internet I was still unable to discern where the funding for Dachau
came from. It took a visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, with the aid of a creative librarian, to find a pamphlet from a conference that contained one line of information about the origins of Dachau’s funding. In comparison to Auschwitz’s professionally designed seventy-page report including multicolored graphs and complete English transition which could be downloaded directly off their website, the single line of information in a working conference pamphlet from 1994 was minuscule.145

The differing levels of availability for financial records of these two museums can be interpreted as a comment on their interest in international involvement. The Auschwitz-Birkenau museum, which is a state museum, is producing glossy translated reports which are easily downloaded on the internet because they want to attract international donors. These reports break down who the donors are, what their donations went to, as well as what percentile of the museum budget comes from international donations. These annual reports are a marketing tool meant to bring about international attention.

4.1: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

In the last six years, the years in which reports are available online, each report has included a statement describing the Museum’s goal to increase external funding. In 2006, the statement read:

A problem requiring urgent action is the systematic obtaining of external funds, above all within European Union frameworks, for the maintenance and functioning of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.146

In the financial section of the 2007 Auschwitz Birkenau Annual Report included the statement:

_The lack of intensive aid from abroad constitutes a significant obstacle to planning capital-intensive, long-term preservation work. In 2007, work began on new methods of fundraising, focusing on private donors, government appropriations, and European Union funds._147

The museum is explicitly stating its goal; there is no contention that the Auschwitz Birkenau Museum is inviting international financial support. This is a state-sanctioned push for increased international financial involvement at the Auschwitz Birkenau state museum. In the introduction letter to these six years of reports the focus is on the necessity of donations and support from abroad, without which the museum could not continue to conserve and preserve the buildings and artifacts of Auschwitz-Birkenau. At the beginning of each annual report a letter of introduction written by the curator, Dr Piotr M.A. Cywiński, gives a short commentary on the events of the past year as well as addressing the major themes throughout the report. Each report includes a reference to the need for financial donors. In 2008 he wrote:

_Only a shared effort will make it possible to preserve the authenticity of this place and its message. In 2008, we laid the groundwork for a special Fund for the preservation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial. I believe that the_


147 Ibid, 57.
democratic countries of this world, and people who realize how fragile this world is, will support us.\textsuperscript{148}

Each report begins with a similar plea to the domestic and international donors to provide support and fulfill one's responsibility to remember through financial means.

From 2006 to 2011 the number of donors listed by the Auschwitz-Birkenau State museum increased from eight to nineteen.\textsuperscript{149} The increase in foreign donors speaks to the growing interest abroad in the museum and the Auschwitz site. In terms of monetary amounts, over the past five years donations from abroad have skyrocketed from €63,930 to €87 million in 2011 just to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation alone. Consistently the Museum’s self-generated income has accounted for about half the museum’s budget. Domestic funding is provided through appropriations from the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture, as well as earmarked funds from the Ministry for specific projects. It is important to note that while the percentage of international funding through grants and donations has been steadily increasing, nearly forty percent of the museum’s annual budget, not including the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation fund, is being appropriated from domestic funding.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars are being donated each year by international organizations and individuals, and this exerts influence on the types

of projects and tasks taken on by the museum. International funds are described as “one-time funding from other governments and private foundations. This money is mostly assigned to specific preservation, publication, research, and educational tasks.” Examples of specific tasks include The Ronald Lauder Foundation in 2007 supported the largest of the task accomplished with foreign funding to date. This was the continuation of the crucial conservation work on the ruins of crematoria and gas chambers II and III. In 2009 international funds from the European Infrastructure and Environment Operating Program Funds were granted for the conservation of wooden barracks at the Auschwitz II-Birkenau site and two prisoner blocks of Auschwitz I. Projects like these could not be accomplished without international support, and over the past six years alone there has been a marked increase in international capital being incorporated into the Museum’s budget that has allowed for large scale conservation initiatives that domestic appropriations alone could not support.

Beyond large scale conservation, international capital appropriated through donations and grants is used to create educational materials. Many times the country of origin speaks directly to the audience for which the materials are being developed. In 2007 the Shoah Foundation in France made it possible to continue work in 2006 on the French language version of the five volume Auschwitz monograph. There is a distinct correlation between the countries of origins of funds and the types of educational initiatives that were taken on.

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151 Ibid, 57-58.
In 2006, international support accounted for one and one-fifth percent of the Auschwitz Birkenau State Museum’s budget. Of that one and one-fifth percent, 226,000 PLN, Germany which accounted for thirty eight percent and the United States which contributed twenty five percent were the two countries with the most donors. During 2006 educational initiatives focused on the creation of a German-English-Polish volume dedicated to the restoration of the site fence. China and France contributed as well. In 2007 three and one-fifth percent of the Museum budget was described as “funding outside Poland.” Germany, Poland, and Israel were the three major countries of origin for these funds. However, in 2007, most of the organizations and individuals donating funds were already earmarked for projects begun in 2006. In 2008, the United States and Germany remained the two countries with the most donors contributing to the museum. Most of the projects remained continuations of initiatives began in the years before. However, there was an increase in funding termed “funding from abroad” from three and one-fifth percent to five and four-fifth percent due to an increase in overall donor participation.

