

FROM RUIN TO RECONCILIATION

Preserved Churches as Living Artefacts of Collective Memory in Berlin

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Abstract

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This thesis examines the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church and the Chapel of Reconciliation, two churches in Berlin that were destroyed in the 20th-century global conflicts, the Second World War and the Cold War respectively. After remaining divided for several decades following the war, the city finally reunified in 1990. Today, the city stands as the ultimate urban palimpsest, comprising multiple layers of history and marked by both physical and historical voids. Using these case examples, the thesis investigates different preservation strategies adopted to revive these two post-conflict churches in Berlin. Further, it extracts from preservation strategies, heritage studies, and memory studies, positioning these tangible cultural heritages as living artefacts that are not only visually distinct but deeply embedded in the cultural memory of people, acting as constant reminders of loss and resilience. By highlighting the difference in preservation practices

between the two churches and evaluating them in relation to the current urban fabric that surrounds them, this thesis contributes to the disciplines of conservation, memory, and cultural heritage. It explores the basis of the determination of various strategies to be adapted by these specific examples and further investigates how different perspectives and interpretations on heritage and preservation shape conservation practices, both in immediate post-conflict responses and in later reinterpretations.

Key Words: Conservation | Collective Memory | Post-Conflict Monuments | Heritage | Memorials

For the people who believed in me,

When I didn't believe in myself.

For my Parents

&

For my Grandparents

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The destruction of World War II and the Cold War rift thereafter deeply reshaped urban and cultural landscapes around the world. After 1945, the tension between nations to be the superpowers post the war led to dividing the world into two parts. This division profoundly affected Germany, resulting in the establishment of four occupation zones, with Berlin itself further partitioned into four zones between the Soviet Union and the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. As the city was rebuilt in different stages, first after the war ended in 1945 and later after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. It faced critical decisions about whether to preserve ruins, restore old forms, or create a completely new urban identity. Among the surviving symbols of the past were landmarks such as the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church and the Chapel of Reconciliation. These sites came to serve as material anchors for collective memory, embodying trauma, loss, sacrifice, and resilience.



*Figure 1. The Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church © Villum Foundation (Left).
Chapel of Reconciliation © Heritage for People (Right)*

1.1 Overview/ Background

These churches, which were built within a few years of each other in the late 19th century, have long served as important landmarks in Berlin. Their destruction in the 20th century and subsequent renewal have significantly impacted their role, reshaping them as monuments that hold and restructure collective memory about the horrific global conflicts that devastated Berlin. As explained by Kevin Lynch, ‘the image of the city that we hold in our minds is organized with 5 key elements: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks.’¹ Among these, landmarks are physical reference points, places, or structures that serve as the visual anchors within the city. These points help people orient themselves and can vary in scale, depending on context.² A landmark may be a small, locally recognized feature within a neighborhood or a prominent monument visible across the city. Both churches served as prominent landmarks, visible from a distance, and were a part of everyday life. A monument is defined as “a significant structure, statue, or place that holds special cultural or historical importance for specific communities.”³ Monuments can be further categorized as “intentional monuments” and “unintentional monuments” according to historian Alois Riegl.⁴ Intentional monuments are described as spaces or structures created to commemorate; their makers intended such monuments to serve so that later generations would specifically recall or remember a person or event in the past. For

¹ Book Review: *The Image Of The City By Kevin Lynch*, Articles, August 30, 2022, <https://urbandesignlab.in/the-image-of-the-city-by-kevin-lynch/>.

² Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, Publication of the Joint Center for Urban Studies (M.I.T. Press, 1960).

³ “Monument | Architecture | Research Starters | EBSCO Research,” EBSCO, accessed March 13, 2026, <https://www.ebsco.com>.

⁴ Alois Riegl, “The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin,” trans. Kurt W. Forster and Diane Ghirardo, *Oppositions*, 1982 1903.

example, the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church was originally built and named to recall Kaiser Wilhelm I (1797-1888); it was an "intentional monument" to Kaiser Wilhelm I. In contrast, "unintentional monuments" were not intended by their makers to be monuments (or memorials); Riegl says it is later generations that see them as recalling a person, event, place, or other aspect of the past. In other words, they have become monuments "unintentionally," as their makers did not intend them as monuments. For example, the remains of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church can be seen as an Unintentional monument to the losses, destruction, and trauma of World War II. Unintentional monuments are structures that gain value over time because they are records of history or past cultures. Unintentional monuments are sometimes called "historical monuments" for this reason.⁵

Constructed around the same time, the Reconciliation Church (1894) and the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church (1895) are both sites that were shaped by traumatic events. The Reconciliation Church was demolished during the Cold War. The Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church was mostly destroyed during the air raid of World War II; only the damaged tower remains. The conserved buildings each, in their own ways, stand still in time, one as a visible scar, whereas the other is concealed within the new chapel. These sites act as constant reminders of the traumatic past. These landmarks, originally built as intentional monuments, were later destroyed in two separate historical events. After this rupture, they came to be seen as unintentional monuments, before once again being reframed as

⁵ Riegl, "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin."

intentional monuments through their preservation and reinterpretation. What ties these together are the urban and historical contexts, the similar building typology, and the dates of original construction. At the same time, they are different: Kaiser Wilhelm retains the ruin of the former church even as a new church was constructed around it; the site of Reconciliation includes remains (foundations, bells, other artefacts) of the lost church, as well as a new building constructed of material that includes debris from the destroyed building. Often remembered differently, one might argue that although the sites are both located in Berlin, they have very different meanings. However, as a pair, they allow investigation of the history of each building, varying conservation practices used at each site, including the ideas that drove the conservation methods used, as well as their presence has influenced the development of the surrounding area. They have changed the roles the buildings play in the city.

Conservation is often defined as “the action taken to prevent and manage change dynamically,” aimed at prolonging the life of our natural and cultural heritage.⁶ Similarly, in the United States, the National Park Service defines historic preservation as “a conversation with our past about our future.”⁷ Conservation or preservation offers opportunities to ask, “What is important in our history?” and “What parts of our past can we preserve for the future?” Through historic preservation, one may look at history in different ways, ask different questions of the past, and learn new things about our history

⁶ Bernard Feilden, *Conservation of Historic Buildings*, 3rd ed. (Routledge, 2007), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780080502915>.

⁷ U.S. National Park Service, “What Is Historic Preservation?,” Historic Preservation, National Park Service, accessed March 22, 2026, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservation/what-is-historic-preservation.htm>.

and ourselves. According to NPS, “Historic preservation is an important way for us to transmit our understanding of the past to future generations.”⁸ While conservation practices vary globally and are perceived differently around the world, conserving the built environment is also viewed differently. Some cultures value preserving the tangible form in time, whereas some cultures value keeping the traditional techniques alive by building and rebuilding. As this thesis presents the histories and the preservation strategies undertaken at the sites of these two churches in Berlin, it will be possible to develop an understanding of important aspects about the original intent of these buildings, the horrors their destruction recalls, and what narratives they deliver now.

This thesis delves into the intricate relationships between the conservation of ruins and the memories of trauma evoked in these two sites, which now serve multiple roles, not solely as churches, but also as landmarks, monuments, memorials, and tourist destinations. This thesis specifically investigates how these monuments have been perceived and interpreted, both in immediate post-conflict responses and in later reinterpretations. It considers them not only in terms of preservation and historical significance but also as dynamic artifacts shaping historical narratives (both built and oral). The thesis focuses on the different conservation strategies undertaken at these sites in order to understand how these monuments/memorials influence people's sense of memory and mold their perceptions, and how they reflect historical, social, political, and cultural dynamics.

⁸ “Preservation Terminology (U.S. National Park Service),” accessed December 5, 2025, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/sec-stds-pres-terminology.htm>; U.S. National Park Service, “What Is Historic Preservation?”

1.2 Research Aim

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the effects of the Second World War and the Cold War on architecture and associated memory, exploring different preservation strategies to retain and rebuild selected buildings as tangible connections to the past. This thesis focuses on two churches in Berlin as case examples to study the implications, both tangible and intangible, leading to generational trauma and sudden changes in dynamics locally and globally. Either church might be studied individually, but considered as a pair, they offer a wider range of actions, issues, and ideas that can be developed through a comparative analysis.

1.3 Research Question

In what ways do ongoing preservation choices made in rebuilding the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church and the Reconciliation Church in Berlin influence how people remember and interpret the past, and how do these choices cause those interpretations to shift over time?

1.4 Objectives

- To understand the intersection of heritage, preservation, and memory in an urban setting, like Berlin.
- To recognize the impact of building preservation on the memory and changing perceptions people have of past events.
- To examine how preservation functions as a tool for sustaining collective memory and fostering resilience in a post-conflict urban context, such as Berlin

1.5 Methodology

The approaches taken during this research included:

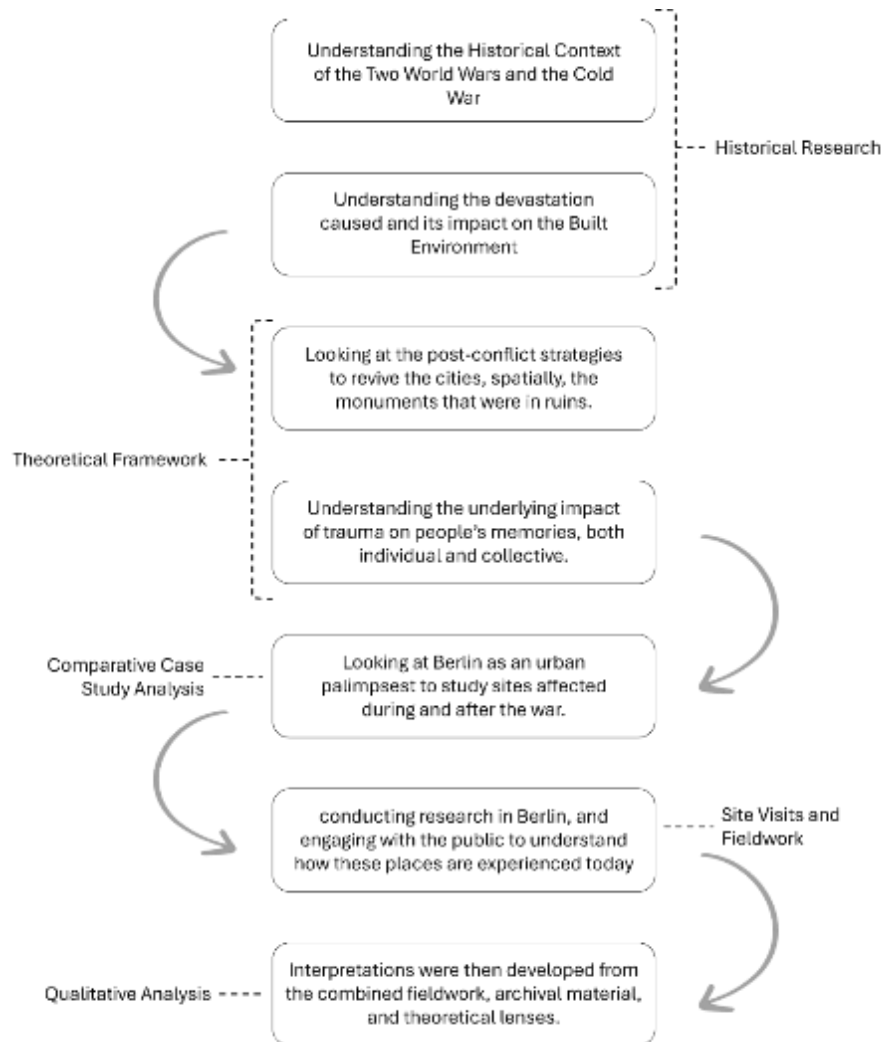


Figure 2. Methodology Chart ©Author

- Historical/Archival Research

Historical and Archival research facilitated the formation of the foundation of this thesis. I referred to historical documents, photographs, and institutional archives to understand how the two churches were represented and transformed over time. This method allowed

me to track the shifts in preservation thoughts, public perceptions, and interpretations, situating each site in the larger urban fabric.

- Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative analysis in this thesis is used to interpret textual, spatial, and visual material through a critical, interpretive lens. For this, it required an analysis of conservation documents, memorial narratives, and public discourse surrounding the site.

- Theoretical Application (Memory Studies, Preservation and Heritage Studies)

Theoretical frameworks from memory studies, trauma theory, and heritage studies have been integrated in this thesis to better understand the material and symbolic dimensions of both sites. Concepts like collective memory, layered temporality, and authenticity guided the analysis, helping in connecting physical conditions with broader cultural narratives.

- Comparative Case Study Analysis

A comparative case study approach enabled a deeper understanding of different approaches towards preservation and differing public responses. This method highlighted how different preservation decisions can shape collective memory in distinct ways, even within one city.

- Site Visits and Fieldwork in Berlin

The research for this thesis was done on-site, and it played a crucial role in grounding the work in direct observations. Visiting the sites allowed me to document spatial qualities,

material traces, and the context through photography and field notes. Experiencing the sites firsthand enhanced the quality of understanding and further provided insights into the atmosphere, scale, and visitor behavior, which I believe would not have been possible without being there.

1.6 Thesis Structure

This thesis examines how architecture, memory, and preservation intersect with one another in Berlin by tracing how two church sites, the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church and the Chapel of Reconciliation, have been preserved, reinterpreted, and integrated into the urban landscape. Examining preservation theory, the recent history of Berlin and of the two churches and conducting visual documentation and analysis of the buildings and their context, the thesis investigates how preservation practices shape what is remembered and how collective memory is carried forward.

The thesis follows a narrative structure, mirroring the experiential and evolving nature of memory in Berlin's architecture.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the central questions guiding the thesis: In what ways do preservation choices relating to rebuilding of these two churches (The Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church and The Reconciliation Church) influence how historical events related to the buildings are remembered and interpreted, and how those interpretations shift over time? This chapter summarizes the significance of studying post-conflict ruins, particularly in Berlin, and situates the two church sites within broader debates on heritage, trauma, and

collective memory. The chapter also presents the methodological approach and the conceptual foundations that shape the study, establishing the groundwork for the theoretical and analytical chapters that follow.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework: Historic Conservation & Preservation

This chapter lays the foundation of key ideas in conservation theory, focusing on meanings, preservation charters, authenticity, integrity, and the ethics of preserving heritage, including damaged or incomplete structures. Drawing on foundational texts such as the Venice Charter and the Riga Document, it explores how preservation practices have evolved and respond to trauma, rupture, and historical complexity. The chapter also introduces art historian Aloïs Riegl's concepts of intentional and unintentional monuments, which guide the document's interpretation of how ruins acquire meaning over time and how preservation decisions are attempts to intentionally shape public memory.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework: Memory and Trauma

Building on the previous section, this chapter turns to memory studies and trauma theory to understand how individuals and societies process conflict and how built environments become containers of collective experience and memory. It discusses the dynamics of individual and collective memory, generational shifts in remembrance, and the role of physical and symbolic sites in mediating trauma. Concepts such as "layered temporality" and "interpretive frameworks" introduced here help form the theoretical basis for analyzing the two case studies.

Chapter 4: Site Histories

This chapter traces the historical trajectories of the Reconciliation Church and the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, situating each within the political, social, and urban transformations of Berlin. It addresses the events that led to their destruction, the debates surrounding their preservation and the strategies adopted, and the evolving meanings attributed to them across different periods. By presenting these histories side by side, the chapter focuses on both the parallels and differences that make these sites compelling cases for the study of historic preservation.

Chapter 5: Layers of Memory: A Photographic Record

This chapter presents photographic documentation of both sites (from archives and site visits), using visual representation as a method to read material traces, spatial conditions, and layers of intervention. The images serve not only as records but also as a means to understand the sites and their contexts.

Chapter 6: Analysis: Interpreting Memory in Architecture

The analysis chapter draws together the theoretical frameworks and site observations. It analyzes how each church functions as a vessel of memory within Berlin's urban landscape, while examining how architectural remnants, conservation choices, and surrounding urban development shape public interpretation and engagement. The analysis further considers the shifting meanings of these sites across generations. Through this comparative reading, the chapter reveals how memory is continually negotiated through architecture.

Chapter 7: Conclusion: Drawing the Threads Together

The final chapter synthesizes the thesis findings, reflecting on how trauma, memory, and preservation intersect in post-conflict heritage sites. It revisits the central question and highlights the broader implications for conservation practice and memory studies. It also considers how political narratives and the tensions between commemoration, tourism, and urban change influence the interpretation of historical sites. The chapter also outlines the scope of potential future research, including the development of a global framework for understanding trauma and collective memory in preserved ruins, monuments, and memorials, and the ethical challenges that arise as these sites evolve in changing urban and cultural contexts.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework- Historic Conservation & Preservation

Monuments, as defined in the previous chapter, “are significant structures, statues, or places that hold special cultural or historic importance for specific communities.”

Monuments and historic buildings sit within the broader categories of heritage, cultural property, and cultural heritage- fields that have been constantly evolving to incorporate various cultural aspects through conferences and charters. This chapter establishes the theoretical foundations that shape contemporary understandings of historic conservation and preservation, tracing how ideas about conservation and preservation have developed and how they continue to influence the ways we understand and care for the material past. To ground these concepts, the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church and the Chapel of Reconciliation are woven into this discussion, not as case studies to be analyzed in full, but as touchpoints that help illustrate how preservation philosophies have shifted over time. It is done by situating these sites within the broader timeline of international charters and heritage discussions.

