Introduction

Germany in the Twenty-First Century

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The focus of this special issue is ‘Germany in the twenty-first century’. The interdisciplinary contributions place emphasis on developments occurring specifically within the limited timeframe of the first decade 2000-2010. Given this wide scope, it is not possible to trace every considerable political, social, economic or cultural shift. What the contributions in this issue do, however, is highlight elements of these developments as snapshots of the changing political culture of Germany in the twenty-first century. The articles in this issue get to grips with answering the following questions: in which ways has Germany responded to the demands of globalisation; which areas of policy have seen major departures from the existing status quo and what impact has this had on German society or politics as a whole; which cultural transformations have taken place and how have these affected interpretations of collective memory? How can the Berliner Republik be said to differentiate itself from the Bonner Republik in the twenty-first century?

It would be wise to pose the question: what kind of century was Germany entering into? In 1992 Francis Fukuyama equated the end of history with the end of the Cold War, arguing western liberalism and democracy will supersede other forms of rule. Fukuyama’s thesis was quickly met with criticism and widespread rejection. History will never stop being moulded out of current experience. By the time the new millennium came around globalisation was the defining and continuing leitmotif of this age. Our collective memories are increasingly being impacted by global events; September 11 2001 serves as the key example. Globalisation has created shifts in economic and political power with traditional hegemonic models sliding into decline. The decade saw new geopolitical actor constellations and posited the steady rise of the so-called BRIC nations. Climate change, growing workplace insecurity, regulating global financial management, terrorism threats and migration are issues which no government has been able to keep off its agenda in the last ten years. They are also issues which no government has been able to deal with in isolation from its neighbours. Ever increasing flows of capital, citizens and goods across borders are transforming conceptions of spatiality. The world appears to have gone global whilst at the same time feeling like a smaller place. Technological advances in computing, telecommunications and social media are connecting organisations and people in a virtual space, in an unprecedented way.

Germany entered the last decade of the twentieth century with the rash and ‘unexpected’ or, in some cases, an ‘unhoped-for’ political unification of East and West Germany. The peaceful revolution of 1989-1990 brought with it

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2 Brazil, Russia, India, China.
new challenges and marked a turning point in German history. As the historian Heinrich August Winkler notes, the 'antiwestliche Sonderweg' of the German empire ended in 1945 and 1990 saw the demise of what he terms the 'postnationale Sonderweg der alten Bundesrepublik und der internationalistische Sonderweg der DDR'. Winkler contends that unified Germany departs from the previous understanding of the Federal Republic as a 'postnationale Demokratie unter Nationalstaaten' - a view forwarded by the historian Karl Dietrich Bracher in 1976 - and, instead, exists since 1990 as a 'demokratischer, postklassischer Nationalstaat unter anderen'. The German question was answered and unification recreated a sovereign German state.

The immediate priorities of the Kohl government in the post-unification phase were threefold. Firstly, Germany would carve out a role for itself as the motor of European integration. Secondly, the government tried to allay external fears of a 'new Germany' and, finally, it sought to overcome the economic, social and cultural difficulties imposed by the enormous task of unification. In the early 1990s Germany was rocked by a series of right wing attacks against foreigners and asylum seekers. These culminated in the arson attacks of Hoyerswerda and Solingen, causing both international concern and internal instability. What would the future hold for Germany’s large immigrant community following this spate of hostility? How was Germany going to deal with this issue and tackle its roots? With political unification the true extent of the Stasi operations against the East German people also started coming to light. Late in 1991 the law governing the opening of the East German Stasi files came in to force under the direction of Joachim Gauck, Commissioner at the Federal Agency for the Stasi files. This was the beginning of a long-term path to reappraisal of the East German dictatorship which would involve opening access to the Stasi files, seeking to bring those responsible for crimes to justice and providing adequate compensation for victims. Internally, Germany was on a quest for inner unity whilst at the same time trying to come to terms with the existence of two dictatorships in one century.