In 2009 there was a distinct drop in the number of donors contributing to the museum proper. Compared to the eleven donors listed in 2008 there were only nine listed in 2009. Funding was appropriated from Infrastructure and

Environment European Operation Program for the conservation of the wooden barracks at the Birkenau site and two prisoner blocks at the Auschwitz I site. This funding was awarded by the European Union and accounted for eight and one-tenth percent of the museum’s annual budget. In 2010 the majority of donors was from Poland, and the number from the United States, Germany, and abroad decreased dramatically. Support from abroad fell to €0.15 million, still almost €100 thousand more than foreign contributions in 2006. These figures do not account for the donations made to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation. In 2011 there was no longer a designation for support from abroad, but a section entitled European Programs raised fifteen percent of the annual budget. The museum’s fundraising efforts shifted away from supporting smaller projects to raising €120 million in order to restore and preserve the Auschwitz-Birkenau site. The museum chose to remove foreign donations from the museum budget and create a foundation with an international mission. By creating a separate entity giving it its own section within the report, the Museum is creating an international community with a multimillion euro goal. Most of the donations now coming to the museum were for the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation, the museum reported in 2011 the

highest number of donors. The list of donors included Croatia, Japan, the Netherlands, as well as Belgium, all of which were new to the list.

In December of 2009, Germany pledged to contribute half of the needed funds, sixty million Euros, to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation. The goal of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation, founded in 2009, is described as follows:

To construct a Perpetual Fund for the purpose of conserving the original camp grounds, buildings, and ruins, as well as conserving and protecting the archival holdings and original objects. When the necessary sum has been raised, estimated by specialists at €120 million, the annual income of €4.5 million will make it possible to plan and systematically carry out these tasks.  

By 2011 seventeen countries, three cities, organizations, and individuals had pledged to donate €97 million to the Fund. With the creation of the fund, there was a decrease in the reporting on specific educational initiatives. This fund is transitioning the museum into a new era focused on long-term projects versus short-term initiatives.

Politics and financial support are woven together in the Auschwitz Birkenau annual reports. The Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation was created to support the international ventures of the museum and placed prominently within the report to show the important of the project, as well as the importance of the countries, organizations, and cities participating. They are tiered by the amount donated, making the statement that they care more. The Auschwitz-Birkenau Death Camp Victims Memorial Foundation in Oświęcim is included because it is


\[161\] Ibid, 27-29.
politically prudent to publically display the community’s dedication to the preservation of the site. The Oświęcim Auschwitz-Birkenau Death Camp Victims Memorial Foundation works closely with the museum on specific projects as well as education initiatives. The organization is listed as a specific donor and starting in 2009 is included in the annual report graphs separate from international support and domestic funding. The Auschwitz-Birkenau Death Camp Victims Memorial Foundation in Oświęcim occupies the gray area between donor and domestic support and how it is recognized and accounted changes year to year as the Museum tries to define the proper space for it. In 2006 through 2008 the Fund is mentioned within the report, but amount and designation is not given and it is described as “supporting publishing, education, and conservation work.”

By including the local foundation in the breakdown and the charts the museum is placing the local foundation on par with international donors. By increasing the visibility of the community’s participation it purports a certain image, an image that this community and the site are engaging in a partnership and that the community is completely in line with how the museum functions. These annual reports are designed to give international donors a specific and well-crafted image of the Museum. These well-designed reports navigate the delicate balance between relying on international support and the need to recognize the role of the local community. In these reports we see the Museum as an internationally supported institution that is trying to nurture local relationships.

4.2: Dachau Museum

Now compare all of this information to a single line of print. From September 25 to September 29, 1994, the Topographies of Terror Foundation and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum brought together representatives from museums, memorials, and sites all over Germany for a working conference entitled “Holocaust Memorials and Museums on the Heritage of The Nazi Past and The Holocaust in The United States and Germany: Similarities and Differences.” This very brief overview of Museums and Memorials in Germany provides just a quick break-down of what each site consists of and the basic background information another attendee of the conference would need to know. On the page describing Dachau next to the subtitle “Sponsor” is listed “The Bavarian State”; right below that next to the subtitle “Financial Support” the Bavarian State is once again listed.163 This seems to be an overall trend throughout the small booklet. For each institution a very specific German city, local, organization, or the entire German state is listed. These are German sites supported by German monies. German support for Holocaust memorials and museums does not end at the State’s geographical boundaries, as evident through the large donation discussed above to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation Fund.

Beyond annual reports and budgets, the websites of both museums speak to very different agendas. While there is a large “HELP US! MAKE A DONATION” button located on every screen you visit on the Auschwitz -

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Birkenau website, there is no mention of donating on Dachau’s website. While Auschwitz, and by extension Poland, is increasingly focused on bringing in long-term funding from international sources, Dachau, and by extension Germany, has no such mission. This reveals an important point that needs to be made. These two museums have forged opposite paths in terms of soliciting international funding, but in no way is Dachau’s lack of focus on procuring international funding a statement on Germany’s level of dedication to preserving sites of Holocaust memory. For Germany this is an extremely personal and national responsibility.

Here the relationship between memory, politics, and economics blend. As a New York Times reporter explained it in 2008, “Most countries celebrate the best in their past. Germany unrelentingly promotes its worst.” Germany has taken the Holocaust as its burden to carry, in both memory and finance. Poland has a much different relationship to this history, as described in earlier chapters. While Germany is viewed as the “perpetrator” of the Holocaust, Poland was labeled a “victim.” For the state of Poland, Auschwitz-Birkenau is a site of Polish suffering. Poland is not financially supporting the memorialization of Polish state crimes like Germany.