2.1 Understanding General Terms- used in the field of Preservation

The general definition of heritage is “what we have inherited from the past, to value and enjoy in the present, and to preserve and pass on to future generations.”⁹ The 1964 Venice Charter addressed cultural heritage primarily as “monuments and sites”. This evolved to

⁹ “What Is Heritage?,” The Heritage Council, accessed June 12, 2025, <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/about/what-is-heritage>.

include “cultural landscapes” in the 1982 Florence Charter. The field of heritage and preservation has since broadened to include intangible heritage, cultural routes, indigenous knowledge, historic urban landscapes, and a world rural landscapes initiatives.¹⁰ For example the 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity broadened how heritage is understood by emphasizing the importance of cultural context and different forms of authenticity.¹¹ A few years later, the 2000 Riga Charter added to this by addressing how reconstruction can help maintain cultural continuity, especially after conflict.¹²

Legal scholar John Henry Merryman describes Cultural Property as ‘objects of artistic, archeological, ethnological, and historical interest.’¹³ Cultural heritage, as defined by UNESCO, is “artefacts, monuments, a group of buildings and sites, museums that have a diversity of values including symbolic, historic, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological, scientific and social significance. It includes tangible heritage (movable, immobile, and underwater), and intangible cultural heritage (ICH) embedded into cultural and natural heritage artefacts, sites, or monuments.”¹⁴

UNESCO defines monuments as “architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings

¹⁰ Cari Goetcheus and Nora Mitchell, “The Venice Charter and Cultural Landscapes: Evolution of Heritage Concepts and Conservation Over Time,” *Change Over Time* 4, no. 2 (2014): 338–57.

¹¹ Jean-Louis Luxen, *The Nara Document: Its Achievement and Its Limits*, 2019.

¹² Herb Stovel, “Riga Charter on Authenticity and Historical Reconstruction in Relationship to Cultural Heritage,” Riga, Latvia, 2000.

¹³ John Henry Merryman, “Two Ways of Thinking about Cultural Property,” *American Journal of International Law* 80, no. 4 (1986): 831–53, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2202065>.

¹⁴ “Cultural Heritage,” June 22, 2020, <https://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/cultural-heritage>.

and combinations,”¹⁵ thereby encompassing historical buildings. These buildings can further be defined as “structures that are significant for their architectural, archeological, or cultural value.”¹⁶ Both monuments and historical buildings, in some cases, could be considered to possess Outstanding Universal Value from the perspective of history, art, or science.

2.2 Evolution of the Preservation Thought: the journey from restoration to conservation

Humans have always had the desire to preserve historical remains. Although the principles and theories behind historic preservation have been debated for more than a century, the field has evolved and transformed over time, shaped by shifting cultural values and changing understanding of what is worth saving.¹⁷ Heritage Preservation is a term commonly used in the American context, which preservation architect Frank G Matero, defines as “the act of maintaining the physical and cultural integrity of a site while respecting its historical authenticity.”¹⁸ Conservation is a similar term used in a global

¹⁵ UNESCO World Heritage Centre, “Cultural Heritage - Questions and Answers,” UNESCO World Heritage Centre, accessed December 17, 2025, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/faq/224>.

¹⁶ “Historic Building Definition - Architecture Dictionary,” accessed December 17, 2025, <https://www.archdictionary.com/historicbuilding>.

¹⁷ Homaira Fayez, “From ‘Objects’ to ‘Sustainable Development’: The Evolution of Architectural Heritage Conservation in Theory and Practice,” *Buildings* 14, no. 8 (2024): 2566, <https://doi.org/10.3390/buildings14082566>

Vicky Stewart, *The Development of Conservation Policies for Cultural Heritage A Survey of 19th&20th Century Theories.Pdf*, n.d., accessed December 6, 2025, https://www.academia.edu/13281301/The_Development_of_Conservation_Policies_for_Cultural_Heritage_A_Survey_of_19th_and_20th_Century_Theories_pdf

POLITISTICA, “The Historical Evolution of Conservation: From Repair to Timeless Preservation,” Politistica, November 15, 2025, <https://www.politistica.org/post/the-historical-evolution-of-conservation-from-repair-to-timeless-preservation>.

¹⁸ Frank G. Matero, “The Conservation of Immovable Cultural Property: Ethical and Practical Dilemmas,” *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 32, no. 1 (1993): 15–21, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3179648>.

context, as defined by conservation architect Bernard Feilden, is “the action taken to prevent and manage change dynamically,” aimed at prolonging the life of our natural and cultural heritage.¹⁹

In ancient times, long before the modern idea of conservation existed, caring for buildings meant regular repair and maintenance; the purpose was to ensure immediate functionality of the building and aesthetic satisfaction.²⁰ This idea was very different from the one that emerged during the Renaissance, which referred to repair as “improving” or even completing the unfinished work.²¹ Between the late 17th century and early 19th century, during the period known in Europe as the Enlightenment, “there was a desperate need to re-establish a sense of national cultural identity” among the European nations, which later deeply influenced early conservation thought.²² Two of the key developments during the 19th century are the restoration movement led by Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814 – 1879), and the anti-restoration movement led by John Ruskin (1819-1900).

Restoration, as Viollet-le-Duc practiced it, and as defined in the “Historical and Philosophical issues in the conservation of cultural heritage”, is ‘neither to maintain it, nor to repair it, nor to rebuild it; it means to reestablish it in a finished state, which may or may not have existed at a given time.’²³ Often referred to as “in the style of the original”, this approach extended the Renaissance idea of conservation and often resulted in creating a

¹⁹ Feilden, *Conservation of Historic Buildings*.

²⁰ politistica, “The Historical Evolution of Conservation.”

²¹ politistica, “The Historical Evolution of Conservation.”

²² Stewart, *The Development of Conservation Policies for Cultural Heritage A Survey of 19th&20th Century Theories*; Jukka Jokilehto, *A History of Architectural Conservation* (Butterworth-Heinemann, 1999).

²³ Nicholas Price et al., *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage* (Getty Publications, 2016).

false sense of history. In contrast, John Ruskin opposed such “restoration,” instead argued for maintaining, protecting, and conserving built heritage in the state in which a building existed.²⁴ Ruskin argued that proper maintenance would obviate the need for “restoration.” Following Ruskin’s lead, William Morris (1834-1896) and others would go on to found the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the first such preservation organization in the world.

Ideas offered by Viollet-le-Duc and Ruskin were subsequently expanded by the Austrian art historian, Alois Riegl (1858-1905), and Italian architect and engineer Camillo Boito (1836-1914). Riegl discusses the conflicts between the ‘restoration’ and ‘anti-restoration’ movements and their opposing theories of conservation.²⁵ In an effort to rationalize various emerging theories, he develops his own view on restoration and distinguishes between three types of commemorative value in sites from the past (which he called “monuments”): age value, unintentional commemorative value (historical value), and intentional commemorative value.²⁶ He expands on “Intentional commemorative value” as monuments deliberately created to memorialize a person, event, or idea for future generations. Whereas he explains that “unintentional commemorative value” is a value that arises when an unintentional monument is valued as evidence of the past. Riegl further explains that age value comes from the visible signs of time- weathering, patina,

²⁴ Stewart, *The Development of Conservation Policies for Cultural Heritage A Survey of 19th&20th Century Theories*.

²⁵ Stewart, *The Development of Conservation Policies for Cultural Heritage A Survey of 19th&20th Century Theories*.

²⁶ Favez, “From ‘Objects’ to ‘Sustainable Development.’”

and decay.²⁷ This aligns closely with the two sites studied in this thesis, the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church and the Chapel of Reconciliation. It looks at the shift from an intentional monument to an unintentional monument in the case of Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, and how it regains its importance as an intentional monument after preservation efforts. Similarly, the Chapel of Reconciliation is viewed as an intentional monument, built to commemorate those who had lost their lives at the Berlin Wall. Boito's theory recognized that buildings went through change and any historical layers might have value, and that "any intervention is necessarily based on value judgements". Boito requested that professionals question their own ideas and biases while dealing with any historic monument.²⁸

Subsequent to these early ideas and theories, the institutionalization of preservation began with the Athens Charter of 1931. This was promulgated by the First International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, which met in Athens, Greece (1931). The Athens Charter proposed principles for the preservation and restoration of old buildings. This conference was driven by the need for international building conservation standards amid rising destruction and urban development. The Athens Charter marked the beginning of international cooperation on conservation and preservation. It served as an important forerunner to the Venice Charter (1964) and to America's National Historic

²⁷ Riegl, "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin."

²⁸ Stewart, *The Development of Conservation Policies for Cultural Heritage A Survey of 19th&20th Century Theories*.

Preservation Act (1966).²⁹ Both of which align closely with the year of completion of the new buildings in the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church complex (1963).

2.3 Approaches in Preservation Practice

The different approaches undertaken to maintain any historic building can be categorized by the degree of intervention necessary and the techniques used.³⁰ Although definitions may differ, in general terms, seven categories of intervention in historic structures may be identified. These are described from the least to most invasive, below:

Indirect Conservation (prevention of deterioration): This degree of intervention does not involve any direct conservation strategy in relation to the building but controls the external environmental conditions that affect the building, like humidity, atmospheric pollution, and traffic vibrations.³¹ This might simply mean protecting ruins from destruction caused by rain or snow by building a roof-like structure over them.

**Preservation:* This degree of intervention is defined as the process of applying measures necessary to sustain the resources in their existing form. Preservation aims to protect and stabilize the property, without any extensive replacement and new construction.³²

Consolidation (Direct conservation): This degree of intervention consists of physical addition or supportive materials into the existing built form to ensure continued durability

²⁹ Favez, “From ‘Objects’ to ‘Sustainable Development.’”

³⁰ Feilden, *Conservation of Historic Buildings*.

³¹ Feilden, *Conservation of Historic Buildings*.

^{*}Preservation in this case is defined in terms of the degree of intervention; it is different from the general term “historic preservation”, used in the United States for all conservation activities.

³² “Preservation Terminology (U.S. National Park Service).”

and structural integrity.³³ This level of intervention differs from stabilization because it targets only the specific areas requiring treatment and does not provide long-term protection for the structure as a whole.

Restoration: This degree of intervention aims to revive the original material, concept, or legibility of the object. It includes the integration and replacement of decayed and missing parts harmoniously with the whole, while being distinguishable on close inspection, so that it does not falsify archeological and historical evidence.³⁴

Rehabilitation (Adaptive Use): Interchangeably used with Adaptive Use, Rehabilitation is defined as the process of making the property compatible for new use, through repair, alterations, and additions, while preserving the features of historical, cultural, and architectural value.³⁵ This modernization could be with or without adaptive alterations, as the original use is generally the best for the conservation of the fabric, as it means fewer changes.³⁶

Reproduction: Reproduction refers to the act of creating an exact duplicate of a historic structure or artefact.³⁷ While often carried out to replace some missing or decayed parts,

³³ “Divergent Approaches for Managing and Rehabilitating Heritage Properties Degrees of Intervention,” n.d., accessed December 5, 2025, <http://elearn.psgcas.ac.in/nptel/courses/video/124105003/lec11.pdf>.

³⁴ Feilden, *Conservation of Historic Buildings*.

³⁵ “Preservation Terminology (U.S. National Park Service).”

³⁶ Feilden, *Conservation of Historic Buildings*.

³⁷ Founterior, “Reconstructing History: The Controversial Role of Replicas in Heritage Preservation,” *Founterior.Com*, November 10, 2023, <https://founterior.com/reconstructing-history-the-controversial-role-of-replicas-in-heritage-preservation/>.

mostly decorative, to maintain its aesthetic harmony,³⁸ it raises ethical and aesthetic considerations regarding the use of replicas.³⁹

Reconstruction: This degree of intervention, using new materials, is necessitated by disasters such as fire, earthquake, or war. It must be based upon accurate documentation and evidence, never upon conjecture.⁴⁰ Feilden also refers to relocation as reconstruction, further providing an example of the temple complex of Abu Simbel (XIX Dynasty), Egypt, which was moved to prevent its inundation following the construction of the Aswan High Dam.⁴¹ Apart from this, there are many examples of the reconstruction of monuments that have been carried out around the world.

While these seven degrees of interventions come from the European conservation theory, in the United States, the National Park Service follows the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, which recognize only four interventions: Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction.⁴²

2.4 Expanding Ideas in the late 20th c. and Early 21st c.

While the first half of the 20th century saw major conservation movements, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The second half of the 20th century brought about some reforms in the field of heritage conservation. In 1964, the Venice Charter emerged in response to the

³⁸ Feilden, *Conservation of Historic Buildings*.

³⁹ Founterior, "Reconstructing History."

⁴⁰ Feilden, *Conservation of Historic Buildings*.

⁴¹ Feilden, *Conservation of Historic Buildings*.

⁴² "The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties - Technical Preservation Services (U.S. National Park Service)," accessed March 24, 2026, <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/secretary-standards-treatment-historic-properties.htm>.

widespread destruction of cultural landmarks during the Second World War. The charter was influenced by the publication in 1963 of Cesare Brandi (1906-1988), offering a theory of restoration based on the philosophical postulates of phenomenology, linking it to the experience of the reception of art in human consciousness.⁴³ It was in the same year that the new buildings by architect Egon Eiermann were completed in the church complex around the ruined tower of Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church. The Venice Charter was an important shift in restoration philosophy, emphasizing authenticity and the preservation of original materials. However, the authors approached heritage in art-historical terms, treating monuments as isolated architectural objects. Issues of cultural context, vernacular traditions, and non-Western perspectives were not completely addressed. It also laid the groundwork for the subsequent agreements, such as the Nara Document (1994), to broaden the concept of authenticity. Two years later, the adoption of the National Historic Preservation Act (1966) in the United States also marked a significant advance in preservation. It elevated the idea of preservation as both a technical and a cultural practice,⁴⁴ and provided a framework for the development of historic preservation practice across the entire United States.

Shifting the idea of monuments from being just built to being considered as heritage, as defined earlier in the chapter, UNESCO redefined cultural heritage in 1972, as artefacts,

⁴³ Fidel Meraz, *Cesare Brandi (1906 to 1988): His Concept of Restoration and the Dilemma of Architecture*, 2019.

⁴⁴ “National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 - Archeology (U.S. National Park Service),” accessed December 20, 2025, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/archeology/national-historic-preservation-act.htm>.

monuments, a group of buildings and sites, and museums that have a diversity of values. It includes tangible heritage, intangible cultural heritage, and natural heritage.⁴⁵

Tangible Cultural Heritage: Best understood as monuments, town sites, archeological sites, and works of art which carry and transmit the cultural features of a society, like the spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of that society or group.⁴⁶

Intangible Cultural Heritage: Also known as Living Heritage, Intangible Cultural Heritage is inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our children.⁴⁷ As mentioned in ICOMOS's (The International Council on Monuments and Sites) 14th general assembly and scientific symposium (2003), it undertook a more comprehensive approach to cultural heritage, resulting in a better appreciation of intangible heritage as a source of cultural identity. Intangible heritage includes customs and oral traditions, dance, music, poetry, languages, and traditional knowledge, along with skills connected with the material aspects of culture.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ UNESCO, "Cultural Heritage," June 22, 2020, <https://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/cultural-heritage>; "Chronology - UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage," accessed December 17, 2025, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/chronology-00094>.

⁴⁶ "What Is Cultural Heritage?," Whose Culture? The Curation and Management of World Heritage, accessed June 12, 2025, <https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/whoseculture/what-world-heritage>.

⁴⁷ Máiréad Nic Craith et al., "The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage," in *Safeguarding Intangible Heritage*, 1st ed., ed. Natsuko Akagawa and Laurajane Smith (Routledge, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429507137-9>.

⁴⁸ Mounir Bouchenaki, "The Interdependency of the Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage," 2003, 1–5, <http://www.international.icomos.org/victoriafalls2003/papers/2%20-%20Allocution%20Bouchenaki.pdf>.

Natural Heritage: Often regarded as landscapes and ecological systems, natural heritage also comprises features like plants, animals, oceans, water bodies, landforms, and natural landscapes.⁴⁹

Drawing upon the 1972 definition of cultural heritage by UNESCO, the Burra Charter drafted by Australia ICOMOS (1979) emphasizes cultural significance over rigid authenticity, urging that any intervention should “do as much as necessary, as little as possible.”⁵⁰ It addressed “contemporary cultural significance”, attending to the current cultural groups, not just those of the past. Following which, the Florence Charter (1981) focused on “the preservation of historic gardens as living monuments.”⁵¹ Although, the charter addresses gardens as living monuments, it is included to understand the evolution of heritage and the incorporation of different aspects to broaden the field. Similarly, Japan’s Nara Document on Authenticity (1994) expanded the understanding of authenticity to include the broader perspective on cultural diversity and heritage conservation. It emphasized that authenticity cannot be judged by universal material criteria alone, but must reflect the values, traditions, and expressions of the culture from which a site originates.⁵² Another charter that focuses on authenticity is the Riga Charter of 2000. Convened just one year after the completion of the Chapel of Reconciliation, the Riga meeting addressed growing international concerns about how authenticity should be understood in cases of the

⁴⁹ Rodney Harrison, “What Is Heritage?,” in *Understanding the Politics of Heritage* (Manchester University Press, 2010).

⁵⁰ Peter Burman, “A Question of Ethics,” Building Conservation.Com, 1995, https://www.buildingconservation.com/articles/_gsdata/_saved_/ethics/conservation_ethics.htm.

⁵¹ ICOMOS, “Historic Gardens (The Florence Charter),” 1981.