Public-political debate was dominated by Helmut Kohl’s Neue Wache memorial, the design and location of the Holocaust memorial to the Jewish victims of Nazi inhumanity and a memorial and site of memory for the victims of the Berlin Wall. Controversies also surrounded the opening of an exhibition dedicated to the Nazi Wehrmacht in Hamburg; the Walser-Bubis debate.

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7 The German term Aufarbeitung has ambiguous translations in English but the most common are ‘coming to terms with’ or ‘reappraisal’ of the past.
The roots of these controversies can be traced back to the infamous *Historikerstreit* of 1986-1987. Considering the forty year division in which two memory cultures of the Nazi period had been constructed, the occurrence of these debates was certainly not untimely and they highlighted the ongoing sensitivity and deep-seated tensions associated with competing historical interpretations of this period in German collective memory.

Disillusionment with unification started to set in amidst the sweeping changes it brought. Time and again the *Mauer im Kopf* or ‘wall in the head’ metaphor was utilised to describe the cultural and attitudinal differences between East and West Germans following forty years of separation. East Germans were accused of reacting to unification by steeping themselves in *Ostalgie* - a form of nostalgia for the former East Germany based on consumption of East German products, cultural expressions through television, film and literature and dismissive attitudes to the philosophy of western market economics - a phenomenon which has signed no signs of stopping in the twenty-first century. In part this was also a response to the difficulties East Germans faced resulting from the ‘shock therapy’ of a speedy unification process and reorienting themselves in a new value system. The decade was marked by consistently high unemployment rates in Eastern Germany, something which was an economic priority for the Kohl government and its successor: the first time political alliance of the Social Democrat Party (SPD) and the Green Party (*Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*).

Although Berlin was voted the capital of unified Germany in 1991, it took another eight years before the national government took up office in the city. With a new seat in Berlin it was not long before the Schröder-led coalition faced a fall in ratings. Leading frontman Oskar Lafontaine’s resignation and the decision to enter German troops in to the Kosovan war caused a distinct decline in the popularity of the new coalition. Whilst providing ample ammunition for the Christian Democrat Party (CDU) opposition, the Kosovo conflict was followed by heightened accusations surrounding illegal and undeclared party donations during Kohl’s chancellorship. The scandal heightened in summer 2000 and led to a battle for unity (*Streit um die Einheit*) between the two major parties; partly construed to distract from the tainted image of the CDU in the press. Germany ended the decade on the same negative note on which it started: rising waves of right wing extremism including attacks on synagogues, Jewish cemeteries and physical violence against foreigners. With a muted mood, Germany entered the twenty-first century.

The West German hey-day based on the founding myths of the Mercedes, Volkswagen, the quality seal ‘Made in Germany’, the D-Mark and the social


welfare state, to name but a few was receding.\textsuperscript{15} Has Germany reached its end station as a ‘\textit{geglückte Demokratie}’ with a reorientation based on core values of European integration and constitutional patriotism?\textsuperscript{16} As Europe’s primary exporter and strongest economy overall, Germany has felt the competition from countries such as China but surprisingly it emerged as one of Europe’s strongest members in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. Recent opinion polls given international media attention placed Germany as one of the most desirables places in the world to live\textsuperscript{17} and as the most attractive location for higher education in the international market.\textsuperscript{18} Germany’s international standing was considered to be mostly positive at the close of the decade and ended on a high with a multitude of celebrations: twenty years of the fall of the Berlin Wall, twenty years of unity and the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the Federal Republic.