4.3: Internationalization of Leadership

Trends in leadership and the dependence on international funding are closely related. The very nature of how the Auschwitz-Birkenau state museum is run makes it lean towards a more international focus and less of an engagement

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with the community, while the Dachau museum’s leadership is primarily domestic. The Auschwitz Museum is a state museum, just as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is a federal museum and is the national memorial to the Holocaust and receives federal funding. The Museum is controlled by the Ministry of Culture in Warsaw. Under the ministry is the International Council of the Auschwitz Birkenau State Museum which advises the President of the Ministries in regard to the preservation and function not only of the Auschwitz site, but of other Holocaust Memorials as well. This Council is made up of a distinctly international population. The council includes survivors who were born throughout Europe, the Rabbi of International Jewish Affairs for the American Jewish Committee, the Executive Director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the past and present directors of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, a German Catholic Priest, the chairman of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, a representative from London, and (the only member from the community) the director of the youth meeting house of Oświęcim.\textsuperscript{165} The Council is mostly made up of international voices, so while the museum is a state museum the contributing voices are for the most part international. The background information about each member is available on the Museum’s website. However, most of the Museum’s staff that is working at the museum day-to-day is Polish. The body governing the direction of the museum is internationalized but the “on the ground” is domestic. In Dachau the situation at the site is similar in that the museum administration and staff is German, but the body governing the direction

of the Dachau site is in contrast primarily German with limited international influence. On Dachau’s website there is not a breakdown of the staff or any mention of museum leadership. Dachau, like many Holocaust sites of memory across Germany, does not openly address the “behind the scenes” side of the museum. Dachau and Oranienburg are not oriented to the international community. While there are ways of contacting the museum and reaching the staff there isn’t the same level of exposure and access. Dachau is a German site run by the German government on German monies, and because of this the website is not designed to cater to an international audience.

4.4: The Economy’s Effect on Internationalization

Just as discussed in the chapter on memory, this research is not oriented as a judgment on the practices of either of these museums. Each approach has its merits and detriments, and the purpose of this endeavor is to examine how these positives and negatives affect the communities that house them. In the case of Poland, the museum has been able to increase the awareness of the atrocity that has taken place there and create an international network of countries, organizations, and individuals dedicated to preserving the memory of the Holocaust. This is no small feat. This has allowed the museum to pursue a radical conservation project that will ensure the site exists for generations from now to witness. Due to international funding the Museum was able to create educational materials accessible to a variety of students from all around the world.
Auschwitz has become an international site of memory that has masterfully publicized and fundraised. However, this means increased attention and scrutiny, which then leaks into the community. When countries, organizations, and individuals from all over the world have invested millions of Euros into a project there is going to be an increased level of discussion and interest in every step the Museum takes, and when a misstep is made it is international news. The local community of Oświęcim in Poland does donate annually to the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, but its effort cannot match that of international donors. Without a financial stake it is difficult to have any sway over the types of programming being developed by the Museum. This leads to the countries which have the highest level of involvement financially being represented through leadership positions and educational initiatives. Dachau is barely ever in the news, and while it is accessible to visitors it has not transcended to the level of Auschwitz. The local community has a much different relationship with the Museum because of this. Instead of constantly being bombarded with international attention and scrutiny, these German communities have been able to work through their relationship with the Museum in relative privacy. By avoiding the necessity of soliciting international support, Dachau has been able to avoid the level of media attention Auschwitz experiences. This reprieve has allowed the site to develop at a slower pace which in turn gave the community time to get behind restoring and preserving the site. In the end local groups initiated and funded many of the initiatives involving Dachau. In Auschwitz the community doesn’t have the financial means to sway the development of the museum. The Auschwitz
site developed at a much quicker pace due to international support which meant the community had to quickly try and come to terms with the fact that not only was Holocaust memory now a defining feature of the town, but that the town was now of international interest.
Chapter Five: Shifting Through the Information

There is currently a frenzy to preserve as much about the Holocaust as possible due to the dwindling number of survivors among us. With that comes the international cry to “protect” these sites. However, who is it that we need to protect them from? Implicitly these communities are being accused of being aggressors against these sites. The international community through the media and conflict over the sites repeatedly positions itself as the protector of Holocaust memory from the local community which would rather forget and move on. Once again the label of “perpetrator” haunts this current generation of students far removed from the events of the Holocaust.

The current generation in particular represents a turning point in the scholarship being produced surrounding Holocaust memory and history. This splintering of community and memory has been further agitated by the increasing focus of Auschwitz-Birkenau on staying relevant. The director in an interview with the New York Times stated “Teenagers now have grandparents born after the war, this is a very big deal. Your grandparents are your era but your great-grandparents are history.”¹⁶⁶ This generation may never meet a survivor or have a family member who remembers how the community changed during the Holocaust. This “third generation” as it has become termed will be dealing with the consequences of an event that is growing ever more distant. Scholars are not sure how this generation will relate to Holocaust history or the museums and

memorials. Harold Marcuse recognizes that this new generation will be its own memory group and will to experience Holocaust memory in a radically different way than its older siblings, parents, and grandparents. These students will not have the personal interaction and emotional connection to the Holocaust; the sole physical evidence of the Holocaust that will remain will be the sites of Holocaust memory. Holocaust museums and memorials are taking on a new importance. The receptivity of students to these museums and memorials defines how they will relate to Holocaust memory in the future. Soon Holocaust memory will be completely reliant on museums and memorials, and if students, for any reason, feel a disconnection with these institutions it will affect how they relate to the Holocaust. If students do not relate positively to the museum or memorial as a member of their community, than the students will not be open to experiencing the site.