⁵² Luxen, *The Nara Document: Its Achievement and Its Limits*; ICCROM, “Nara Document on Authenticity,” Nara, Japan, 1994.

reconstruction of monuments destroyed in conflicts. It states that in exceptional circumstances, reconstruction may be necessary to recover cultural significance, provided it does not falsify evidence, damage surviving fabric, or rely on conjecture.⁵³

2.5 Authenticity and Material Integrity

Preservation architect Frank G Matero, in the ‘Conservation of Immovable Cultural Property: Ethical and Practical Dilemmas’, mentions that ‘Heritage Preservation is the act of maintaining the physical and cultural integrity of a site while respecting its historical authenticity.’⁵⁴ With its evolving meaning, principles, and norms, international charters, such as the Venice Charter (1964), Burra Charter (1979), Nara Document on Authenticity (1994), and the Riga Charter (2000), have continued to shape the professional discourse on heritage preservation, continually emphasizing authenticity, minimal intervention, integrity, and cultural diversity.⁵⁵

As conservation of outdoor monuments, landscapes, archeological sites, and buildings (immovable cultural property) gained attraction in the late 20th century, it evolved and branched out of the 19th-century restoration theories (like the restoration and anti-restoration theory), and charters such as the Venice Charter (1964) and the Burra Charter (1979) laid the groundwork for modern conservation philosophy. While the Venice Charter

⁵³ Stovel, “Riga Charter on Authenticity and Historical Reconstruction in Relationship to Cultural Heritage.”

⁵⁴ Frank G. Matero, “The Conservation of Immovable Cultural Property: Ethical and Practical Dilemmas,” *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 32, no. 1 (1993): 15–21, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3179648>.

⁵⁵ Mounir Bouchenaki, *The Interdependency of the Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage*, January 1, 2003, https://www.academia.edu/65858694/The_interdependency_of_the_tangible_and_intangible_cultural_heritage.

emphasized material authenticity and minimal intervention,⁵⁶ the Burra Charter shifted the focus toward cultural significance, recognizing that heritage value may reside not only in physical fabric but also in use, associations, and community meaning. It famously urges that interventions should “do as much as necessary, as little as possible.”⁵⁷ This evolution continued with the Nara Document on Authenticity (1994), which challenged the traditional views that authenticity must be material-based; it acknowledged that oral traditions, rituals, customs, and community memory are just as important, and fall under intangible cultural heritage or living cultural heritage.⁵⁸ Similarly, integrity refers to whether a site retains enough of its form, materials, and context to convey its historic significance.

Building on this expanded understanding of the Nara Document, the Riga Charter (2000) addressed the complex issue of reconstruction, particularly in societies emerging from conflict or political upheaval. It emphasized the importance of authenticity while acknowledging that, in certain circumstances, reconstruction may be necessary to recover cultural meaning, as long as it avoids false display of the past and respects surviving evidence.⁵⁹ Extending further in the context of conservation of post-conflict ruins, Matero addresses the broader issues of immobility, context, size, scale, and material. He highlights the debate between restoring structures to a prior state (original state) and preserving them in their ruined form, emphasizing that such decisions involve questions of material and

⁵⁶ ICOMOS, “The Venice Charter,” 1964.

⁵⁷ Australia ICOMOS, “The Burra Charter,” ICOMOS, 1979.

⁵⁸ Heike C. Alberts and Helen D. Hazen, “Maintaining Authenticity and Integrity at Cultural World Heritage Sites,” *Geographical Review* 100, no. 1 (2010): 56–73; Pamela Jerome, *An Introduction to Authenticity in Preservation*, n.d.

⁵⁹ Stovel, “Riga Charter on Authenticity and Historical Reconstruction in Relationship to Cultural Heritage.”

narrative authenticity, historical truth, and the moral responsibility of the conservator.⁶⁰

This particularly becomes important as it is relevant to the present thesis, which focuses on the conservation of post-conflict architectural remains in Berlin and therefore engages directly with the ethical and practical questions.

Similarly, in the book *Transcultural Diplomacy and the Ethics of Heritage Conservation*, the authors present an exciting conversation between international law, ethics, and culture, making an argument that the field of heritage conservation is not purely technical anymore.⁶¹ It expands the discussion to a global context, emphasizing the role of international law and transcultural ethics in heritage conservation. It further explores how organizations such as UNESCO establish global frameworks and standards for protecting cultural property (tangible and intangible), but also notes the importance of grounding these standards in local cultural values, as the meaning of the building, structure, site, or landscape might change on the local level.⁶²

Taken together, these debates highlight that preservation is never neutral- it always involves informative choices that mold how history and events are remembered or forgotten, or made to remember and argue that conservation efforts must grapple with the physical degradation of heritage sites while maintaining reliability to their original form, context, and

⁶⁰ Matero, "The Conservation of Immovable Cultural Property," 1993.

⁶¹ Olimpia Niglio and Eric Yong Joong Lee, eds., *Transcultural Diplomacy and International Law in Heritage Conservation. A Dialogue between Ethics, Law, and Culture* (Springer Nature, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-0309-9>.

⁶² Niglio and Lee, *Transcultural Diplomacy and International Law in Heritage Conservation. A Dialogue between Ethics, Law, and Culture*.

meaning.⁶³ Riegl's distinction between intentional and unintentional monuments becomes particularly relevant here, as post-conflict sites, such as the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church and the Chapel of Reconciliation, often shift between these categories, illustrating that destruction and deliberate conservation choices continually reshape the meanings of such sites.

⁶³ Niglio and Lee, *Transcultural Diplomacy and International Law in Heritage Conservation. A Dialogue between Ethics, Law, and Culture*.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework- Memory and Trauma

While commonly treated as synonyms, the terms memory, remembering, and reminiscing have distinct meanings in sociology, psychology, and memory studies, each describing a particular way in which individuals and groups engage with the past. Memory, largely defined as “the ability to remember things from the past,” involves “making an impression by an experience,” which, later, with retention and re-entry, is recorded into consciousness, eventually resulting in recall and recognition.⁶⁴ Remembering, on the other hand, as philosopher Edward S. Casey, in his book *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, defines, “is regarded as a mental act and is intentional in structure”, meaning that remembering is an intentional act, which then leads to the creation of memories.⁶⁵ He further explains that reminiscing is a social form of memory, that happens in the “company of others.”⁶⁶

Reminiscing highlights that our engagement with the past is sometimes shaped through shared practices and experiences rather than isolated individual recall. Within this framework, commemoration is understood as a collective form of remembering, an intentional act through which communities publicly acknowledge and interpret past events, while giving meaning to them.⁶⁷ Even when those being honored are no longer

⁶⁴ Ralph W. Gerard, “What Is Memory?,” *Scientific American* 189, no. 3 (1953): 118–27.

Ralph Waldo Gerard (1900-1974) was an American neurophysiologist and behavioral scientist.

⁶⁵ Edward S. Casey, *Remembering, Second Edition: A Phenomenological Study* (Indiana University Press, 2000).

⁶⁶ Casey, *Remembering, Second Edition*.

⁶⁷ Casey, *Remembering, Second Edition*.

physically present with us, commemorative rituals allow people to remember together, creating a shared sense of continuity and belonging.⁶⁸ Commemoration, thus, functions as a mechanism for organizing collective memory, transforming past events into shared narratives. Memory, therefore, sometimes extends far beyond the confines of individual minds. It spills outward into the world around us, shaping how we perceive and inhabit our surroundings. Memory, in this way, plays an integral role in shaping the spaces we occupy by infusing them with emotional, cultural, social, and historical significance.⁶⁹

Influenced and mediated by memory, trauma is, as Freud suggests, a wound not to the body but to the mind. It creates a gap in one's experience; a rupture that is not confined by time, self, and the world, and often resurfaces through nightmares and repeated events.⁷⁰

While many forms of trauma are deeply personal and leave no visible mark on the world, certain events, especially those produced by war or political violence, exceed the scale of the individual. When trauma is shared by a community, it often does not remain contained in one's mind; evidence of such traumatic events can be found in traces around the cities. As is evidently visible in Berlin in the form of physical and historical voids.⁷¹ Spaces are not merely physical entities but are deeply intertwined with the experiences, narratives, and

⁶⁸ Casey, *Remembering, Second Edition*.

⁶⁹ Anouk Bélanger, "URBAN SPACE AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY: ANALYSING THE VARIOUS DIMENSIONS OF THE PRODUCTION OF MEMORY," *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, 2025.

⁷⁰ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (The John Hopkins University Press, 1996).

Cathy Caruth (born 1955) is a leading global authority in Trauma Studies, who teaches in the department of literature in English and Comparative Studies at Cornell University

⁷¹ Katharyne Mitchell, "Monuments, Memorials, and the Politics of Memory," *Urban Geography* 24, no. 5 (2003): 442–59, <https://doi.org/10.2747/0272-3638.24.5.442>.

Katharyne Mitchell is a Distinguished Professor of Sociology at UC Santa Cruz whose work examines the intersections of migration, geopolitics, and urban space.

memories of the people who occupy them.⁷² Trauma, however, operates differently. It can disrupt a person's sense of time, place, and self.⁷³ Collectively, it alters ordinary locations into symbolic places of meaning and connection, anchoring personal and collective histories to physical landscapes.⁷⁴ Memory and trauma do not merely attach to spaces being occupied; they actively shape how spaces are perceived, interpreted, and used, individually and collectively.⁷⁵ Yet this shaping may not be uniform. As urban sustainability scholar Cheshmehzangi notes, urban memory is layered, uneven, and deeply dependent on the positionality of those who engage with a place.⁷⁶ The meaning of a site such as the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church differs significantly for someone who lived through the bombings in 1945 compared to someone born in 1995. Likewise, the Chapel of Reconciliation carries a different emotion for families who lost loved ones at the Berlin Wall than it does for a 20-year-old tourist encountering the site for the first time.

3.1 Understanding Memory

French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs describes memory not solely as an individual cognitive function, but as something deeply embedded within social and cultural

⁷² Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (Presses Universitaires de France, 1950; repr., Harper & Row, 1980).

Maurice Halbwachs (1877-19) was a French philosopher and sociologist known for developing the concept of Collective memory.

⁷³ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*.

⁷⁴ Aline Cordonnier et al., "Collective Memory: An Hourglass between the Collective and the Individual," *Memory, Mind & Media* 1 (January 2022): e8, <https://doi.org/10.1017/mem.2022.1>.

⁷⁵ Ali Cheshmehzangi, *Urban Memory in City Transitions: The Significance of Place in Mind* (Springer Nature, 2021).

Ali Cheshmehzangi is a Professor in the School of Architecture, Design and Planning (ADP) at the University of Queensland. His work focuses on climate resilience and sustainable urbanism, and he is the Editor-in-Chief of Springer's Urban Sustainability book series.

⁷⁶ Cheshmehzangi, *Urban Memory in City Transitions*.

frameworks.⁷⁷ He argues that individual recollections are mostly shaped within social contexts, further suggesting that memory is sustained through social frameworks. He emphasizes that we remember events through our participation in social groups and that our personal memories depend on shared reference points, languages, and spatial settings. Although memories are intangible in themselves. Places, rituals, and material environments provide a tangible anchors for recollection.⁷⁸ The built environment, therefore, can serve as a container of collective experiences, allowing memory to be continuously reconstructed through collective interaction.

Building on Halbwachs's argument, memory is further developed as communicative and cultural. Communicative memory refers to everyday, interpersonal forms of remembering-stories, conversations, and shared experiences. It is informal, fluid, and is limited to the span of living generations. Cultural memory, by contrast, is institutionalized through monuments, texts, rituals, and symbolic forms that serve as artefacts to inform future generations of the past.⁷⁹ These tangible aspects, like heritage, monuments, museums, memorials, and ruins, then become powerful bearers of memory. These built forms are found to have multiple layers of trauma, history, and cultural heritage. Monuments and ruins, as French historian Pierre Nora suggests, become "lieux de mémoire"- sites where

⁷⁷ Sarah Gensburger, "Halbwachs' Studies in Collective Memory: A Founding Text for Contemporary 'Memory Studies'?", *Journal of Classical Sociology : JCS* (London, England) 16, no. 4 (2016): 396–413, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468795X16656268>.

Sarah Gensburger (born 1976) is a full research professor in political science, a sociologist of memory, and a historian of the Holocaust. She is one of the former presidents of the Memory Studies Association.

⁷⁸ Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*.

⁷⁹ Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511996306>.

memory becomes crystallized when living remembrance is no longer a possibility, making physical remnants symbolic containers of common remembrance.⁸⁰

Memory may not be only carried in the mind, it may also be reflected in the body's movement through space.⁸¹ In the book "*Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*", Edward S. Casey explains this as body memory, which he defines as "the ways the body remembers through movement, sensation, posture, and habit. It is a form of memory that is enacted rather than recalled."⁸² Then he goes on to place memory, which he defines as "the capacity of places to hold, evoke, and structure memory." Finally, he addresses commemoration.⁸³ In architectural context, memory is embodied and experiential. Casey emphasizes that spaces do not merely serve as containers of memories; they actively shape how remembering occurs. He further draws a distinction between a place and a site, where he says that each place, in the context of memory, is defined by its distinctive dimensions, characteristically providing users with clues, whereas a site has no points of attachment onto which to place memories.⁸⁴ Therefore, through movement, perception, and sensory interaction, individuals may encounter the past within architectural environments- called places. These spaces, therefore, are material anchors.

⁸⁰ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 7–24, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928520>.

⁸¹ Steven Hoelscher and Derek H. Alderman, "Memory and Place: Geographies of a Critical Relationship," *Social & Cultural Geography*, ahead of print, 2004, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1464936042000252769>.

⁸² Casey, *Remembering*, Second Edition.

⁸³ Casey, *Remembering*, Second Edition.

⁸⁴ Casey, *Remembering*, Second Edition.

3.2 Commemoration: Architecture and Conservation

To commemorate is to remember with others.⁸⁵ Commemoration is a collective practice through which groups intentionally engage with the past. It can take both tangible and intangible forms. Tangible forms include monuments, memorials, and artefacts- physical structures or objects that embody or symbolize a society's collective memory.⁸⁶ In contrast, intangible forms of commemoration consist of rituals, processions, symbolic gestures, and ceremonies. These are enacted rather than built, and they reinforce shared values and collective narratives through repeated performance, often associated with specific dates or anniversaries.

Communities remember through bodily repetition of everyday acts and practices such as rituals, festivals, pageants, and civic ceremonies, which become key mechanisms through which societies remember, and remember together.⁸⁷ These collective engagements bring the past into the present, making memory visible, shared, and enacted. The other, more obvious way to remember and commemorate is through the integral relationship between memory and place. Monuments are material forms carried forward from the past, but they do not all originate in the same way. Some are intentionally created to commemorate particular events or figures, while others become monuments later when societies assign them historical, cultural, or symbolic significance (unintentional monuments). In addition,

⁸⁵ Casey, *Remembering*, Second Edition.

⁸⁶ Sarah Lee, "Commemoration in Cultural Memory: Understanding the Significance of Collective Remembrance," May 27, 2025, <https://www.numberanalytics.com/blog/ultimate-guide-commemoration-cultural-memory>.

*Monuments: Defined in the previous chapter, Theoretical framework: Historic Conservation and Preservation

⁸⁷ Hoelscher and Alderman, "Memory and Place."

places where events occurred, such as buildings, ruins, or specific sites, may also be designated as unintentional monuments. These are structures that have directly witnessed or endured traumatic events, inadvertently becoming active containers of memory, holding traces of what happened and shaping how communities continue to remember.

As per Lynch's definition of landmarks, where he states that "landmarks are physical reference points, places, or structures that serve as the visual anchors within the city, these may be a small, locally recognized feature within a neighborhood or a prominent monument visible across the city",⁸⁸ monuments are landmarks. These are places that could be located in the central squares and intersections of cities, places that aid in the establishment of memory by materializing history.⁸⁹ Professor of sociology, Katharyne Mitchell, defines memorials as "ceremonies and built spaces that encourage us to remember some things and to forget others."⁹⁰ Looking at built memorials, they do not merely represent historic events; they strategically choreograph remembrance through spatial sequencing and engagement. Among the many examples of memorial architecture, some of the most powerful are not structures that directly witnessed events themselves, but those designed afterward to commemorate the lives lost (intentional monument), such as the Memorial to the Murdered Jews in Berlin, the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Alabama, or the 9/11 Memorial in New York. They are purpose-built monuments,

⁸⁸ Lynch, *The Image of the City*.

⁸⁹ Mitchell, "Monuments, Memorials, and the Politics of Memory."

⁹⁰ Mitchell, "Monuments, Memorials, and the Politics of Memory."

shaped through deliberate design strategies that guide how the past is encountered and felt.

Adding to this idea, physical memorials are also monuments, objects, or spaces that might or might not have directly witnessed the events they signify. The monuments that have directly witnessed the events may also carry the physical traces of those histories within their material fabric. Ruins, in this case, are structures that embody the past rather than reconstruct it; they function as tangible witnesses of trauma and transformation. Once these structures become recognized as witnesses to the past, the question shifts to how they can be sustained and protected without diminishing the histories they embody.

Conservation practices, therefore, become essential in sustaining the cultural, emotional, and symbolic significance embedded in such places. Through preservation, restoration, and adaptive reuse, these kinds of monuments remain active mediums of remembrance, allowing their histories to continue resonating rather than fading into static artifacts.⁹¹

3.3 Memory, Trauma, and Built Environment- the intersection

Memory plays a crucial role in influencing how traumatic events are encoded, stored, recalled, and recollected. Trauma, however, disrupts this process. Because traumatic experiences often involve a psychic rupture, they exceed one's capacity to fully register in the moment. Therefore, making traumatic memories a collection of fragmented, emotional, and bodily experiences; these are not coherent and chronological narratives.⁹²

⁹¹ Riegl, "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin."

⁹² IATP, *Memory and Trauma* | *Psychotraumatology*, July 1, 2025, <https://iptrauma.org/docs/body-of-knowledge-of-psychotraumatology/memory-and-trauma/>.