Tensions caused by East/West differences were reflected in political and public debate about remembrance culture pertaining to the GDR. The beginning of the decade saw an even heightened wave of GDR nostalgia encapsulated in television shows and films such as the DDR Shows on RTL and \textit{Good Bye Lenin} and \textit{Sonnenallee}.\textsuperscript{19} Parallel to these cultural developments ran widespread discontent with the new \textit{Hartz IV} unemployment measures which were interpreted as placing East German citizens at a particular disadvantage as well as generally lowering social security and living standards. ‘Monday demonstrations’ in the spirit of 1989 were held in protest but were met with negative press pertaining to the East German psyche; ‘\textit{Jammertal Ost}’ headlined the current affairs magazine \textit{Der Spiegel} in September 2004\textsuperscript{20} It was thus unsurprising that in 2005 Wolfgang Thierse felt it necessary to speak out about this during his speech at the central celebrations for the day of German Unity in Potsdam on 03 October proclaiming ‘\textit{Der Osten ist kein Jammertal und auch kein Milliardengrab}’.\textsuperscript{21} With competing interpretations of the GDR polarised between a trivial \textit{Alltag} and a repressive \textit{Diktatur}, the Sabrow Commission - named after the Director of the Centre for Contemporary History in Potsdam - was appointed in early 2005 to formulate a key conception for a networked historical alliance for the reappraisal of the SED dictatorship.\textsuperscript{22} For well over a year the commission was a mainstay in the German press as each sitting provoked a mixture of

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criticism and reflection. In 2008 a study authored by Klaus Schroeder and Monika Deutz-Schroeder highlighted the deficits in schoolchildren’s understanding of historical narratives of the GDR. It also pinpointed an ongoing generational problem of competing with family memory and the wider societal factors involved in the development of historical consciousness and knowledge formation of the past. The divide between East and West Germany socially and economically was again brought up at the twenty year anniversary of unification with Gesine Lötzsch, MP in the Left Party, declaring politicians to date had done nothing more than create a ‘Hartz IV Land’ out of East Germany.

The last ten years have seen many changes in Germany politics and society. The second Grand Coalition in post-war German history coincided with the momentous rise to power of Angela Merkel as the first woman Chancellor. Fifteen members of parliament with an immigration background were elected and two different federal Presidents entered and left office. Shifting political landscapes at both local and national level emerged. The significant rise of the Green party and Die Linke embedded a five-party system in to German politics. Their success made inroads in to the support for other parties with the SPD notably suffering large-scale defeat in the 2009 federal election. The expression of dissatisfaction did not stop at the polling booths. The ‘Noughties’ can also be considered a decade of protest in Germany. Welfare and educational reforms brought citizens on to the streets to demonstrate against the Hartz IV social welfare provisions, the introduction of compulsory student fees in some federal states and the internationalisation process of the German higher education system. This saw increasing numbers of universities replacing the traditional Magister and Diplom with Bachelor and Master degrees. In the final months of the decade, fierce clashes took place between police and demonstrators of the Stuttgart 21 project in Baden-Württemberg.

In his article, Transformations of the Educating Leviathan: The Restructuring of German Higher Education in the Noughties, Karsten Mause investigates the dynamic changes which have been undertaken in the German higher education system. With specific emphasis on the changes in the higher education structure, Mause explores the key ways in which the ‘educating state’ (p.14) has changed in Germany in the twenty-first century and which mechanisms operated to enable these changes to take place? The article highlights three major developments: the introduction of Bachelor and Master programmes, the introduction of accreditation agencies and the role of tuition fees. Mause shows that there have been changes in the ‘supply side’ of the educational marketplace, altering the previous status quo of ‘supply’ and ‘demand’ under the system of Diplom, Magister and Staatsexamen. Since 1998 Bachelor and Master programmes have been rolled out Germany-wide and Mause’s analysis plots how these new programmes have ‘crowded out’ (p. 16) the traditional course formats as well as public institutions remaining the largest ‘supplier’ of higher education in the German marketplace. The

23 Ibid., pp. 185-367.
article also tackles how Bachelor and Master studies came to the fore and what led to their overtaking the traditional German higher education degree programmes. Mause identifies three key aspects: i) the badly needed reform of the old system termed marked by underfunding, high drop-out rates and late entry into the labour market; ii) Germany’s entry into the Bologna process with the ultimate aim of creating a ‘European Area of Higher Education’ (p.17) by 2010 marked by a two-tier Bachelor/Master structure; iii) dual pressure by the governing SPD-Green coalition and the state governments who never ceased to make higher educational policy a priority.