5.1.1: The Auschwitz Convent

During the twentieth-century there were several incidents that incited local frustration. The controversy over the presence of the “Auschwitz convent” began as a local issue in 1984 and turned into a sixteen-year drama fueled by interaction from abroad and inter-fighting. The Auschwitz convent and its large cross came to represent the battle for control over Auschwitz and a symbol of the town’s frustration with influence from the West and in particular the United States. On August 1, 1984 a group of fifteen Carmelite nuns took up residence in a building adjacent to Auschwitz. The building had once been utilized as a storage space for Zyklon B which had been used to murder hundreds of thousands of prisoners, the
vast majority of them Jews, in the gas chambers. The nuns had been granted a lease by local authorities with the urging of the Archbishop of the Cracow diocese. While Poles viewed Auschwitz as first a Polish site of suffering, Jewish communities around the world saw the convent as an attempt to Christianize Auschwitz and wipe out Jewish memory. The convent became international news, and the controversy increased exponentially once Jewish Holocaust survivors began protesting. From 1986 to 1989 these two faith communities attempted to defuse the controversy and find a resolution. In July of 1986 there was a Catholic-Jewish Summit in Geneva. It was primarily a meeting of international Catholic and Jewish leaders. Certain local Polish religious leaders such as primate Jozef Glemp were not included in these discussions. In 1987 a second meeting was held. The summit decided that a new Centre for Information, Education, Meeting, and Prayer, should be built some five hundred meters outside the camp site and that the convent would be resituated within the Centre. The Western world saw the issue of the convent as resolved once the Polish Catholic Church made the convent move. The iron curtain had not fallen by this time and Polish leaders were not always included or fully aware of the discussions happening in the west.

In July 1989 Rabbi Avi Weiss from New York City traveled to Poland with six other men to try and reason with the nuns in person. The incident thrust the convent into the headlines once again. Weiss and his followers staged a peaceful protest at the gates of the convent after the nuns would not meet with them. The standoff ended with members of the Oświęcim community tossing buckets of water mixed with paint or urine on the seven men. They were then
physically dragged to the street where they were called derogatory names and were beaten as bystanders watched on, including police officers and a priest. Two days later they returned dressed in the stripped pajamas of Jewish prisoners and entered the convent garden. This time they were joined by thirty Canadian Jews who remained outside the convent. Multiple protests occurred at the convent in the weeks to come, primarily by international groups. While national Polish opinion seemed to support moving the convent, the local community was furious at the protests taking place culminating in Glemp spouting off Antisemitic comments to the international media.  

The Polish government was forced to act quickly in order to quiet foreign unrest. After a series of Polish political leaders spoke out in support of moving the convent, the Vatican broke its silence of the issue and expressed its support for building the centre and pledged to contribute financially. In response the Mother Superior of the nuns at Auschwitz stated “You can tell the Americans that we are not moving an inch”; the conflict over the convent had become internationalized. No longer was it a matter of whether the convent should be located for the local community, it was a matter of international interaction. Pope Jon Paul II intervened once again in April of 1990, sending a letter to the convent in April. He wrote “Now, in conformity with the will of the Church, you will change your place while remaining in the same town

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168 Ibid, 32.
169 Ibid, 33.
of Auschwitz.”

However, rather than moving, the sisters left Oświęcim completely. The building was finally vacated after nine years of controversy.

5.1.2: Fire at Sachsenhausen

Sachsenhausen and surrounding Oranieburg businesses have been the targets of periodic neo-Nazi violence since Germany's 1990 reunification. In 1992, just weeks after large groups of rightist youths attacked three homes for foreigners seeking asylum, the Sachsenhausen barracks housing an exhibit on Jewish suffering during the Holocaust were severely damaged in a fire. The fire was set days after Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had urged German leaders to fight the wave of neo-Nazi violence taking place in Germany. Two young men were charged with arson, but they were acquitted for lack of evidence. The acquittals created an international firestorm which only subsided after Germany’s highest court set aside the acquittals and retried the youths. Both were convicted of arson in 1995. In 1996 the process of conserving Barracks 38 and 39 began. The museum decided to preserve the charred wood, choosing to bring this recent act into the collective memory of the site. In November of 1997 the museum to Jewish victims at Sachsenhausen was reopened. About 350 people joined Ignatz Bubis, the chairman of Germany's Central Council of Jews, and other international dignitaries at the museum dedication ceremony. The renovations were completely funded by the state of Brandenburg and the federal government at a cost of DM 4.3 million.

\[170\] Ibid, 34.
5.1.3: The Disco in the Tannery of Auschwitz

Since the turn of the century the city has taken steps to use the international attention focused on the town for the benefit of the town by speaking out publicly on the hardships the town faces. In 2000 a conference was held to address the problems of the city, during which Mayor Krawczyk stated

In Oświęcim, we know how hard it is for the city and the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum to coexist. Changes are necessary. What the city needs above all is a calm and dignified existence. The problems of the city should not be seen in isolation from the problems of the Museum, and the problems of the Museum should not be seen in isolation from the everyday problems of the city and its residents. Above all, these problems should not be turned into conflicts. Here in Oświęcim, we know what should be done.¹⁷¹

The town’s increasing frustration over the dismissal of community issues were as one resident expressed, "The people who think of it as a museum -- 'don't build anything, don't change anything' -- they would like to leave it as it is."¹⁷² The town is increasingly frustrated with international pressure relegating the town to less and less space, literally closing it in through zoning. Increasingly the plea of “We want to have some peace and quiet and live as normal people” is beginning to be addressed.¹⁷³ Since the petition, the town has been receiving financial aid from the Polish government to deal with the costs associated with having the Auschwitz-Birkenau state museum located within the community.

When the local government announced that a Disco was going to be opened in the Auschwitz tannery in 2000 it caused an international media blitz, and students became a target. Stories of Oświęcim teens dancing on graves were splashed across the news, and there was even mention of wet t-shirt contests taking place. The international press portrayed these local teens as insensitive to the history of the site and just interested in partying. Absent from these stories was the voice of students. Here students could have been brought into the international dialogue on how Holocaust memory was affecting their community; instead they were treated like hoodlums. After the closing of the disco, plans began to build a strip mall. Once again the controversy reached international proportions and the community had to defend the need to develop and grow.