As Cathy Caruth, one of the central figures in trauma studies and a scholar of comparative literature, argues, trauma is not confined to the moment of occurrence but is transmitted slowly and often materializes through forms of representation.⁹³ Trauma theory, therefore, provides insights into how these violent histories, which can be understood as events involving large-scale harm, loss, or rupture, could be transmitted and represented spatially.⁹⁴ Such histories may not imprint themselves onto every urban landscape; rather, in certain cities that are shaped by war or political violence, such as Berlin. These traces may become embedded in different ways in the sites, structures, or absences around the cities.⁹⁵

While specific places and segments of spaces are linked to communities and collective activities, the spaces we occupy, traverse, and return to over time also accumulate meaning through repeated engagement.⁹⁶ Space, in turn, becomes an integral part of remembering. The structuration of social space and the position the individual occupies explain the expression of memory. Together, these spatial and social dynamics help determine the content and form of memory.⁹⁷ Architecture, therefore, can become a medium through which societies engage with difficult pasts, but it is not the singular way to do that. Some sites evoke memories of trauma without any architectural intervention, while

⁹³ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*.

⁹⁴ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*.

⁹⁵ Mitchell, "Monuments, Memorials, and the Politics of Memory."

⁹⁶ Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*.

⁹⁷ Gensburger, "Halbwachs' Studies in Collective Memory."

others rely on carefully designed spatial strategies to frame how the past is encountered. Some succeed in creating conditions for reflection and engagement, while others may not.

3.4 Ruins

Ruins are one significant type of traumatic landscape, particularly when they are the remains of sites shaped by violence, conflict, or collective rupture. These ruins serve as sites of testimony, where material remains bear witness to violence and loss, allowing history to remain visible, rather than erased.⁹⁸ Preservation of structures (ruins, religious sites, palaces, forts, etc.) allows these sites to continue as containers of historical memory, and coming generations are able to experience the past in a tangible way, instead of simply freezing these landmarks in time. As Pierre Nora argues, certain monuments and memorials anchor memory in material form, particularly when experience has progressed to the point of beginning to withdraw into history.⁹⁹ The significance of monuments, which are now ruins, comes not just from their creation but from the emotions and stories they continue to evoke.

In post-conflict contexts, some ruins and monuments have also become landmarks, serving both as physical points of orientation and as highly emotional, symbolic fixtures of historical memory and trauma. In this context, the representation of trauma raises ethical concerns. The aestheticization of destruction, through picturesque ruins or stylized memorial forms, risks transforming suffering into beautiful sights. For example, the ruined

⁹⁸ Jenny Edkins, "Trauma and the Memory of Politics," *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* 2 (September 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592704240373>; Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*.

⁹⁹ Nora, "Between Memory and History."

tower of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, what we see on site is way more aesthetic than what was initially left after the bombings in 1945; the uppermost stone layer had to be removed in 1949 because of safety reasons, making the silhouette less rugged and more pleasing.¹⁰⁰ While aestheticization of ruins may not be viewed as problematic in some contexts, in others, it might lead to obscuring evidence or even misrepresentation of the past. For ruins shaped by violence, conservation becomes a way of negotiating the relationship between memory, trauma, and identity. It protects not only physical structures, but also the cultural and emotional stories that make a community.

3.5 Remembering and Forgetting

Places serve as dynamic archives in which remembering and forgetting coexist. The idea of “urban palimpsest” used as a metaphor, describes these urban forms as layered texts, places where traces of the past occupants, destructions, constructions, and reconstructions remain visible beneath the contemporary form.¹⁰¹ As each historical event leaves behind material and symbolic residues, each adding to a layer, it may shape individual and collective memory.

History, as complicated as it is, is not always commemorated through monuments, memorials, and museums; its evidence may also be removed or marginalized. Memory, while often shaped by dominant narratives, plays an integral role in keeping a certain narrative alive. An interplay between destruction and renewal structures the relationship

¹⁰⁰ Martin Germer, “Chapter 15- Memorial, landmark, symbol of peace: The long road of the Memorial Church to today’s place of learning and remembrance,” Unpublished, n.d.

¹⁰¹ Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts : Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford University Press, 2003).

between memory and urban change. Through wars, redevelopment, and modernization, younger generations may create new memory frameworks while forgetting older ones. Evidence of the layers of memory may get lost in the name of redevelopment, as architectural interventions may change or obliterate the remains of past times, losing the evidence that supports older historical narratives.¹⁰² While remembering and forgetting operate as intertwined processes through which societies shape spatial identity, they may also produce tension between continuity and rupture.

Preservation should be the process of maintaining the physical and cultural integrity of monuments.¹⁰³ When applied to visually prominent landmarks, such as the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, preservation efforts increase their mnemonic value, making them from passive remains to active agents of remembrance. In such cases, the interplay between the landmark and preservation practice produces a layered spatial condition, where the physical structure becomes a temporal and ethical marker, linking past with present identities and future acts of remembering. This is most evident in landmarks like the Chapel of Reconciliation, symbolically reconstructed, using the debris from the original church, to reinforce memory of the people who lost their lives at the Berlin Wall, and the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, partially preserved to symbolize both destruction and reconstruction in post-World War II Berlin. In this way, ruins as monuments become powerful bearers of memory, with multiple layers of trauma, history, and cultural heritage.

¹⁰² James Mayo et al., “Reviews: The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments and The See-through Years: Creation and Destruction in Texas Architecture and Real Estate,” *Journal of Architectural Education* (1984-) 50 (September 1996): 68–70, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1425289>.

¹⁰³ Matero, “The Conservation of Immovable Cultural Property,” 1993.

Chapter 4: Site Histories

The destruction of World War II and the subsequent rift (the Cold War) deeply reshaped the urban and cultural landscapes around the world, especially in Germany. The post-war tension between nations, led to the division of Germany into four occupational zones between the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and the Soviet Union, eventually dividing Berlin. The bipolar division emerged subsequently, dividing the city into two parts, East Berlin and West Berlin, and was hardened into place with the building of the Wall. As the city was rebuilt after the war and later after reunification, it faced critical decisions about whether to preserve ruins, restore old built forms, or create completely new urban identities. Among the most important surviving building fragments of this devastating era are landmarks such as the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church and the Reconciliation Church, now the Chapel of Reconciliation. These sites serve as material anchors for collective memory, embodying trauma, loss, sacrifice, resilience, and recovery.

The preservation of war-damaged landmarks was not only a technical and aesthetic challenge but also raised deep ethical questions with the public. Both structures, which were constructed in the mid 1890's, were destroyed during different devastating historical events. The Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church was severely damaged by the 1943 and 1945 bombings during World War II, and the Reconciliation Church was deliberately destroyed during the Cold War.

The choice of these buildings lies in their ability to represent two diverse, yet complementary preservation strategies. Both are religious sites, situated in the same city,

they offer a shared framework that makes comparison meaningful. The monumental scale of these churches and their association with one another in the historical timeline make them especially useful as case studies to help explain the context. The following analyses bring together diverse perspectives on what should be preserved and how it should be done. This raises important ethical and technical questions, which we explore below.

4.1 Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church

Situated at the busy central ‘*Breitscheidplatz*’ in West Berlin, Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church was originally commissioned by Kaiser Wilhelm II (1859-1941) and was built to honor his grandfather, Emperor Wilhelm I (1797-1888).¹⁰⁴ Designed by architect Franz Schwechten, the construction of the church began 2 years after the demise of Emperor Wilhelm I, and took 4 years to complete. The Church’s 371-foot spire made it the tallest building in Berlin at that time. The building remained a prominent Protestant church for about half a century, then, during the Second World War, it was heavily damaged in a bombing attack in 1943. Subsequent air raids in 1945 leveled the building, leaving only the ruined tower standing.¹⁰⁵ After the war ended in May 1945, the site of the church with the surviving tower was in the West Sector. There it stood as a ruin for the next decade and served as a remembrance of the pre-war city as the new city of Berlin was rebuilt around it. After the competition in 1956 and a following public protest, the committee decided that the damaged tower should remain, with the new church building in the complex. The

¹⁰⁴ Cornelius Holtorf, *Destruction and Reconstruction of Cultural Heritage as Future-Making* (2020), 157–72, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-51316-0_10.

¹⁰⁵ J. Elke Ertle, *Walled in Berlin* (Mentobe Press, 2013), <https://walled-in-berlin.com/j-elke-ertle/iconic-kaiser-wilhelm-memorial-church/>.

church's board of trustees commissioned architect Egon Eiermann to design the new building after the 1956 competition, and the new ensemble was completed in 196. Since then, the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church has included the juxtaposition of the new modern buildings with the damaged tower. The church remains a place of worship, with the damaged structure preserved as a memorial to the devastation of war. Today, it stands as a powerful symbol of peace and reconciliation, reminding visitors of the consequences of conflict and the building of a new modern Germany in the ruins of the old.¹⁰⁶

Location	Berlin, Germany
Original Construction Year	1891- 1895
Past Use	Church
Architectural Style	Neo-Romanesque Style
Architect	Franz Schwechten
Built-Up Area	1,000 sq. m.
Year of Destruction	1943
Event	World War 2
Associated Memory	Air Raid during the War
Current Significance	Serves as a powerful memorial against war and destruction and a symbol of peace and reconciliation
Current Use	Memorial
Initial Rehabilitation	1957-1963
Architect	Egon Eiermann
Renovation	2009-2015, 2023-Present
UNESCO World Heritage Designation	No
Managed By	The Evangelical Church

¹⁰⁶ Germer, "Chapter 15- Memorial, landmark, symbol of peace: The long road of the Memorial Church to today's place of learning and remembrance."



Figure 3. Kaiser Wilhelm Church Then and Now ©Britannica ©Wikipedia

4.1.1 Historical Background

Construction

The Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church was completed in 1895. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Berlin was undergoing rapid growth. This part of the city required more public buildings including schools, hospitals and churches.¹⁰⁷ As a result, the congregation chose to construct a new church building to meet the needs of the Protestant believers.¹⁰⁸

The planning process included a design competition, launched in 1890. The winning

¹⁰⁷ Jessica Waldera, "Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church," Information Booklet, ed. Freunde der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtnis-kirche e.V. and Dr. Barbara Borek, trans. Timothy Jones and Ove Bergner, Freunde der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtnis-kirche e.V., n.d.

¹⁰⁸ Virginia Morris, "Reconstructing the Past: Rebuilding Churches and Reinventing Identity in Postwar Germany," 2018 Spring Honors Capstone Projects, May 1, 2018, https://mavmatrix.uta.edu/honors_spring2018/20.

proposal, a monumental building in the Romanesque style with Gothic elements, came from architect Franz Schwechten (1841-1924).¹⁰⁹



Figure 4. Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church. Circa 1933 © KWG Archives

Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm II (1859-1941) enthusiastically supported the project, as he saw it as a chance to honor his grandfather to create a significant memorial. The congregation for the Protestant church was headed by his wife, Empress Auguste Viktoria.¹¹⁰ The foundation stone of the church was laid on March 22, 1891, the 94th anniversary of the birth of Kaiser Wilhelm I.

Although initially designed as a relatively plain monument, the planning for the decoration in the church went through multiple phases, developing into a colorful ensemble of sculptures and stained glass, and finally incorporating mosaics to mark the completion of

¹⁰⁹ Waldera, "Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church."

¹¹⁰ Morris, "RECONSTRUCTING THE PAST."

the church in 1906, two years after the ceremonial opening of the Memorial Hall inside the church building.¹¹¹

Destruction

On the night of November 22-23, 1943, the church was partially destroyed in an Allied bombing raid on Berlin. The two spires opposite the bell tower were destroyed completely, as were parts of the transept and the nave. All that remained on the site the next morning were the lower 71m of the tower and ruins of the nave.¹¹² Over the course of the next year and a half, subsequent fire during the battle for Berlin damaged the remaining structure, and the city became a sea of rubble and wreckage. By 1945, the church was a burned-out shell amid the ruins of the city.¹¹³ The war ended on May 8, 1945, and the first worship service took place in the unroofed nave of the church at the end of the year. The clearing of rubble and debris from the site took place in the years that followed. The final gathering in the ruined nave church was in 1953, before it was torn down because of its weakened structural condition.¹¹⁴

Proposed Reconstruction of Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church (1957-1963)

The Eiermann Project

After the war, when the West Berlin government decided to tear down the ruins of the church in 1956, based on the competition proposal made by the architect Egon Eiermann,

¹¹¹ Waldera, "Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church"; Morris, "RECONSTRUCTING THE PAST"; Holtorf, *Destruction and Reconstruction of Cultural Heritage as Future-Making*.

¹¹² Morris, "RECONSTRUCTING THE PAST"; Waldera, "Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church."

¹¹³ Morris, "RECONSTRUCTING THE PAST."

¹¹⁴ Waldera, "Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church."

the idea was vigorously protested by the public. Revisions to the plan in response to public outcry left the tower standing in the same condition as it was, and included a new church around it.¹¹⁵ The decision to incorporate the ruins of the old church in a new ensemble allowed the old structure to be preserved as a war memorial.¹¹⁶ The ruins of what was originally the grand entrance clearly bear the scars of time. Therefore, preserving it required and still requires, complex precautionary measures that cost both time and money.¹¹⁷ The main entrance now leads into the Hall of Remembrance, where a permanent exhibition displays the remains of the magnificent mosaic work and a photographic record of the church's construction.¹¹⁸

Architect Egon Eiermann (1904-1970) designed the new buildings between 1957-1963. They included an octagonal nave, a hexagonal bell tower, a square chapel, and a foyer, clustered in the ruin's compound. Constructed using a steel skeleton frame clad with honeycomb concrete elements. The new buildings contrasted strongly with the old ruin, acting as a symbolic juxtaposition, reflecting continuity through destruction.

¹¹⁵ Provost T. Richard Howard, "A Way to Reconciliation," ed. Anneliese Funke et al., trans. Robin A. Youett, Klaus Wirbel (CNN Centre Martin Luther Memorial Church), 2013, https://www.mariendorf-evangelisch.de/fileadmin/sites/mariendorf-evangelisch.de/Downloads/SonstigePDF/Nagelkreuz_Flyer_englisch.pdf; Ertle, *Walled in Berlin*.

¹¹⁶ Morris, "RECONSTRUCTING THE PAST"; ms6282, "The Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church," *Down by the Dougie*, March 26, 2014, <https://greatacre.wordpress.com/2014/03/26/the-kaiser-wilhelm-memorial-church/>.

¹¹⁷ Waldera, "Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church."

¹¹⁸ Waldera, "Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church."

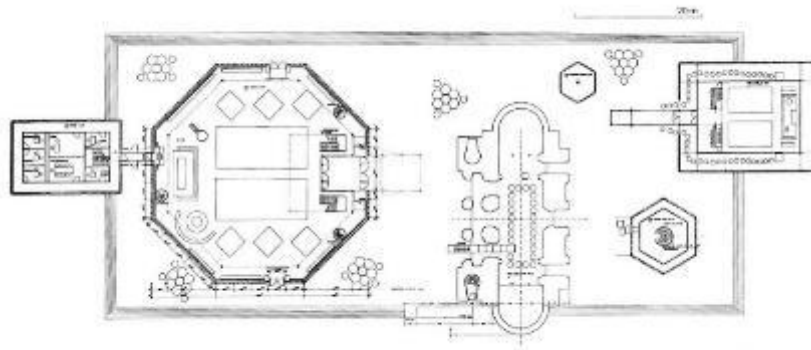


Figure 5. Proposed Plan of the New Nave and Bell Tower (1963) © Archiweb

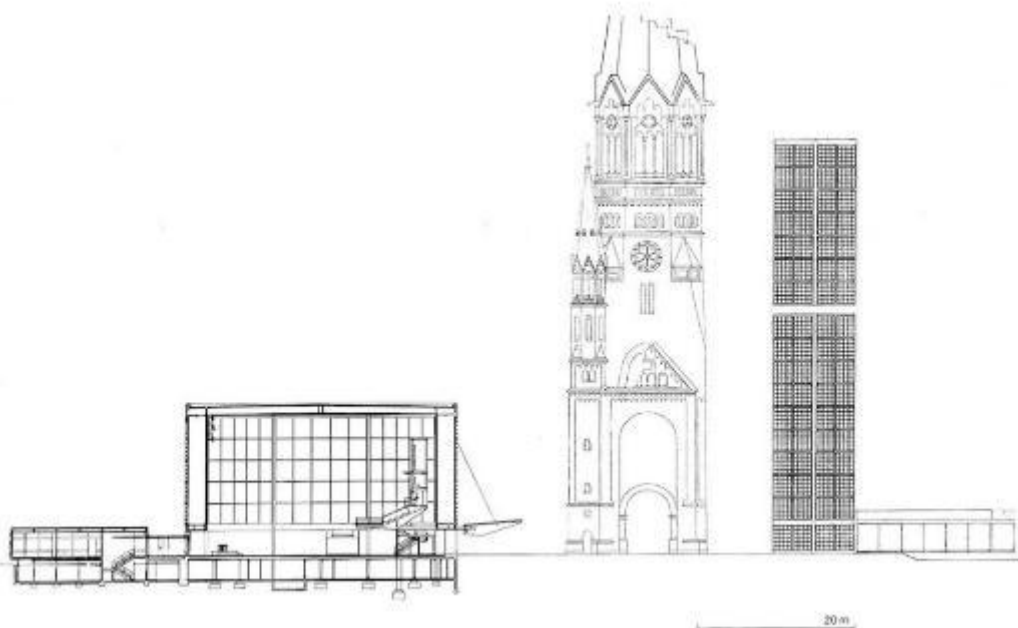


Figure 6. Proposed Elevation of the New Nave and Bell Tower (1963) © Archiweb

Famously known as “the lipstick and powder box”, among Berliners, the striking blue-colored glass-paneled facades of the bell tower, and the nave attracts the visitors from a far. With Eiermann’s overall design concept cleverly combining strict geometrical forms by giving them a similar outward appearance. Contributing to that is the interesting design

element of the walls. Although superficially uniform, the nave is double-walled, acting as insulation for the purpose of noise cancellation, the walls of the bell tower and the chapel are not double-walled.¹¹⁹ This style of the walls creates an illusion, however, as the glass gives each a translucent individuality, this effect was created by a French glass artist, Gabriel Loire. The glass mosaics in these buildings create an impressive changing play of colors, predominantly in blue, but with hints of ruby red, emerald green and yellow.¹²⁰



Figure 7. Inside the 1963 octagonal nave © Photo by Author

Preserving the old tower (2010-2015)

The Eiermann project was sited to retain the tower as a symbol of the past. It was stabilized, but otherwise remained as it was after the site was cleared of rubble until after 1953. However, over time, it became apparent that the tower was continuing to deteriorate

¹¹⁹ Waldera, "Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church."