Furthermore, Mause also detects and elaborates on a complementary shift in regulatory practice accompanying the introduction of Bachelor and Master programmes: namely the entry of accreditation agencies in to the playing field. As Mause shows, changes occurred in the late 1990s which focused on the quality control of academic programmes. A delegation occurred shifting ‘quality assurance competencies from ministerial bodies at the state level to accreditation agencies.’ (p.21) Mause’s articles highlights that they operate as private agencies in ‘an accreditation market’, (ibid.) thereby breaking with the previous dynamic of state-controlled to market-controlled regulation. However, as Mause reflects, the state has not completely disappeared. The state emerges as the ultimate ‘quality controller’ (p. 24), despite its perceived back-seat role, as it sets out the rules for the game and the entry procedures into the market.

Lastly, Mause explores the third major change in the higher education system: tuition fees. Starting by highlighting the landmark decision by the Federal Constitutional Court on 26 January 2005, declaring a ‘Germany-wide prohibition of tuition fees at public universities as unconstitutional’, (p. 25) he breaks down his analysis of the after-effects into three main groups: federal states which introduced fees, those which introduced fees and abolished them and states which decided against fees. In seeking to explain the differences across Germany for this dissimilar behaviour, Mause concludes that ideological differences in the ruling coalitions and regional demographics played a major part in the imbalanced behaviour across Germany’s federal states. The decision not to have fees or to abolish them almost always lay with leftist coalitions whilst the ‘fee states’ were ruled by centre-right coalitions. Mause also goes on to show that no East German federal state introduced fees, regardless of the political ideologies of the ruling coalition.

In Prekäre Beschäftigung und Anerkennung Stefanie Wahl traces change in the German labour market since reforms were undertaken at the beginning of the decade. As a consequence, an increase in primarily precarious forms of work can be seen in Germany which offer little of the income, social protection and integration measures afforded by well-paid, decent work. The most common forms of precarious work in Germany are shown by the author to be temping, fixed-term contract work, as well as so-called ‘mini-jobs’ or ‘midi-jobs’. Nevertheless, this kind of precarious work still remains a fairly obscure part of the labour market. Wahl indicates that the issue of precarious work came to the fore most prominently around 2006 in Germany with the publication of a study by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung highlighting that eight per cent of citizens were bound by conditions of precarity. The author also roots the analysis of precarity in the fore-running academic discussions and publications on this topic. These locate the increase in flexible work as a ‘symptom of the postfordist model of production’ (p.47), brought on by
structural changes in the labour market. The author’s analysis deconstructs the German labour market in the twenty-first century into three broad categories: normal work, freelance work and atypical work. By consulting various studies, Wahl depicts a wide-spread consensus that conditions in the German labour market are enabling a sharp increase in precarious work.

Part time work is defined as involving twenty-one hours of paid work a week or less. Wahl points out the high participation rate of women in this category and although official claims that part-time work can aid in achieving a more balanced work and home life, Wahl argues that the reality is different in that a stop-gap has been created, especially for women searching for permanent work. Fixed-term contracts are shown by Wahl to affect young people and women in particular. Insecurity, breaks in a candidate’s working history and difficulty in life-planning are all negative effects demonstrated by Wahl in her examination. Temping has also become a normal part of the labour market with Wahl explaining in detail the complex relations between the worker, the recruitment agency and the employer. Again, low wages, high demands on the workers to be permanently flexible on the agency’s behalf and quick disposal are some of the destabilising features brought to the fore by Wahl. ‘Mini-jobs’ with a mere €400 a month salary, lack of social security measures and legal number of hours count as one of the most precarious forms of work in Germany today.