To accuse the local government of going about their business over the ashes of the victims is highly immoral and wrongful towards the residents of Oświęcim, who have given repeated proofs of their respect for the tragedy of the Holocaust.\(^{174}\)

The community has been forced to prove publicly that they are not dismissing the memory of the Holocaust or trying to diminish it in any way. International media repeatedly making a community prove and state they are not “the bad guys” is going to breed frustration within that community. This frustration becomes engrained in the population as they take on the challenge of navigating this complex situation. However, this frustration is not focused on the history or memory of the Holocaust, but on the institutions and groups that are causing the town to be scrutinized. The students were to an extent villainized for trying to carve out a youth-oriented space in the town. While a better location could have

been chosen, the implication that these sites needed to be protected from Polish
disrespect ran throughout much of the international reporting on the incident. The
mayor actually took steps to confront this theme saying

_The city of Oświęcim needs peace and quiet. We owe as much to those who survived the camp, and to the new generation that respects the memory of the victims, but also has a right to a normal life, and to decide about the development of their city._

The mayor is defending the right of the town to grow and develop their own community. The residents of the town are forced to repeatedly state that they respect the legacy of the Holocaust because the international community keeps calling their dedication to preserving the memory into question. It is true that there is frustration and controversy over how these sites should be memorialized and integrated into the community. However, when the quotes and comments of individuals living in these towns are analyzed, a trend emerges. The resentment is not directed towards the sites, but towards involved international parties.

Underlying suspicions, spoken and unspoken accusations, and a lack of understanding by the international community has led to burn-out within these communities. In one of his many travel blogs, Rick Steves, the well-known travel guru, explained his interaction with a woman from Dachau.

With each visit to Dachau I remember a chance contact I had with a woman who called the town of Dachau home. Riding the city bus from Munich to the infamous concentration camp, I sat awkwardly next to an old German woman. I smiled at her weakly as if to say, "I don't hold your people's genocidal atrocities against you."

She glanced at me and sneered down at my camera. Suddenly, surprising me with

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175 Ibid.

There are a few main points that need to be drawn out of this interaction. First, the woman’s frustration is not focused on the sites, but on the international tourist. Second, she is speaking English. It attests to the level of internationalization this small Bavarian town has undergone if even this elderly woman speaks fluent English. Third, Rick Steves’ inner dialogue of “I don’t hold your people’s genocidal atrocities against you” implies that it could be otherwise. The woman is responding to that underlying accusation that was such a large part of how Dachau was internationalized. Whether this woman was alive and living in Dachau during the Holocaust or not, she could be seen as a perpetrator.

In 2000, the owner of the disco of Auschwitz said “With all due respect to history, Oświęcim should not die for Auschwitz.”\footnote{“Auschwitz and Oswiecim: Split Personality,” \textit{Jewish Telegraphic Agency}, September 20, 2000. http://www.jta.org/news/article/2000/09/20/6110/AuschwitzandOswiec.} While many reporters were quick to quote him and comment on the need to protect Auschwitz from the increasingly frustrated community, it seems no one stopped to try and unpack why this town’s population was harboring this resentment. Many wrote it off as “Polish antisemitism” or as evidence of the hardening of the close-minded community of Oświęcim towards the history of the Holocaust.\footnote{Ibid.} However, if you examine the comments and thoughts citizens have expressed in the media, the frustration is focused not on the history, but on the interaction from abroad in the towns. The internationalization of a site of memory doesn’t just alter the site, it
exposes the community that houses the museum or memorial to the commentary of the international community. The degree to which a site of memory is oriented abroad affects the level to which the surrounding community must become accustomed to international attention. Such is the case in Oświęcim, Dachau, and Oranienburg. In any other town, building a parking lot or a youth center would be considered a mundane city council matter, but in these towns such day-to-day happenings become fodder for global headlines. The memory housed in these three towns, and the interest from abroad invested in them, has greatly affected how these towns interact with the history of the Holocaust and Holocaust sites of memory. These towns are attempting to bridge the gap between the community and these institutions while trying to distance the community and distance from the history of the camp at the same time. This disconnect in memory creates a precarious situation that places the local communities at odds and at once one with a history that the global community has yet to fully come to terms with.

5.2: The Study

Completely absent from the discussion surrounding community-museum relations is the voice of students. Not only are they not included, but on the rare occasion a “youth,” which means someone who is twenty five and out of school, is referenced the comment is usually surface level. Quotes like

*I live in Krakow [but] I work here. So for me, every day [the fact that there is a concentration camp here] is a big [deal], and I think for everyone who lives in Poland, Oświęcim is a very big deal.*

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179 Jeffery Donovan, “Europe: Auschwitz Legacy Weights on Residents of Nearby Town—Especially Its Youth.”
do not display the potential input students can offer to the discussion of memorial-community relations. If anything the overwhelming absence of student commentary paired with the occasional perfunctory comment by the token “youth” has diminished expectations of students’ capacity to be a part of this international dialogue. These students have the education and emotional understanding to create real change in their communities and in how they are perceived by the international community. However, they have yet to be given the opportunity to fully express their sentiments. Everyone talks around them, at them, and even for them. No one seems to talk to them or listen to them when it comes to how they relate to the museums and memorials situated in their communities.