¹²⁰ "Restoration of Berlin's Iconic Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church | Villum Fonden," April 9, 2024, <https://villumfonden.dk/en/news/restoration-berlins-iconic-kaiser-wilhelm-memorial-church>.

and might eventually collapse. In the Autumn 2010, tower was enveloped in scaffolding, and extensive preservation work began on the façade of the ruined tower.¹²¹ The scaffolding was designed as a freestanding structure, only fixed to the ruined tower at a few key points to minimize damage. Almost 9000 square meters of PVC sheeting and Perspex* attached to the scaffolding, creating an outline reminiscent of a modern-day office building.



Figure 8. Scaffolding resembling an office building ©imago

Although preparation began in 2010, the actual preservation work did not start until 2012, once a comprehensive assessment of the condition of the tower had been completed.¹²²

Actions that were then taken consisted of repair of crumbling mortar joints in the masonry,

¹²¹ Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche, “Preserving the Tower Ruins (2010-2015),” information panel, Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, n.d.

*Perspex is a premium brand of solid, transparent plastic sheet made from Polymethyl Methacrylate (PMMA), commonly known as acrylic.

¹²² Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche, “Preserving the Tower Ruins (2010-2015).”

replacement of deteriorating sandstone blocks, and renewal of the copper roofing, gutters, and drainpipes. By spring 2015, most of the restoration work was complete.¹²³

Adaptive Reuse Competition for the Old Tower (2023)

The second phase of major renovations in the church, after the 1963 proposal, is a part of the proposals made in a 2023 design competition. The competition's purpose was to redesign the ruined tower and return it to the tourist circuit as a war memorial and exhibition space.¹²⁴ The proposed ideas to replan the structure ranged widely from one another, with common themes being adaptive reuse, while commemorating the past. A Dublin firm, Heneghan Peng Architects, working with Ralph Appelbaum Associates, Berlin, and artist Susan Philipsz, won the competition. The project aims to transform the local landmark into a new visitor attraction, comprising a war memorial and an exhibition space.¹²⁵ The replanning of the remains of the old church would add a new visitor center to the tower and expand the exhibition space in the old church porch. Apart from the changes, the proposal also included a new addition of a circular pool, referencing the bombed rosette window, and removal of the part of the roof which was added during the rebuilding

¹²³ Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche, "Preserving the Tower Ruins (2010-2015)."

¹²⁴ Maria-Cristina Florian, "Heneghan Peng Architects Wins Competition for Transforming the Ruins of a Historical Berlin Church," ArchDaily, November 2, 2023, <https://www.archdaily.com/1009198/heneghan-peng-architects-wins-competition-for-transforming-the-ruins-of-a-historical-berlin-church>.

¹²⁵ Merlin Fulcher, "Competition Results: Heneghan Peng Wins Berlin Church Spire Contest," *The Architectural Review*, November 10, 2023, <https://www.architectural-review.com/competitions/competition-results/competition-results-heneghan-peng-wins-berlin-church-spire-contest>.

in the postwar period, to open up the tower and “create a continuous, central cavity with atmospheric force”.¹²⁶



Figure 9. Proposed Interior Space in 2023 Competition ©Arch Daily

Restoration of the 1963 Egon Eiermann additions (2024-Ongoing)

While the old church remains have undergone restoration initiatives in the past, the former vestibule of the old church under the tower acts as a memorial hall with the original mosaic work on the ceiling.¹²⁷ The new buildings added in 1963, are old enough (more than 60 years) to require an intervention for their preservation. The restoration, which has been underway since 2024, will take place in two phases.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ “Heneghan Peng Architects Wins Competition for Transforming the Ruins of a Historical Berlin Church | ArchDaily,” accessed January 20, 2026, <https://www.archdaily.com/1009198/heneghan-peng-architects-wins-competition-for-transforming-the-ruins-of-a-historical-berlin-church>.

¹²⁷ ms6282, “The Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church.”

¹²⁸ “Restoration of Berlin’s Iconic Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church | Villum Fonden.”



Figure 10. Scaffolding around the new Bell Tower, from the old tower © Photos by Author

Over more than 60 years, the concrete grid and glass infill have shown signs of weathering, prompting the need to restore and stabilize the structure to prevent further deterioration. The recent efforts emphasize the need to conserve the unique glasswork on the walls of the nave, bell tower, and chapel, along with ensuring the long-term structural integrity of the buildings.¹²⁹

4.1.2 Present Status of the Building and Urban Integration

From its initial construction, the church has been integral to the urban fabric of the city, strategically placed in the commercial center, surrounded by cafes, shops, and transit routes. It stands as a constant reminder of the past, becoming a part of the day-to-day life

¹²⁹ “Restoration of Berlin’s Iconic Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church | Villum Fonden.”

of the people in the vicinity. The church stands as a prominent urban landmark and at a critical urban node.



Figure 11. Present Day Urban Fabric of Berlin (Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church-2025) ©Google Earth Pro

Rather than separating the site as a sacralized or solemn enclave, the church remained embedded in the city's everyday fabric largely because of its original nineteenth-century setting. And in the post-war decisions, planners chose to embed it within the city's active life by rebuilding the surrounding neighborhood. This choice allows the structure to remain part of the city's lived experience, where the symbolism of destruction and recovery coexists with the rhythm of modern Berlin. The site also operates as a social and cultural hub: every year, the surrounding area transforms into a lively Christmas market, where residents and tourists gather for seasonal festivities. In this way, the church continues to

function as a vital urban center (visual landmark), bridging the sacred and the everyday, the past and the present.¹³⁰

4.2 Chapel of Reconciliation

The original Church of Reconciliation, located at the '*Bernauer Strasse*', commissioned by the local reconciliation parish and designed by architect Gotthilf Ludwig Möckel (1838-1915), was completed in 1894. It was formally named by Empress Auguste Viktoria during its consecration in the same year.¹³¹ This Gothic Revival-style building served its parish for the next 65 years. In 1961, with the increased restrictions on the citizens, the division between East Berlin and West Berlin was marked by the construction of the Berlin Wall. Part of the wall was directly in front of the north-west facing main entrance of the church. Thereafter, the church was inaccessible as it fell in the "Death Strip," the restricted border zone of the wall. In January 1985, the building was demolished by the East Berlin government.¹³² After the Wall fell in 1989-1990, the site stood vacant until 1997, when the new Chapel of Reconciliation, built on the site of the former Reconciliation Church, was commissioned and became a part of the Berlin Wall Memorial. The Chapel is a rammed-earth structure, made using clay mixed with the debris of the original church, paying homage to what was lost.¹³³

¹³⁰ "Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church," Berlin.De, accessed January 20, 2026, <https://www.berlin.de/en/attractions-and-sights/3561433-3104052-kaiser-wilhelm-memorial-church.en.html>.

¹³¹ Howard, "A Way to Reconciliation."

¹³² "Chapel of Reconciliation - Wikiwand," accessed January 15, 2026, <https://www.wikiwand.com/en/articles/Chapel%20of%20Reconciliation>.

¹³³ *The Chapel of Reconciliation – EARTH ARCHITECTURE*, January 5, 2004, <https://eartharchitecture.org/?p=495>.

Location	Berlin, Germany
Original Construction Year	1894
Past Use	Parish Church
Architectural Style	Neo-Gothic Style
Architect	Gotthilf Ludwig Möckel
Built-Up Area	~800 sq. m.
Year of Destruction	1985
Event	Berlin wall Division and Cold war tensions
Associated Memory	Symbol of division between East and West Berlin; later, of reconciliation after reunification
Current Significance	Memorial church symbolizing healing, unity, and remembrance of Berlin's divided past
Current Use	Chapel and memorial site within the Berlin Wall Memorial complex
Initial Rehabilitation	1997-2000
Architect	Rudolf Reitermann and Peter Sassenroth
Renovation	Continuous maintenance since 2000 as part of the Berlin Wall Foundation
UNESCO World Heritage Designation	No
Managed By	The Reconciliation Parish and Berlin Wall Foundation



Figure 12. Chapel of Reconciliation Then and Now ©See in Berlin

4.2.1 Historical Background

Construction to Cold War, 1892-1945

Constructed between 1892-1894, the reconciliation church was a neo-Gothic red brick structure. Its dominant feature was a 75 m tall bell tower with an octagonal tent roof, capped by the pointed spire. This Gothic Revival style, prominent in the Northern German region during the 19th century, was said to demonstrate material honesty and structural clarity. Although the church was severely damaged during World War II, it was restored in 1950, even though it was located on the border between East and West Berlin.¹³⁴

Cold War and Reunification

After World War II, the Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, along with their respective allies emerged. Under the settlement after the war, Germany was divided into four occupational zones, with each part of the western part of Germany being administered by one of the Allied Powers (the United States, the United Kingdom, and France), whereas the eastern part was administered by the Soviet Union.¹³⁵ Berlin, the capital city, although located within the Soviet zone, was also split among the four powers, in a similar manner, with Americans, British, and French forming West Berlin, and the part under Soviet Union control becoming East Berlin.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Francesco Di Maio, ed., "Reconciliation. From the Destruction of the Church to the New Chapel," *Aracne*, 2024, 45–46.

¹³⁵ "How Was Germany Divided After World War II? | Zones, Allies, Berlin, Cold War, & Facts | Britannica," January 15, 2026, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/How-Was-Germany-Divided-After-World-War-II>.

¹³⁶ "What Was the Berlin Wall and How Did It Fall?," Imperial War Museums, accessed January 16, 2026, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/cold-war/germany/berlin-wall>.

By 1949, as Germany had formally split into two independent nations, the Federal Republic of Germany (FDR or West Germany), and the German Democratic Republic (GDR or East Germany), restrictions were imposed on the citizens.¹³⁷ In Berlin, the citizens could still freely travel from one part to another. Thus, ended on August 13, 1961, when the East German government, with Soviet support, erected the infamous Berlin Wall. The Wall cut West Berlin entirely off from the East Berlin. Citizens in the East Berlin and East Germany were prohibited from passing from one side to the other.¹³⁸



Figure 13. Reconciliation Church in the border strip. Circa 1975 ©mauer-fotos.de

As the Church was located on the east side, adjacent to the boundary that separated West and East Berlin, after October 1961, not even the faithful of East Berlin could use it. Given its strategic location, it was soon occupied by the border troops of the GDR, who used the

¹³⁷ Imperial War Museums, "What Was the Berlin Wall and How Did It Fall?"

¹³⁸ *The Berlin Wall Is Built — August 13, 1961 – Association for Diplomatic Studies & Training*, n.d., accessed January 16, 2026, <https://adst.org/2014/08/the-berlin-wall-is-built-august-13-1961/>.

bell tower of the church as a watchtower for surveillance.¹³⁹ By the early 1980s, the body of the church was seen by the GDR as an obstruction, preventing the border troops from having a clear field of vision/fire on the border strip.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, on January 22, 1985, the Council of Ministers of the GDR ordered the demolition of the nave and the tower, with the intention to increase security, order, and a clear surveillance area at the state border.¹⁴¹ By the late 1980s, unrest and popular discontent led to a loosening of restrictions and, on November 9, the citizens from East Germany were allowed to travel to the West. Thereafter, citizens began chipping away at the wall, creating more openings. In June 1990, GDR border troops began dismantling the wall. After which the church land was claimed by the reconciliation community.¹⁴²

The pressure on the East German government to loosen some of its regulations on travel to West Germany led to the announcement at a press conference on November 9, 1989, and the demolition began soon after the borders were opened, with so-called ‘wall peckers’ breaking off the pieces of concrete to keep as souvenirs.¹⁴³ The official reunification of the German Capital took place on October 3, 1990.

¹³⁹ Di Maio, “Isolanità.”

¹⁴⁰ Adam Sharr, “The Sedimentation of Memory,” *The Journal of Architecture* 23, no. 5 (2018): 780–96, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602365.2018.1495908>.

¹⁴¹ Di Maio, “Isolanità”; “Church of Reconciliation Demolished - History of the Berlin Wall and Its Fall,” History of the Berlin Wall and Its Fall Visualized with Videos and Images - Rbb, January 22, 1985, <https://www.the-berlin-wall.com/videos/church-of-reconciliation-demolished-695/>.

¹⁴² Di Maio, “Isolanità”; “Berlin Wall Memorial,” Orte Der Einheit, accessed January 21, 2026, <https://www.orte-der-einheit.de/en/berlin-wall-memorial/>.

¹⁴³ “What Was the Berlin Wall and How Did It Fall?,” Imperial War Museums, accessed January 22, 2026, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/cold-war/germany/berlin-wall>.



Figure 14. Reconciliation Church, right next to the Berlin Wall, with the houses still there, Circa 1962-1965 © JSTOR

Chapel of Reconciliation (1999-2000)

Following both the literal and symbolic fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the removal of the border fortifications in 1990, the Reconciliation Parish regained access to the site and found that the foundations of their former church had survived and were intact. They were able to recover several of its relics, among them the communion vessels, the baptismal font, the altar Bible, the damaged reredos, and the original bells, which were later incorporated in the new Chapel. In the years that followed, an architectural competition was launched in 1996 to design a new chapel, that would embody the spirit of reconciliation on which the parish had first been founded. The resulting building would be conceived not only as a functional place of worship for the reunited community, but also as

a memorial to all the lost lives at the Berlin Wall and to the circumstances under which the church was destroyed.¹⁴⁴



Figure 15. The transition space between the two ovaloids ©Photo by Author

The competition was won by architects Rudolf Reiterman and Peter Sassenrath, who formed the partnership specifically for this project.¹⁴⁵ The rammed-earth work was achieved with the assistance of Austrian rammed-earth expert Martin Rauch.

The new Chapel of Reconciliation is a rammed-earth structure, built on the site of the former church. The walls of the chapel are organized as two ovaloids in plan, one contained by the other.¹⁴⁶ The inner ovaloid is enclosed by massively thick walls, made

¹⁴⁴ Sharr, "The Sedimentation of Memory."

¹⁴⁵ Sharr, "The Sedimentation of Memory."

¹⁴⁶ Sharr, "The Sedimentation of Memory."

using clay mixed with the debris of the original church.¹⁴⁷ While the outer ovaloid is twisted in geometry with respect to the inner sanctuary, and is open to the air with closely spaced vertical wooden louvers.¹⁴⁸ The continuation of this church represents a singular strategy of symbolic reconstruction, incorporating rubble from the original building, embodying reconciliation and renewal rather than replication. This incorporation of the old into the new fabric ensures that the memory of the demolished church is materially present.¹⁴⁹

Standing over the foundation of the original Reconciliation Church, the Chapel of Reconciliation, with its strikingly different plan and architectural expression,¹⁵⁰ recognizes those who lost their lives at the Berlin Wall. While many aimed to eliminate the memory of the Berlin Wall by dismantling its material traces (physical and symbolic), some members of the community led the discussion about preserving specific sites as places of reflection, reconciliation, and historical responsibility.¹⁵¹

4.2.2 Present Status of the Building and Urban Integration

Today, the site makes the trauma of division unmistakably visible even as it offers a space for reconciliation. When the Wall fell, its demolition was celebrated by many, not only as the reunification of a city, but as the long-awaited reunion of families and friends.¹⁵² The Chapel of Reconciliation occupies a symbolically charged position along Bernauer Strasse,

¹⁴⁷ Earth Architecture, “The Chapel of Reconciliation,” *The Chapel of Reconciliation*, January 5, 2004, <https://eartharchitecture.org/?p=495>.

¹⁴⁸ Sharr, “The Sedimentation of Memory.”

¹⁴⁹ “Chapel of Reconciliation | visitBerlin.De,” accessed December 8, 2025, <https://www.visitberlin.de/en/chapel-reconciliation>.

¹⁵⁰ Sharr, “The Sedimentation of Memory.”

¹⁵¹ Hope Millard Harrison, *After the Berlin Wall: Memory and the Making of the New Germany, 1989 to the Present* (Cambridge University Press, 2019).

¹⁵² Harrison, *After the Berlin Wall*.

within the Berlin Wall Memorial landscape; the site comprises many layers (presented physically and symbolically), reminding the people of Berlin of the various events that occurred over the period. The area around the chapel is characterized by open green strips, preserved border installations, and residential blocks, situating it within a historically layered corridor. Both the Bernauer Strasse tram stop and U-Bahn station lie only a short walk away. Multiple pedestrian access points are open for visitors from the memorial path, the adjacent parkland, and the surrounding neighborhood to approach the chapel.

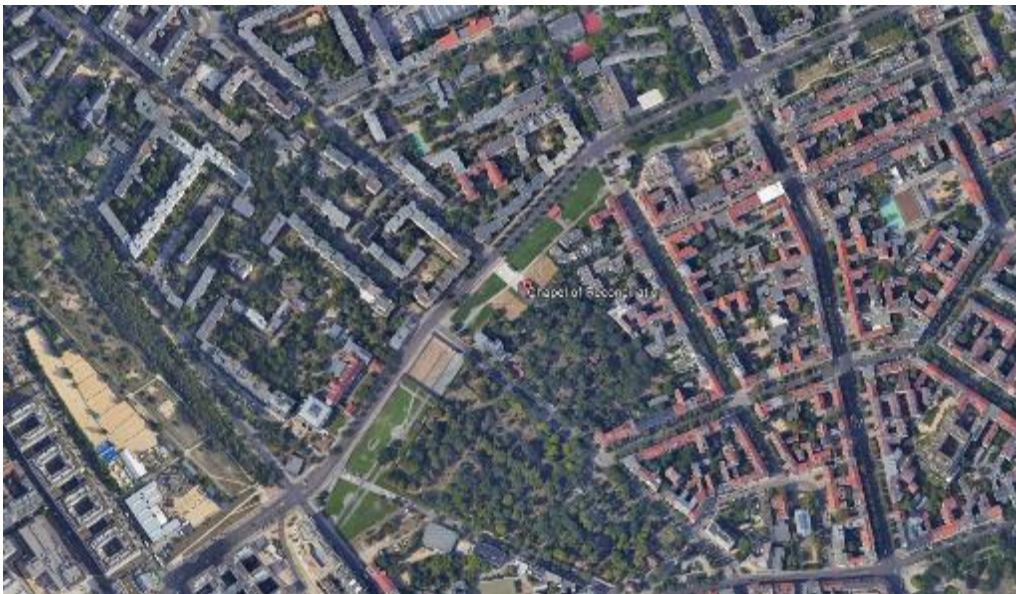


Figure 16. Present Day Urban Fabric of Berlin (Chapel of Reconciliation-2026) ©Google Earth Pro

Rather than standing apart as an isolated religious structure, the chapel is integrated into the everyday life of the neighborhood. The building's modest scale and rammed-earth construction blend with the open, park-like setting, while the vertical steel bars, information panels, imagery on walls and archaeological windows maintain a direct visual dialogue with the preserved border elements. The chapel not only functions as a local place of worship, it becomes a community gathering point, promoted through community

activities like tree plantation taking place on the 4th Saturdays of the month at the rear of the chapel, and a key interpretive element within the Berlin Wall Memorial.

4.3 Conclusion

Viewed together, the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church and the Chapel of Reconciliation reveal two parallel yet distinct historical trajectories that begin in the late nineteenth century and diverge sharply through the course of time. What stands on each site today is a layered outcome of these histories. At the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, the surviving tower, the postwar Eiermann ensemble, and now the new interventions, the site has been adding and changing meanings and interpretations for more than eighty years, representing layers of destruction, reconstruction, and reinterpretation. By contrast, the Chapel of Reconciliation, being associated with the Berlin Wall and its destruction, has less than 40 years of history. It brings together the elements from the original Reconciliation Church. Elements such as the foundation remains, the recovered relics, the bells and the capitals contribute to the rammed-earth chapel and the memorial landscape through deliberate design interventions, referencing a longer and more fragmented past.

These various temporalities shape how each site is encountered today: both sites use architectural form and spatial context to shape how trauma is remembered and transmitted through generations. In both the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church and the Chapel of Reconciliation, symbolic reconstruction transforms destruction into meaning. While one preserves its ruin as a scar framed by modern additions, another rises anew from the rubble of the original church. Together, they demonstrate how the passage of time,

the sequence of interventions, and the conditions under which rebuilding occurs determine the ability of architecture to embody reconciliation, resilience, and the continuing dialogue between memory and regeneration.

Chapter 5: Layers of Memory- A Photographic Record

Berlin, with its dense layers of history, memorials, and contested memories, offers an exceptionally rich context for examining how cities negotiate loss, trauma, and transformation. Today, both the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church and the Chapel of Reconciliation stand as living artefacts: sites of memory, where it is not only preserved but continually encountered in the flow of everyday urban life. They operate as a constant reminder of rupture and recovery, embodying the tension between what once stood and what now remains.

Before engaging with the historical context and detailed analysis of the case studies, this chapter introduces a visual reading (in order of the timeline) that situates the two sites through photos: putting together archival photographs with contemporary images to trace how their material presence, urban roles, and symbolic meanings have evolved over time.

1892-1894	Reconciliation Church Constructed
1891-1895	Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church Constructed
1943-1945	Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church Destroyed During Air Raids
1961	Erection of Berlin Wall Began
1963	New addition of the Kaiser Wilhelm Church Constructed
1985	Reconciliation Church Demolished
1989-1990	Fall of the Berlin Wall
1999-2000	Chapel of Reconciliation Constructed
2010- 2015	Restoration of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church (old tower)
2023	Adaptive Reuse Proposals-old Tower- Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church
2024- Ongoing	Restoration of 1963 Addition- Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church

KAISER WILHELM MEMORIAL CHURCH



Figure 17. Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church. Circa 1900 © Britannica

The Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church was built between 1891–1895. The original neo-Romanesque church was severely damaged in a 1943 air raid, leaving only the shattered tower. The new modern ensemble was designed by the architect Egon Eiermann in the late 1950s.



Figure 18. Inauguration Ceremony of the church in 1895, 7 years after Kaiser Wilhelm I died © KWG Archives



Figure 19. Inauguration Ceremony of the church in 1895 © KWG Archives



Figure 20. Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church from the street in 1904 © KWG Archives



Figure 21. Inside and Outside of the Church in 1933 © KWG Archives



Figure 22. Remains of the church. Circa 1959 © KWG Archives

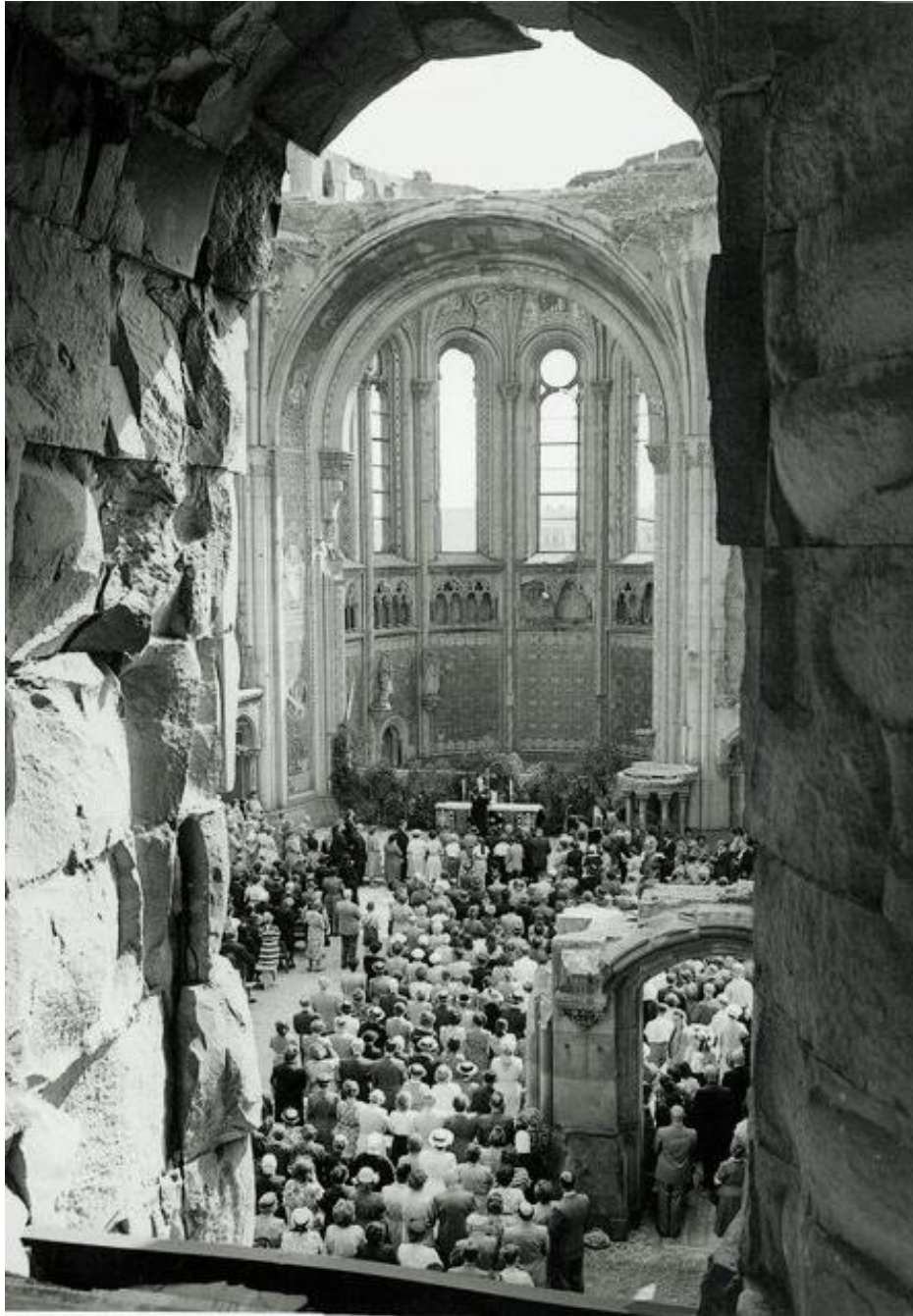


Figure 23. Last service before the demolition in 1953 © KWG Archives



Figure 24. Proposed reconstruction of the church in 1954 by Ar. Werner March © KWG Archives



Figure 25. Design proposal by Prof. Egon Eiermann © KWG Archives



Figure 26. New bell tower and nave under construction. Circa 1959-1962 © KWG Archives



Figure 27. Scaffolding around the old tower during restoration between 2010-2015 © Imago

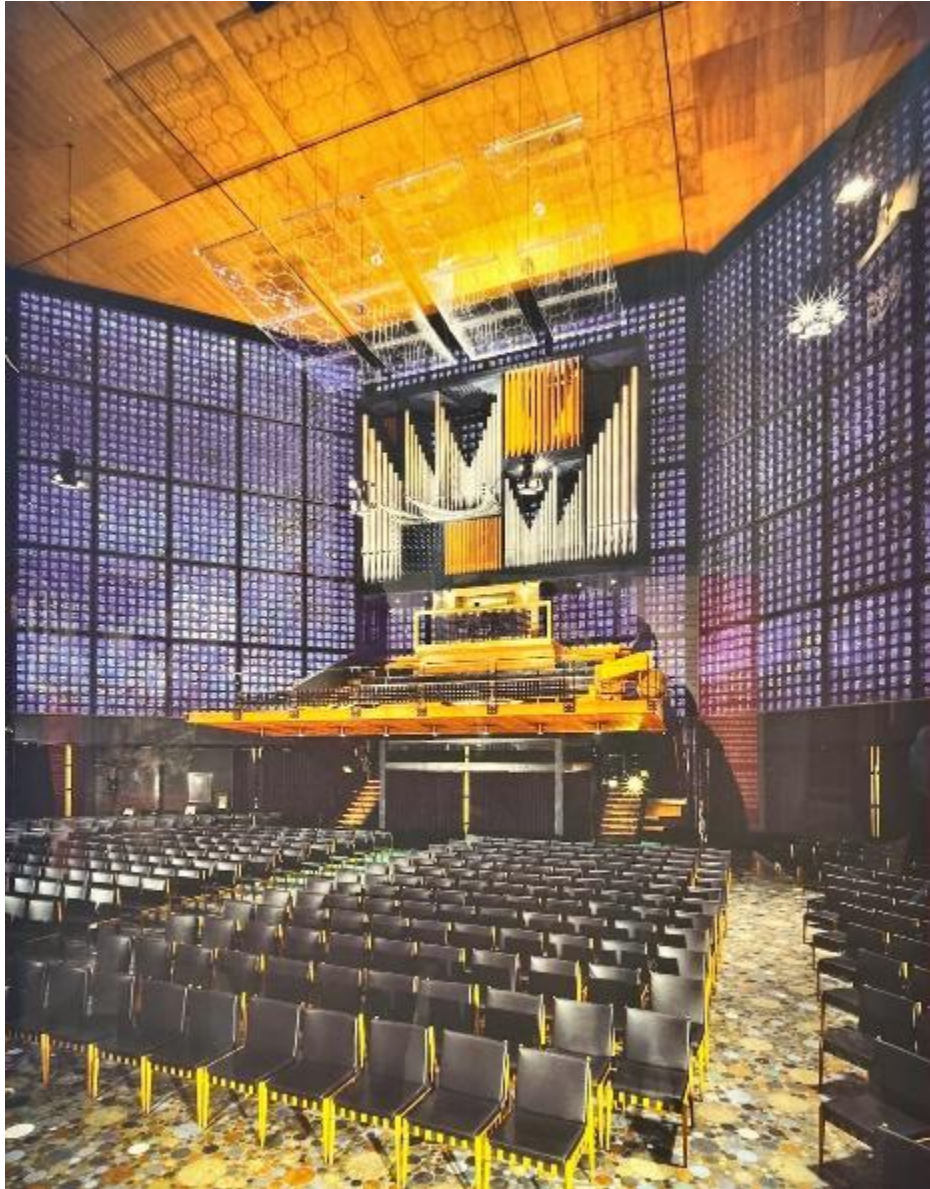


Figure 28. New constructed nave. Circa 2005 © KWG Archives



Figure 29. The contrast between the old and new churches © Photo by Author



Figure 30. External views of the old tower © Photo by Author

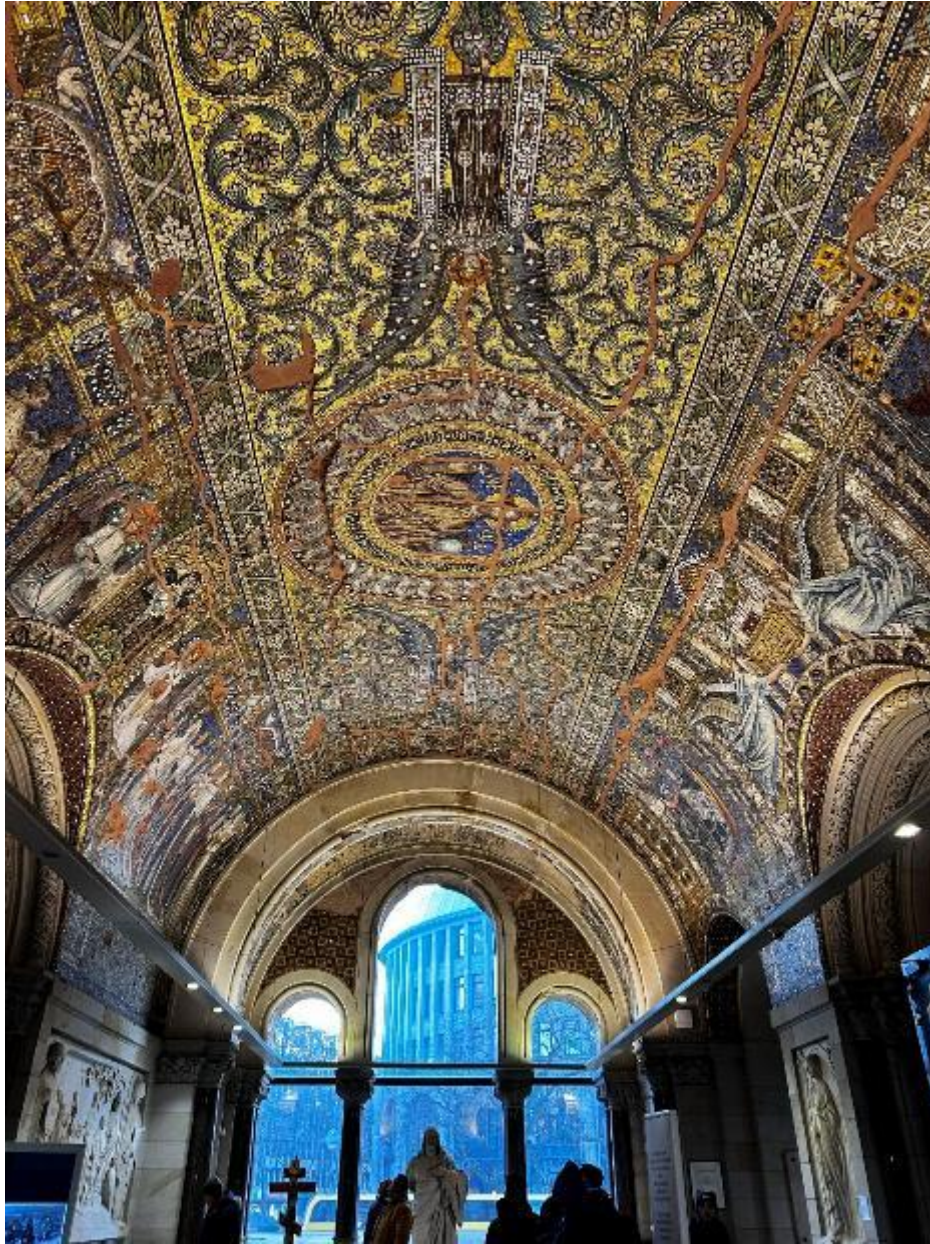


Figure 31. Inside the Memorial Hall at Old Tower © Photo by Author



Figure 32. View of the church complex from the new chapel © Photo by Author



Figure 33. Contrast between the old and new church © Photo by Author



Figure 34. View of the new bell tower from the old tower © Photo by Author



Figure 35. Mosaic remains (left). Tower at organ level (right) © Photo by Author

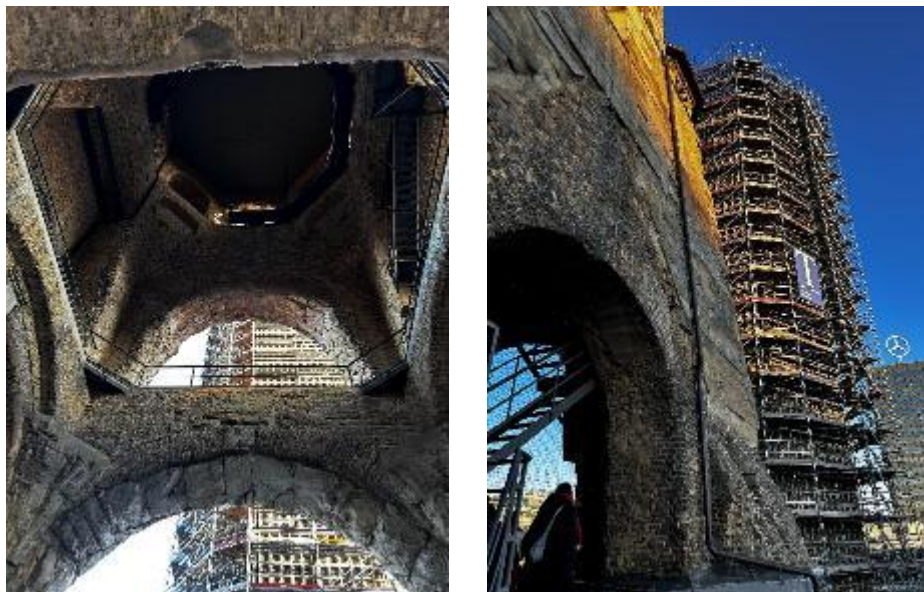


Figure 36. View of the top of the tower from the organ level (left). View of the new bell tower from the second level of the old tower (right) © Photo by Author