While this could be a matter of communities trying to protect students from an international firestorm if they say something controversial, students have been successfully brought into related conversations. The European Union has conducted extensive research over the course of the last decade on the state of Holocaust education in European schools. They brought in the voices of students and teachers through interviews and extensive surveys. One of the key findings of the survey was

> Many of the interviewed students expressed that the confrontation with the Holocaust has had an impact on their personal lives, particularly with regard to visits to memorial sites. Students perceived memorial sites as places that could have a lasting impression on them.\(^\text{180}\)

The statement supports the findings of the survey. The European Union is asserting that Holocaust education is important and can be linked to the contemporary initiative of integrating human rights education into schools. This quote from the study exhibits the students’ connection to the history of the Holocaust and the effect it has on their day-to-day lives. Their surveys showed these students are open to experiencing sites of Holocaust memory. However, this survey was explicitly focused on learning about the history of the Holocaust and its relation to human rights education. The participants are asked to discuss sites of Holocaust memorials only within their capacity to be an educational tool. Having students overwhelmingly say they understand sites of Holocaust memory to be powerful education tools supports the findings of the study and by extension the existence of the EU. However, this is a very one-sided evaluation. These youths may understand that the memorial is a way of disseminating an understanding of the Holocaust, but that doesn’t mean they have a positive relationship. For example, the question “Is learning mathematics important?” could solicit different answers than “Do you enjoy mathematics?” While a student may understand why proficiency in math is important, that does not mean they enjoy mathematics. The survey did not examine how students relate to these sites as modern members of their local and national communities, and this relationship greatly affects the power of museums and memorials as learning tools.

5.2.1: The Participants

The students who are referenced throughout this section are discussing nuanced topics in English, which for many is their second or third language. Of
the participants, the German classroom which participated in the study is located within the city of Berlin. Eighteen students completed the survey after visiting local sites of Holocaust memory. The two Polish classrooms which participated are located in Warsaw, and a total of thirty Polish students completed the survey. Overall the responses from Germany were more in depth, and the Polish responses demonstrate a lower mastery of the English language. Students were also told they could skip any question they were uncomfortable answering, and German students on the whole answered more questions on the survey than Polish students. Whether this was a language issue or a purposeful omission cannot be said for sure. Imagine if language was not a hindrance and these students were able to speak freely the dialogue that could develop. However, within the constraints of this study the students’ responses, even with the language challenge, were bold and telling. Responses were analyzed in terms of tone towards certain key questions.

5.2.2: Questions One Through Three

Overall, at the most basic level, a larger percentage of German student participants indicated that they like learning about history overall, while Poland is an almost fifty-fifty split.\textsuperscript{181} In terms of Holocaust memory, ninety-four percent of German students stated that they think learning about the Holocaust is important, while seventy percent of Polish students answered in the positive. This is a higher percentile than the percentile of students who were interested in history overall, and many Polish and German participants said they were interested in learning

\textsuperscript{181} See Appendix B for visual representation of data.
about the Holocaust because of its connection to their family and community. When asked whether they appreciate going to museums and memorials, seventy percent of Polish participants responded that they do appreciate the experience of going to museums and memorials, while only forty-four percent of German participants stated that they appreciate the experience of going to museums and memorials. These three questions begin to expose the preferences and experiences students bring to the survey. Overall, a higher percentage of German participants liked learning about history, and the vast majority find learning about the Holocaust important. Polish students in contrast overall were less interested in learning about broad history but did respond positively to learning about Holocaust history specifically. In terms of museums and memorials, even though Polish students indicated lower interest in learning about history and Holocaust history than German students, Polish students reported at a higher percentile (seventy-seven percent) than German students (forty-four percent) that they appreciate trips to museums and memorials. From this data it would appear that while German student participants reported a stronger relationship to learning about the past, Polish student participants reported a greater interest in the institutional side.

When asked about the frequency with which they discuss the Holocaust it was a very mixed response across the board. While German participants were split thirty-three percent “we speak often”, forty-four percent (we do not speak often), and eleven percent (we speak sometimes), Polish participants reported a three way tie. It seems that while students seem to be in the same classroom
environments, what they believe to be often and rarely is subjective and a personal distinction. While one student from Poland responded “we talk nonstop” the other responded “never, maybe at school.” Polish students tended to answer this question to extremes or middle-of-the-road, pushing the ends of the spectrum while German responses hovered just above and below neutral.

A somewhat confusing response showed up repeatedly in the answers from Polish student participants. Twenty percent of Polish participants reported they had never been to or visited a Holocaust museum. With regard to their fellow students’ responses, and their own responses, it seems hard to believe that these students have not visited a site of Holocaust memory. No German student participant reported they had never been to a site of Holocaust memory. Students were not directly asked if they had ever visited a Holocaust museum or memorial meaning these students chose to include this in their responses without being prompted, primarily in response to what they found most effective about Holocaust museums and memorials.

5.2.3: Questions Seven, Eight, and Eleven

The two most probing questions on the survey involved asking the students about their perception of the community-memorial relationship in their communities. When asked if Holocaust museums and memorials were a positive addition to their communities, seventy-eight percent of German student participants responded that they were a positive addition, and they did so quite

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strongly. The remaining twenty-two percent was split between “neutral” and “no response.” Polish students responded somewhat differently, with thirty-seven percent choosing to leave the question blank or write “no opinion.” Of the remaining participants, thirty percent felt they were a positive element of the community, twenty percent felt they were a negative addition to the community, and thirteen percent felt they were neither good nor bad. This is a definite discrepancy that speaks to how these students relate to the Holocaust museums and memorials within their communities. Polish participants overwhelmingly appreciated visits to museums and memorials, but there is something leading twenty percent of the Polish students who participated in this study to feel that Holocaust museums and memorials are negatively affecting their communities. They were asked to consider this question within their own community of Warsaw, and to think about other communities in Poland. In contrast, German students had a lower appreciation of museums and memorials over all, but when it came to addressing Holocaust museums and memorials in their communities they overwhelmingly feel they are a positive addition.