Figure 37. Exterior view of the 1964 Nave © Photo by Author



Figure 38. Glowing walls from inside the nave in daytime © Photo by Author



Figure 39. Façade Details- day vs night © Photo by Author



Figure 40. Glowing façade of the new nave at night © Photo by Author



Figure 41. Inside the new nave © Photo by Author

RECONCILIATION CHURCH (CHAPEL OF RECONCILIATION)

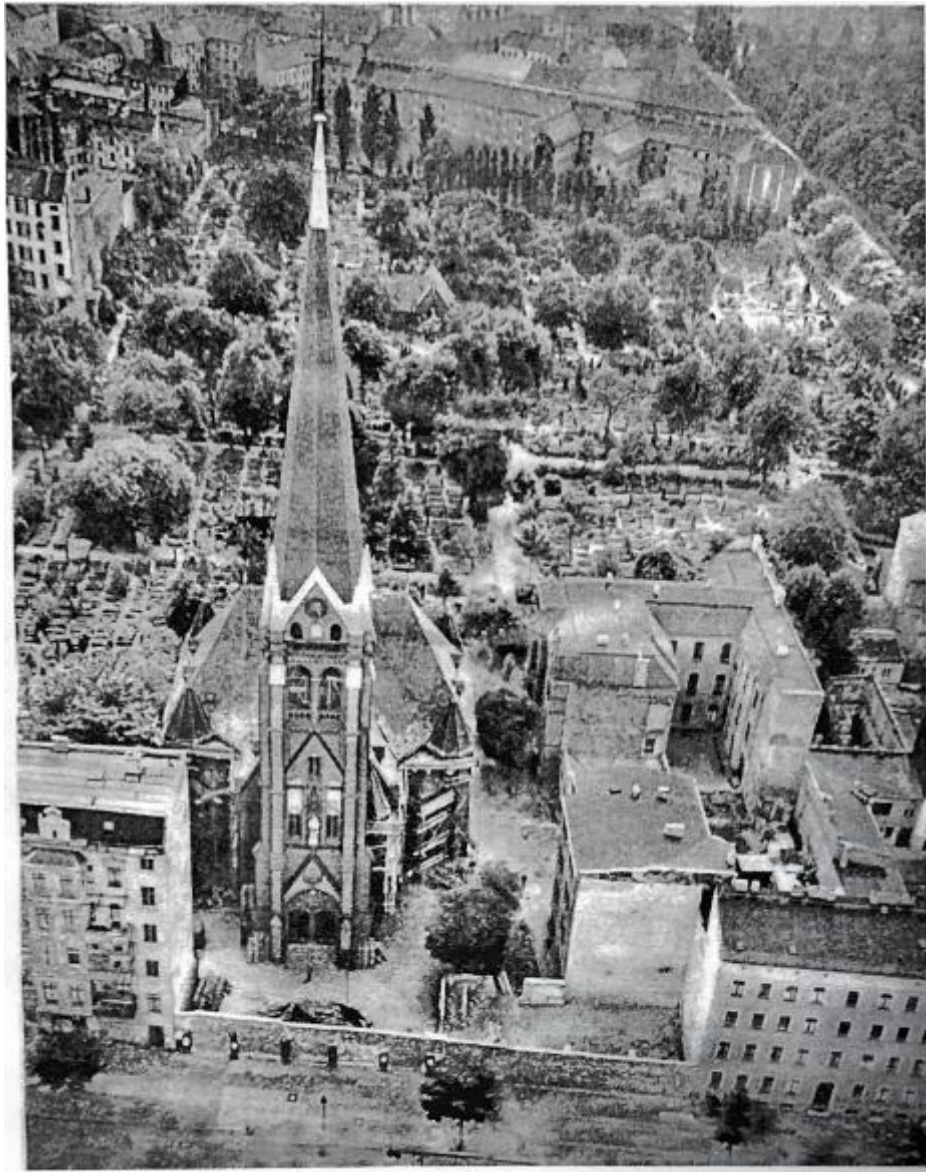


Figure 42. Church of Reconciliation. Circa 1961 © Berlin Wall Foundation

The original Church of Reconciliation, built in 1892–1894, was trapped in the border strip after 1961 and demolished by East German authorities in 1985. Constructed in 1999–2000 and dedicated in 2000, the new Chapel of Reconciliation is designed by Rudolf Reitermann and Peter Sassenroth, with rammed-earth specialist Martin Rauch.



Figure 43. Walk to the church of reconciliation. Circa 1950 © Berlin Wall Foundation



Figure 44. Hall of the old church of Reconciliation © Berlin Wall Foundation



Figure 45. Community centre in Bernauer Strasse beside the Reconciliation Church © Berlin Wall Foundation



Figure 46. View of the church from the Bernauer Strasse. Circa 1945 © Berlin Wall Foundation



Figure 47. Construction of the Berlin Wall in 1963 © Berlin Wall Foundation



Figure 48. People peeping through the Berlin Wall (left) © Berlin Wall Foundation

Reconciliation Church at Death Strip (right) © JSTOR



Figure 49. Reconciliation Church at Death Strip © See in Berlin



Figure 50. Demolition of the Reconciliation Church in 1984 © orte-der-einheit.de

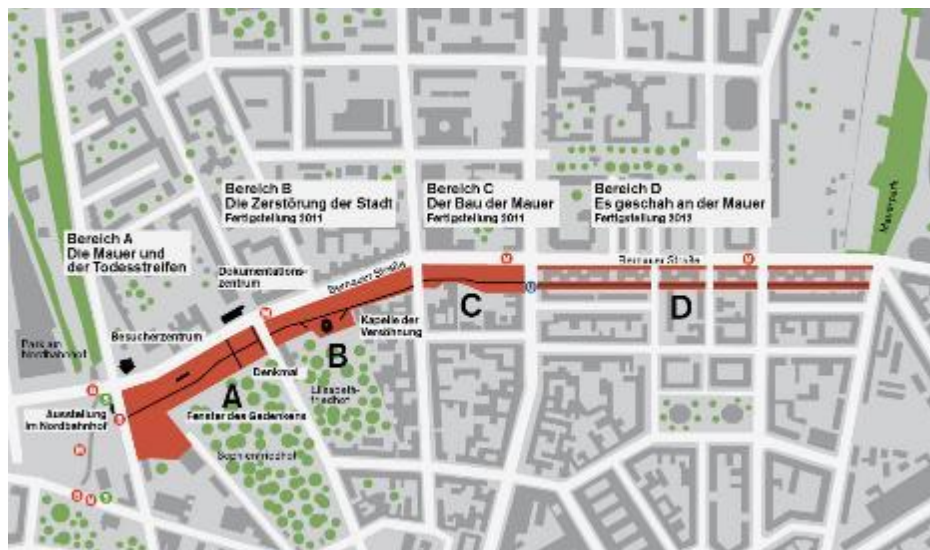


Figure 51. Map Showing segments of the Berlin Wall Memorial. Chapel lies in segment B © Berlin Wall Foundation



Figure 52. Chapel of Reconciliation under construction © ZRS Architects Engineers



Figure 53. Chapel of Reconciliation from the entrance- with elements such as metal bars representing the Berlin Wall, bells from the original church, and the metal outline of the original church on ground © Photo by Author



Figure 54. View of the Berlin Wall Memorial from across the street from the U-Bahn station towards the east side of the Chapel © Photo by Author



Figure 55. Berlin Wall Memorial and its proximity to the tram station © Photo by Author

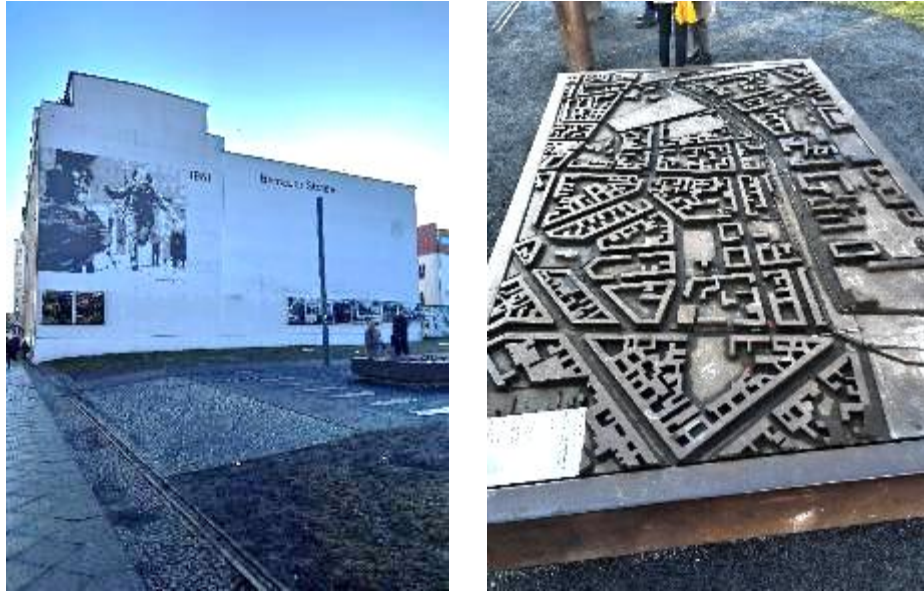


Figure 56. Depiction of Houses on Bernauer Street. Circa 1961 (left). 3D plan of the Berlin Wall Memorial at the start point (right) © Photo by Author



Figure 57. Berlin Wall Memorial- the bars in this represent the Berlin Wall © Photo by Author



Figure 58. Remnants Station with information panels © Photo by Author



Figure 59. Remnants of the basements of houses and the Berlin wall © Photo by Author

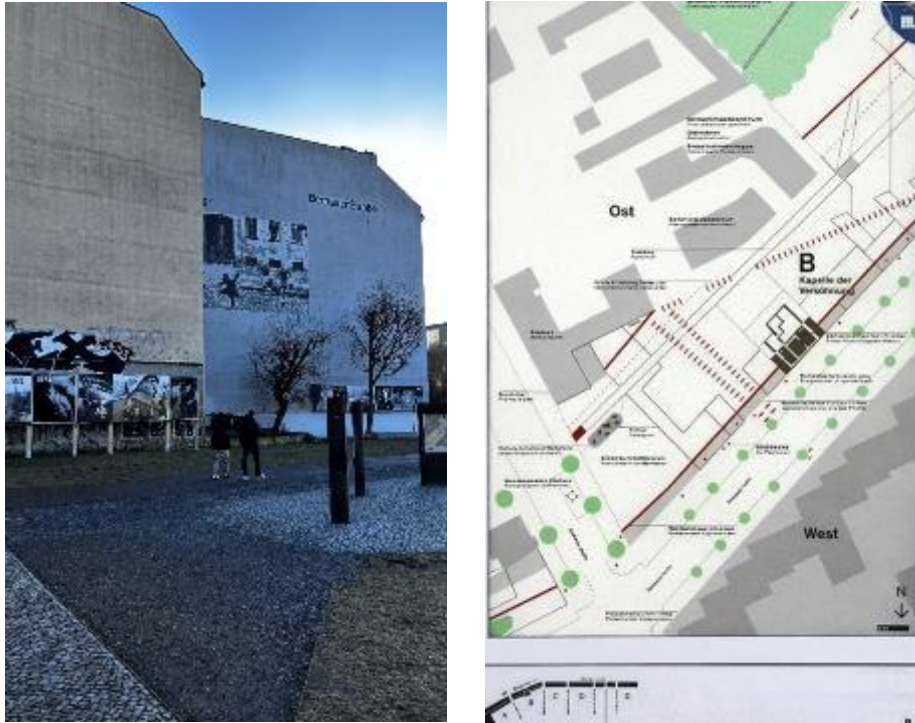


Figure 60. Exhibit station on the way to the Chapel (left). Plan of the surrounding area (right) © Photo by Author



Figure 61. View of the chapel as one walks towards it from the remnants station © Photo by Author



Figure 62. Bell tower and the bars representing the Berlin wall © Photo by Author



Figure 63. Position of the new Chapel, in relation to the old church (plan outlined with metal plates on the ground) and bell tower on the left © Photo by Author



Figure 64. View of the cemetery (St. Elisabeth-Cemetery) behind the Chapel (left). The transition space between the two ovaloids (right) © Photo by Author



Figure 65. The Reconciliation sculpture outside the chapel, created by Josefina de Vasconcellos, depicts two figures embracing after a long separation. It symbolizes healing and reunion in the aftermath of conflict. © Photo by Author



Figure 66. View from the entry to the inner ovaloid – facing the altar from the original church (left). Fragment from the blown-up Reconciliation Church inside the chapel (right) © Photo by Author



Figure 67. Damaged altar top from Reconciliation Church (left). Bells from the old Reconciliation Church, installed outside the new chapel (right) © Photo by Author



Figure 68. Bell tower outside the chapel © Photo by Author

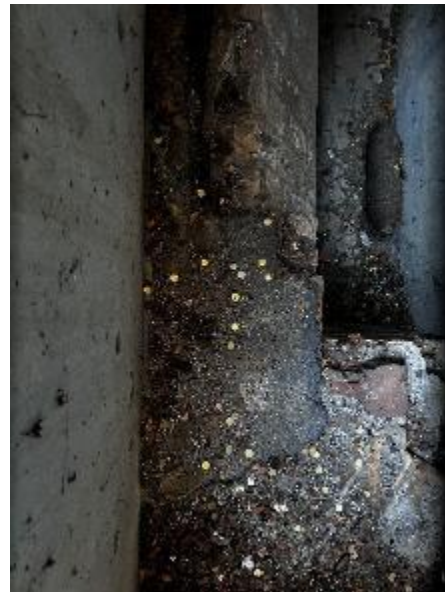


Figure 69. Archeological window inside the Chapel (left). Archeological remains of the foundation of Reconciliation Church (right) © Photo by Author



Figure 70. Relicts of the Reconciliation Church, placed outside the chapel © Photo by Author



Figure 71. Close-up view of the metal plate detail, used to outline the plan of the old church (left). Rammed Earth wall in the new chapel (right) © Photo by Author

Chapter 6: Analysis- Interpreting Memory in Architecture

The preservation of monuments (ruins, religious sites, palaces, forts, significant historical buildings and sites) is generally governed by established standards and practices. In contrast, preservation of architectural ruins tied to conflict (including war, division, and displacement) poses complex practical and ethical challenges, such as deciding how much to repair, and how much to leave in ruin, as well as how whatever remains is explained and interpreted. Choices regarding the treatment of ruins usually reflects societal values regarding memory, trauma, and heritage. As is evident in these two Berlin churches, the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church and the Chapel of Reconciliation. Sites are often more than simply remnants of destruction, they are also emotionally charged, carrying emotional, social, political, and cultural weight as “places of memory,” especially memory that involves memory and loss. Scholars increasingly recognize that decisions surrounding conservation of such sites are not neutral (as people associate with these spaces emotionally and personally); they reflect and respond to broader values, including how societies choose to grieve, commemorate, and remember (or sometimes, instead try to forget). Ruins, in this understanding, become what Barbara Gabriel, an associate professor at Carleton University whose work examines ethics, memory, and postmodern

subjectivity, calls “ethical texts,” spaces that resist closure and invite ongoing interpretation, that may keep changing with time, just as memory often does.¹⁵³

6.1 Preservation Strategies

The two sites, the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church and the Chapel of Reconciliation, both integrate the old and the new, although each represents a distinct theoretical approach to conservation. Each may be considered within internationally recognized preservation frameworks that were developed after each site was re-established. These frameworks suggest that issues of authenticity and integrity are central, yet these issues may be understood differently at each site given their different levels of destruction.¹⁵⁴

These two sites respond to destruction differently. The Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church focuses on preserving the ruin and the meaning carried by the absence of most of the destroyed church. The Chapel of Reconciliation necessarily is a symbolic rebuilding that supports healing and continuity, although fragments of the lost church are included.

The preservation strategies adopted for the surviving ruins of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church emphasize a deliberate effort to retain and conserve the damaged ruins. At the time of the first design proposal by Egon Eiermann the goal was to remove what remained, but under pressure from the community, the revised design retained the damaged tower as

¹⁵³ “Ilcan and Gabriel - 2004 - Postmodernism and the Ethical Subject.Pdf,” n.d., accessed June 15, 2025, https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9780773571877_A23656264/preview-9780773571877_A23656264.pdf.

¹⁵⁴ Alberts and Hazen, “Maintaining Authenticity and Integrity at Cultural World Heritage Sites”; Mounir Bouchenaki, *The Interdependency of the Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage*, January 1, 2003; UNESCO, “Cultural Heritage.”

the central feature of the site while adding new buildings on each side. Today, the tower suggests a combination of different values as articulated by Riegl. The ruined tower, as a ruin, can be understood as an unintentional monument that now serves to remind present-day visitors of the destruction of the Second World War. At the same time, it was intentionally retained in the face of proposals for its removal, so for the generation who fought for its retention, it can be seen as an intentional monument- they conceived it as a message to future visitors telling what had been but was no longer. With the adjacent new elements, it can also be seen as intentionally signaling the rise of modern Germany from the ruins of the past. And, in its aging and continuing decay, it can be seen as aligning with Alois Riegl's articulation of age-value, in which the visible marks of decay, conveying an emotional message about aging and the passage of time.¹⁵⁵ From a conservation ethics perspective, the decision to preserve the ruin, reflecting public opposition to the destruction of the tower and before the promulgation of the Venice Charter, signals a commitment to authenticity understood not as aesthetic completeness but as historical integrity.¹⁵⁶ The decision to retain the tower and construct new buildings on the site beginning in 1959, was 5 years before the foundational document of modern preservation, the Venice Charter, was published. Although the first design by Franz Schwechten suggested a reconstruction of the church in the Neo-Romanesque style, and Egon Eiermann's early proposal called for demolishing the ruined tower entirely, public

¹⁵⁵ ERA Stories, "Alois Riegl and the Modern Cult of the Monument," *ERA Architects*, January 9, 2011, <https://www.eraarch.ca/2011/alais-riegl-and-the-modern-cult-of-the-monument/>.

¹⁵⁶ Pamela Jerome, "An Introduction to Authenticity in Preservation," *APT Bulletin: Journal of Preservation Technology*, 2008; Luxen, *The Nara Document: Its Achievement and Its Limits*.

opposition led to the revisions made to Egon Eiermann's design. The new plan incorporated the ruined tower between the new bell tower and the new nave. This approach reflects the Venice Charter's emphasis on minimal intervention and respect for the historical fabric,¹⁵⁷ and is further seen in the later 2010-2015 restoration and stabilization work.

The contrast and the creation of new buildings can also be seen as an embrace of "newness value" as a part of the post-war creation of a new Berlin. Riegl, in his early twentieth-century writings, introduced "newness value" as one of the many competing values shaping attitudes toward the built environment.¹⁵⁸ Although this concept did not help with Riegl's aim, which was to develop a preservation policy for older buildings and sites, nonetheless Riegl wanted to capture the different values that he said were being applied to the built environment, so he wrote about "newness value" in his essay *The Modern Cult of Monuments*. What is especially striking today is how many different value frameworks coexist at the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church. Every time one tries to pin it down to be just one thing, it can be seen as something else. It is a site that clearly holds different values depending on who is looking at it and how they are understanding it.

At the second site, the Chapel of Reconciliation, its meaning is produced through carefully assembled elements that together contribute to the site's layered history. The Chapel itself represents a strategy of symbolic reconstruction. The use of debris from the original church in the rammed-earth walls of the new chapel aligns with evolving preservation philosophies, those stated in the Riga Charter of 2000, that recognize reconstruction as a

¹⁵⁷ Feilden, *Conservation of Historic Buildings*.

¹⁵⁸ Riegl, "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin."

legitimate means of sustaining cultural and intangible heritage values.¹⁵⁹ The use of materials further highlights the Nara Document's broader interpretation of authenticity, which supports culturally specific responses to loss and acknowledges that material continuity is not the only bearer of meaning.¹⁶⁰ As is visible in this case, the past is materially incorporated in the new structure. The remains of the original church's foundations anchor the space in its nineteenth-century origins. Further, the metal outline on the ground showing the location of the former church, the displayed bells from the former church, the retained altarpiece inside the new chapel reinforce continuity, allowing fragments of the past to inhabit the new chapel space, both materially and symbolically. Equally significant are the elements that recall the Berlin Wall period. The former Berlin Wall is represented by the rows of metal posts following the Wall's alignment, and the wall is shown in photographs displayed on adjacent/nearby buildings as a reminder of the 1961-1989 historical period. The meaning is not just found in the Chapel alone, but in its surrounding area. Together, the chapel and the Berlin Wall Memorial transform a former site of division into one that promotes gathering and contemplation, therefore prioritizing healing and reconciliation.

¹⁵⁹ Mounir Bouchenaki, "The Interdependency of the Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage," paper presented at ICOMOS 14th General Assembly and Scientific Symposium, 2003, https://www.academia.edu/65858694/The_interdependency_of_the_tangible_and_intangible_cultural_heritage; Stovel, "Riga Charter on Authenticity and Historical Reconstruction in Relationship to Cultural Heritage."

¹⁶⁰ Luxen, *The Nara Document: Its Achievement and Its Limits*.

6.2 Material and Symbolic Expression

Material in the reconstructed churches becomes a medium that evokes memories. At the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, the ruined stone tower embodies violence and historical rupture. It stands as a material witness to war and destruction. In contrast, the later modernist additions, particularly the blue glass sanctuary in relation to the old tower, create a dialogue between opacity and light, weight and transparency. This shift from the fractured stone tower to the modernist luminous enclosure generates a spatial movement from chaos to silence when one enters the Eiermann nave. Externally, visitors encounter loss as represented by the surviving fragment of the historical church. Inside the sanctuary, visitors find themselves detached from this external world; light comes through the blue glass block, but it is impossible to see out.

At the Chapel of Reconciliation, rammed earth composed of debris physically embodies the material of the former church and it can be said to symbolize both fragility and regeneration. Unlike at the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, the use of earth in the construction of the chapel suggests reintegration into natural cycles. This material transformation resonates with, trauma theorist Cathy Caruth's understanding of trauma as requiring new narrative forms for integration.¹⁶¹ The chapel does not monumentalize destruction; it quietly addresses it.

As memory is evoked through materials. The Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church today makes visitors experience the contrast between the ruin and the new, as Pastor Germer in his

¹⁶¹ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*.

manuscript has explained “the ruin acts as a testimony of the past, serving as a backdrop to make the new buildings more clearly visible as representatives of the present and of the future.”¹⁶² This is also made evident through differences in light, acoustics, and enclosure. The fractured building remains open to the sky, filled with light, whereas the new nave is a quiet, enclosed space with filtered blue light. At the Chapel of Reconciliation, the circular earthen enclosure’s tactile quality, along with the open-to-air transition space, creates a layered spatial sequence.¹⁶³ Memory, here, is experienced as sedimentation and is described as layering of time within architectural form.¹⁶⁴

6.3 Public Engagement and Memory Mediation

Both the Church and the Chapel are more than architectural landmarks in the city and act as sites of collective memory. As Maurice Halbwachs highlights, collective memory is sustained within social frameworks and anchored in material environments.¹⁶⁵ These buildings shape how the public encounters and understands the past. Here, architecture serves as a material form through which memory is socially produced and retained, spatially experienced, and continuously evolves.

The Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church does this through preservation of ruin, and the Chapel of Reconciliation does this through symbolic reconstruction, but incorporates the old in the new. Today, the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church is composed of the preserved

¹⁶² Germer, “Chapter 15- Memorial, landmark, symbol of peace: The long road of the Memorial Church to today’s place of learning and remembrance.”

¹⁶³ Di Maio, “Isolanità.”

¹⁶⁴ Sharr, “The Sedimentation of Memory.”

¹⁶⁵ Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*.

neo-Romanesque tower ruin, juxtaposed with the 1963 modernist additions.¹⁶⁶ The ruined tower represents loss, inviting contemplation and moral reflection. In contrast, the Chapel of Reconciliation uses the rubble in the rammed-earth walls, asking the visitors to seek out the traces of the past. It incorporates elements from the old church, addressing trauma through transformation.

Visitor interactions and memorial practices.

Public responses to the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church have shifted dramatically over time. When the ruined tower was first left standing after the war, with its uppermost stone layers still intact, some critics called it a “monster,” while many citizens argued strongly that it should be saved as a reminder of the destruction.¹⁶⁷ The modern additions built in the 1960s created a sharp contrast, symbolizing Germany stepping into a new, modern era.

Today, the church sits in the middle of a busy commercial area. Many people walk past it without even noticing, while Sunday services still keep it connected to everyday community life. At the same time, increasing tourist interest and the 2023 adaptive-reuse proposal suggest that the site is slowly shifting from a familiar city landmark into more of a tourist destination.

In contrast, public responses to the Chapel are often shaped by its location within the Berlin Wall Memorial. Tourists mostly encounter it as part of the memorial route, drawn to

¹⁶⁶ Germer, “Chapter 15- Memorial, landmark, symbol of peace: The long road of the Memorial Church to today’s place of learning and remembrance.”

¹⁶⁷ Germer, “Chapter 15- Memorial, landmark, symbol of peace: The long road of the Memorial Church to today’s place of learning and remembrance.”

its calm, grounded form and its role as a peaceful sanctuary in the middle of an open landscape. The rammed-earth walls and simple oval shape create a quiet, reflective atmosphere that contrasts with the intensity of the surrounding history.

Berlin residents come to the Chapel for Sunday services, community gatherings, and monthly tree-planting events that make the chapel part of everyday life for the neighborhood. These different ways of responding show how the chapel serves both as a tourist destination and as a living community space, with meanings that continue to shift as people interact with it over time.

How Each Church Integrates into the City

Today, the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church is fully woven into the urban life of Berlin. Standing in the middle of a major commercial district, it is located among shops, cafés, transit routes, and constant pedestrian movement. Rather than being treated as a separate sacred zone, the site is integrated into the city's everyday rhythms. The preserved ruin and the modern additions serve as an active public space, a cultural landmark, and a social hub. In this way, the church continues to operate as a vital urban node.

Although the Chapel of Reconciliation is not in the central, busy area of Berlin, it is closely woven into the Berlin Wall Memorial landscape. Sitting in an open green site with preserved border elements, and nearby residential blocks, the Chapel is easy to reach by tram, U-Bahn, and pedestrian travel. Its modest scale and rammed-earth walls blend with the park-like setting, while the vertical steel bars (along the route of the former Wall) and elements such as the archaeological windows, bells, and the metal outline on the ground maintain a direct

visual link to the former border. As a result, the chapel functions as an integrated urban space, where everyday movement and public memory meet.

6.4 Synthesis

After the war, as Germany struggled to understand its role in the conflict and to rebuild a sense of identity, cultural heritage became a way to anchor collective memory. Preserving historic sites offered a means to confront the past while carrying it forward. Yet the ways people relate to these places, and the meanings they assign to them, have shifted over time and were never fully predictable.

For the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, the ruined tower quickly became a symbol of destruction and renewal. Left visible within the busy urban fabric, it entered the city's daily life as a constant reminder of the war. Its integration into the surrounding commercial district ensured, that historical memory remained present, not distant or isolated.

At the Reconciliation Church, the remains are not immediately visible; they appear only when one looks through the archaeological windows or comes to understand the metal lines on the ground as the outline of the lost church. The new chapel, with its distinct form and rammed earth construction, memorializes those who died at the Berlin Wall and reminds us of the church that was destroyed. Set within the Berlin Wall Memorial landscape, the site layers physical traces and symbolic meanings, inviting visitors to engage with the city's history of division and loss.

Together, these two sites reveal how memorialization is shaped by design intention, context, visibility, and the passage of time. One stands openly as a scar in the city; the

other asks visitors to seek out its traces. Both show how preservation decisions influence what is remembered, how it is interpreted, and how meaning evolves as Berlin continues to fill its physical and historical voids.

Chapter 7: Conclusion- Drawing the Threads Together

In the aftermath of twentieth-century wars, Berlin was in ruins, shelters destroyed, lives lost, and identities fractured. The urban landscape bore not only physical wounds but also evidence of emotional and cultural trauma that shaped the national consciousness for generations and even today continues to do so. Surviving ruins are a silent witness to violence, loss, grief, and the fragility of human civilization during the devastating periods of war and partition.

Both sites analyzed in this thesis, the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church and the Chapel of Reconciliation, show that preservation approaches are inseparable from cultural narratives and national identity. At each site, surviving elements, new architectural form, material choices, and contextual relationships shape how loss and trauma are remembered and transmitted across generations. Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church retains a partly preserved ruin as a visible reminder surrounded by modern additions; Chapel of Reconciliation rises anew from the rubble of the original church, quietly marking the site of loss within a charged landscape of remembrance.

The contrasting preservation approaches show how destruction can be transformed into meaning. They demonstrate that architecture is not merely a container of memory but an active participant in shaping it, mediating between past and present, between trauma and healing, between immediate post-war responses and later reinterpretations.

Together, the two churches reveal how Berlin, even today, continues to negotiate its physical and historical voids, and how the meanings of places may shift as the city itself changes. In the ongoing dialogue between memory and regeneration, preservation can be a powerful tool for understanding what a society chooses to remember and how those memories evolve over time.

In Berlin, it is evident that memory—personal, collective, or institutional—changes over time. It shifts as the generation that endured the trauma of war and loss ages and then passes from the scene. In addition, memory is shaped by changing political narratives, evolving urban landscape and conditions, and the continuing presence of architectural remnants. This thesis has raised broader questions about how individuals and societies remember, reinterpret, and preserve the traces of conflict: ruins, memorials, monuments, forts, palaces, temples, churches, and many more.

What meanings do post-conflict ruins hold eighty years later, or forty years later, and how have these meanings shifted over time? In what ways do memories of conflicts evolve for subsequent generations who inherit, rather than experience, these histories?

How might future generations, the ones without direct association with war, division, or trauma, engage with and reinterpret these past events? How will the future generations understand these sites?

How does the urban fabric adapt to, or become reshaped by, the pressures and consequences of conflict, and how does a changing urban context reshape the historical narratives associated with a site?

In what ways do physical and symbolic sites serve as containers or triggers for collective memory with cities, and what role do architectural remnants play in shaping the collective memory and urban identity of cities like Berlin?

Do sites of trauma inevitably transition into tourist destinations, and how does this shift affect patterns of interaction and preservation priorities?

What ethical questions arise in the preservation of post-conflict ruins, and how effectively do heritage organizations address them?

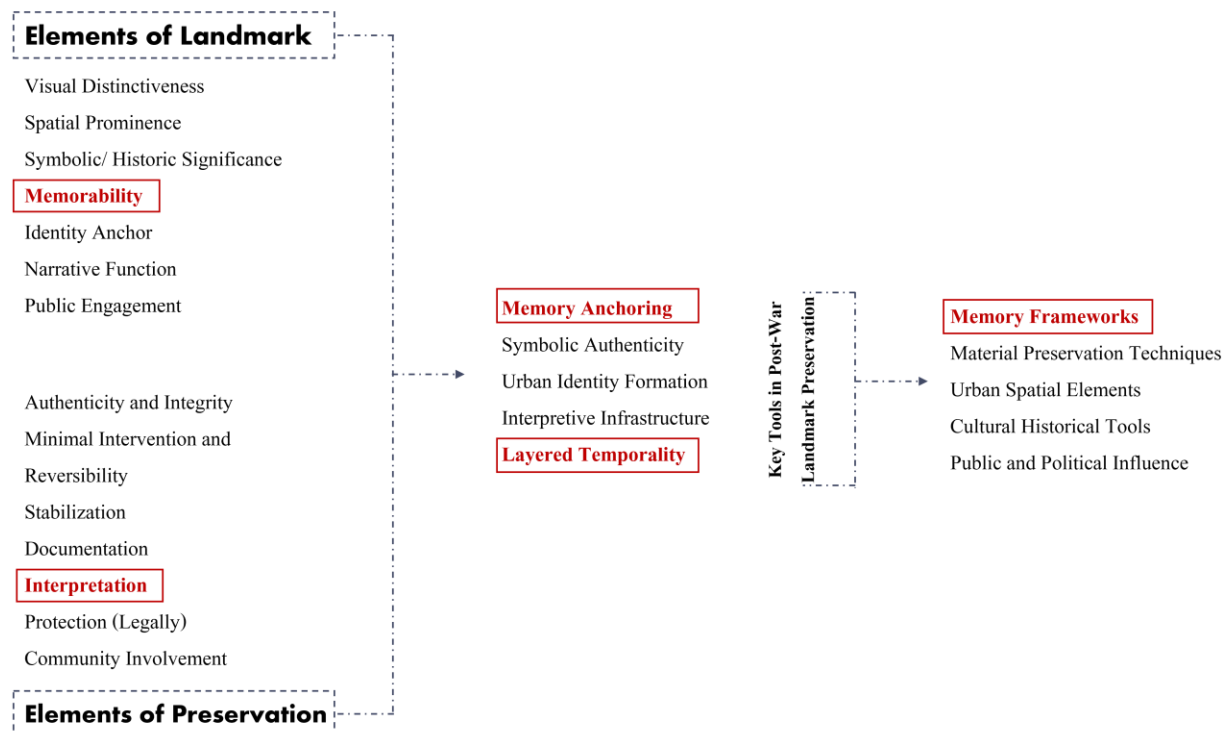


Figure 72. Research Framework

Future research could expand this study into a broader framework for understanding how trauma and collective memory operate across post-conflict heritage sites worldwide.

Building on the model developed, linking memorability (one of the elements of landmarks)

and interpretation (one of the elements of preservation), to further establish tools of memory frameworks through memory anchoring and layered temporality. It would be possible to compare how forts, temples, churches, palaces, ruins, memorials, and other preserved sites absorb, respond to, express, and transform memories of conflict through time. This brings us back to Riegl's concept of intentional and unintentional monuments, where these sites, although built as intentional monuments, turn into unintentional monuments post-conflict. This kind of research would help identify global patterns in how the preservation of buildings helps individuals and societies process trauma, and how meanings and interpretations of important buildings and significant sites shift across generations.

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