When asked “How do you think your community would be different if these sites were never there? How would it change?” not one student from Germany said their community would change for the better if the Holocaust museums and memorials were not there. Fifty-six percent of German participants felt that it would be detrimental if these museums and memorials did not exist, and this was primarily because they were adamant these sites needed to exist for future generations to witness. One student wrote “I think when we don’t have
those museums our children and grandchildren wouldn’t known how horrible it was some years ago.”\textsuperscript{183} The importance of Holocaust memory has been engrained into these students. One student simply wrote “I can’t imagine a life without this sites.”\textsuperscript{184} However, no student wrote that the absence of Holocaust museums and memorials would affect the local community. The lack of connection between the museum and community in the minds of these students could be a symptom of the international nature of the sites. Many students alluded to not only a German audience for these sites, but an international one. Of Polish participants, it is important to note that sixty percent of the students either wrote “no opinion” or left the question blank. Once again it cannot be discerned whether the students who chose to omit this question did so because of language difficulties, because they ran out of time, because they were uncomfortable, etc. Of the forty percent who did respond to the question thirty percent either felt there would be no change or that any change that occurred would be neither good nor bad. The last ten percent responded that the community would be changed in a positive way if these sites were never there. One student wrote “Better of course we should think about present and future.”\textsuperscript{185} This same student, when asked what are the benefits and draw-backs of having a Holocaust memorial in your community, wrote “Good to know what happened. Bad course so many people from Israel come to see it!” This student expresses not only a frustration with constantly looking back, but with the prevalence of international tourism. This is a challenge of an international group that has become highly involved in the site.

\textsuperscript{183} Participant G12, “Community and The Site of Memory,” Fall 2013.
\textsuperscript{184} Participant G1, “Community and The Site of Memory,” Fall 2013.
\textsuperscript{185} Participant P8, “Community and The Site of Memory,” Fall 2013.
Like the Auschwitz nuns, these students have directed their frustrations towards the foreign audience. The students are contesting the influence certain countries and international groups have had over the direction of the Auschwitz-Birkenau state museum. About ten percent of Polish students made a comment about the internationalization of Holocaust museums and memorials in Poland. Overall these internationally-oriented comments were of frustration.

It cannot be ignored that antisemitism does exist today around the world. Antisemitic violence and hate speech does occur in Germany and Poland, such as the 2007 vandalism of almost one hundred graves at one of Poland’s largest Jewish cemeteries with Nazi graffiti and the statement “Jews Out.” A study conducted by the United States Government on the state of antisemitism in 2007, showed it is still prevalent across Europe. When asked whether “Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust,” fifty-eight percent of Poles and forty five percent of Germans surveyed responded “probably true.” These statistics are of Germans and Poles overall, not specifically youths. It cannot be assumed that these students have a negative attitude towards specifically Jewish groups. However, it is clear about ten percent of the participants in this study do harbor negative feelings towards international visitors.

There is currently the expectation that this generation of German youths will be able to put the past behind it. In 2004 Wilhem Heitmeyer of Bielefeld University conducted a poll which concluded almost seventy percent of Germans

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“are irritated at still being held responsible today for the Holocaust.”

Wolfgang Thierse, the vice president of Bundestag, stated "It is a surprising figure at first. But when you think about the thought process behind it, it is understandable … The people alive now are not the perpetrators." However the results of this survey display that youths in particular hold a much different opinion. As historian Michael Jeismann explains "German society as a whole has adopted the need for remembrance." While these students may be frustrated with the labels and attention, they overwhelmingly believe these sites are important and have a positive impact on their community. This goes strictly against the idea of moving on and relegating Holocaust memory to the past. Many students seemed to almost fear the idea of what would happen if Holocaust museums and memorials didn’t exist. They express a strong belief that it is a part of their responsibilities as citizens of Germany to maintain the memory of the Holocaust so it will never occur again.

5.3: Interpreting Results

Every single participant, German and Polish, made a statement at least once about the importance of people knowing what happened. While they may find history “boring” or feel these museums and memorials are not a positive addition to their communities, all of these students recognize the need to preserve Holocaust memory. Overall German students related positively to the history of

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189 Ibid, 28.
190 Ibid, 28.
the Holocaust and the museums and memorials associated with its memory at a higher rate than Polish students. However, Polish students expressed a level of frustration or apathy that was not present within the responses of the German students. If Polish students feel learning about the Holocaust is important and overall believe that sites of Holocaust memory are not negatively affecting their communities, then there must be another force affecting how these students view the legacy of the Holocaust. Looking at how these sites and communities have developed since liberation, the process of internationalization differs greatly within these two countries. It is arguable then that what they resent is the international attention focused on these sites and by extension their communities. Coupled with the implication that they are disrespecting the past by trying to develop as a community, international focus in the past twenty years has seriously affected how these communities function. In Germany and Poland the respect for the past and historical knowledge is present. These students seem to be very much aware of how the Holocaust has shaped the history and future of their countries.

What is causing these discrepancies between German and Polish responses is the differing history of these two countries. Even comparing Oranienburg and Oświęcim which were under Soviet control through most of the development of Sachsenhausen and Auschwitz respectively, these sites have been addressed by the international community in drastically different ways over the course of the last three decades. Oranienburg has been able to retain its identity as a town while simultaneously integrating Holocaust memory, the major difference being it was able to undergo this process without intense western interaction. When you
conduct an internet search of Oranieburg, the town’s website is on the first page of results. This is not the case for Oświęcim. It took finding a news story about Auschwitz that linked to a local newspaper that in turn linked to the town’s website to get to the official website of Oświęcim. In international memory, many of Poland’s cities are first sites of Holocaust memory and second towns in which people live. This breeds resentment and a certain level of distance between students and the museums and memorials that interact with the international community.

The students’ responses highlight the need to bring students into the discussion of what is affecting community-memorial relationships across Europe. These students have opinions and strong feelings about the history and memorialization of the Holocaust, and they need to be treated as valid by the international community, which has affected their communities so much already. By validating their thoughts and contributions to the discussion the percentiles are going to change. When students are allowed agency and are allowed the chance to create real change in their communities, the positive percentiles are going to climb. When students are given the ability to have a certain level of influence in these sites, then their investment in these sites will grow.
Chapter Six: Afterward

Millions of visitors walk past Bruno each year as she sits by the entrance of the Auschwitz-Birkenau state museum. They come from all over the world to visit the ultimate symbol of senseless genocide. I believe that museums are a unique space where history can be broken down to its most fundamental level: people and their experiences. These personal moments are the most powerful tool museums have because people connect these experiences with their own personal memories, making the past relevant. Museums have the ability to put forth certain narratives and supply people with the resources they need to make history attainable. No other place in our society allows us the same opportunity - a safe space to learn about the past while learning about ourselves. For no event is this truer than for the Holocaust. Holocaust survivors have become the concrete link to the past that has kept the Holocaust from fading, but this may be the last generation who will ever meet a Holocaust survivor. Museums now face the task of finding new ways for visitors, specifically students, to make the past concrete and personal.

The history of internationalization of these sites of memory and the financing of the memorials has effected how these museums interact with their local communities. Conflicts between these towns, down to basic building ordinances are connected to international interaction. International involvement as the camp developed into a museum deepened the divide between camp and community. Within the last decade the forceful push to make Holocaust memory temporal and relevant has acted like a catalyst only agitating the situation as the
museum puts preservation before community. This divide has created a series of repercussions that have yet to be fully explored. The narrative of Holocaust memory is very much rooted in the physical site of Auschwitz, and right now the museum is not fully grounded in the community. The narrative of the Auschwitz site has taken on an increasingly international spin, which is not a negative shift in memory, but can be ascribed as a symptom of this rift between community and site. Memory is not set in stone and is constantly in flux and influenced by the contemporary context in which it is situated, and Holocaust memory is no exception. This rift must heal so that this new generation, who will continue to shape the relationship between museum and community and ultimately Holocaust memory, will not inherit such a strained relationship with the museum. Museums and memorials need to once again rejoin the local community and create a balanced memory landscape so that memory is not hindered by politics and the community is not suffocated by the atrocities of the past.

It is my hope that this undergraduate thesis proves that students are invested in preserving the memory of the Holocaust through sites of memory. While German students express the burden of agency and responsibility for Holocaust sites of memory, Polish students do not have the same national connection to sites located within Poland. The greater internationalization of Auschwitz has made it an international site of memory, removing it further from the Polish community. The Polish responses indicate that the students feel less of a need to take responsibility for the site because it is not explicitly Polish. The German students see it as their duty as Germans to preserve the memory of the
Holocaust, but it is their responsibility as a local community member to support the preservation of sites of memory. Museums and memorials reach out to student audiences, and they are important to the future of these museums and memorials. Yet their voice is not being heard within the context of how the Holocaust should be memorialized. While students are a target audience of many museum programs, they rarely are involved in the creation of these programs. Students should be built into the process of designing new programs and informing how museum narratives are re-written in the years to come. By including young people and making their voices heard in a fundamentally new way they are no longer just a target audience, but a part of the museum community. The museum’s work would be enriched by young people, and the young people would connect and come to understand the past in a completely new way. In the case of Poland, the students have a deep academic and personal understanding of the Holocaust and how it has affected their communities. Through programs like the one I am proposing museums and memorials can become a support system for helping students find their voice within Holocaust and genocide memory. It would be an excursion into uncharted waters in the field of museum education.

This research project, the discussions, the surveys, and the relationships that will come of it will hopefully set the stage for a much larger discussion about how to bring students into the global sphere. These students already have a unique relationship to the history of the Holocaust, but it is my hope that we take that powerful knowledge and work together to join the global dialogue about how Holocaust memory continues to be relevant because genocide is still happening.


Informational brochure for the Working Conference: Memorials and Museums on the Heritage of the Nazi Past and the Holocaust in the United States and Germany: Similarities and Differences.


Nesse (Galperin) Godin, conversation with author, July 2011.


Appendix A: Study Worksheet

Community and The Site of Memory

Instructions: Please answer the questions below to the best of your ability. The goal of this exercise is to discuss, in English, a site of memory located within your community.

1. Do you like learning about History? If so what do you like most about History class, and if not what is your least favorite thing about learning about History?

2. Do you find learning about the Holocaust interesting? Explain.

3. Do you like going to Museums and Memorials? Do you like visiting Sachsenhausen / Auschwitz?

4. How often do you talk about Sachsenhausen / Auschwitz?

5. Do you and your family talk about Sachsenhausen / Auschwitz?

6. What do you feel Sachsenhausen / Auschwitz is a positive member of your community?
7. What do you not like about having Sachsenhausen / Auschwitz in your community?

8. How do you feel after you visit Sachsenhausen / Auschwitz?

9. How do you think your community would be different if Sachsenhausen / Auschwitz was never there? How would it change?

10. Would you rather the Sachsenhausen / Auschwitz was not present within your community?
Appendix B: Graph Representing The Responses of German and Polish Youths to Survey Questions 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, and 11