Wahl also offers an explanation from a socio-anthropological aspect outlining a theory developed by Axel Honneth relating work and societal recognition. Building on this, Wahl indicates the integrative function work has for individuals in society and the links between not only the financial rewards but also the more abstract aspects such as social capital, appreciation, social contact to other employees, opportunities for wider participation in the company and recognition of social rights. Precarious work works against this and leads to situations of ‘Missachtung’ (p.46) or irreverence. Wahl points out the varying effects of this: exclusion, stigmatisation and indignity. As the author unfortunately concludes, precarious work has become more of a norm than a trend in Germany and voices against such precarious work are not being heard at the political levels which matter the most.

In the article *High performance career women in ‘Germany’s Next Top Model - A new view on women and work in German Reality TV*, Bahri Gültekin deals with the portrayal of gender relations and working lifestyles in the popular fashion casting show “Germany’s Next Top Model”. As the author highlights, reality television has flourished to become a huge market for the German entertainment industry and is broadcast in various ways nearly every day. Ratings are high and a huge fan base led “Germany’s Next Topmodel” to celebrate success all over the world in all kinds of languages over several series. The critical success of the show and the rise of popularity of reality television led Gültekin to analyse the content of the show with a group of test subjects. The results of Gültekin’s study reveal that reality television is assisting in creating new ‘lifestyle blueprints’ (p. 57) which particularly appeal to younger audiences.

Gültekin applies a method of conversion analysis to discover the main topics present in a show on a latent and manifest level. The technique of conversion analysis allows the researcher and his test subjects to experience the television show together and write down their emotions and associations. In group or single interviews, problematic topics are discussed and a show
overview is constructed. Recurring themes and emotions can then be used to find hidden and intended topics in the show. In Gültekin’s case, he infers that the female candidates are being shown to be trained for a real-life model career but on the other hand, hidden inside this orchestration, is a latent staging of Heidi Klum as somewhat of a superwoman. In continual sequence, the candidates are strategically used to illustrate her perfection and flawlessness by celebrating her continuously and complimenting her in each episode.

The candidates, who are referred to as ‘the girls’ in the show, are systematically dismantled and criticised, even made fun of during the episodes. Gültekin also contends that Klum is the ultimate role model for the candidates and it is this asymmetrical relationship which is constantly shown and worked upon in the shows. The investigation in to the show also highlights that Klum is also portrayed in various social roles such as the ‘handy man’ or as a ‘photographer.’ Her professional appearance in these roles led to another topic, in which the concept of the high career performance woman is shown. This leads to one of Gültekin’s central theses: cultural and societal expectations have shifted so that women are pressured to be beautiful and elegant but must also perform on a high level in every kind of situation in the working environment. Gültekin finds parallels to current working situations in German society, where not only grades or expertise matter. Last-minute changes, workplace changes, sudden changes in technology and even the role of the work itself force human beings to become more flexible. Those who do not perform on a high level often get left behind. Gültekin contends that it is these kinds of lifestyles which are being broadcast on German reality television such as Germany’s Next Topmodel. It is in these environments where this kind of performance is being taught and learned. The popularity and success of the show are early indicators that this sort of lifestyle is proving to be interesting for younger audiences in particular. Gültekin concludes that these television formats are providing a replacement for role models who are no longer found within traditional structures such as family or in religion for example, but instead in media icons.

Moving on to issues of cultural memory, the central focus of Mark Barnard’s contribution is the 2010 Deutsches Historisches Museum (DHM) exhibition: Hitler and the Germans. Volksgemeinschaft and Crimes. In his article The Breaking of a Taboo? The Museumisation of Adolf Hitler and the Changing Relationship Between the Former Führer and Germany, Barnard’s indicates how, in the very first instance, new ground had indeed been broken in that a museum exhibition dedicated solely to Hitler opened on German soil in the capital city, Berlin. As the author highlights, previous carriers of cultural memory relating to the Nazi period played out narratives pertaining to victim/perpetrator discourses: the concentration camps, Wehrmacht crimes and the Holocaust. The idea of a museum exhibition dedicated solely to Adolf Hitler was, as Barnard shows, nigh on unthinkable with previous attempts in 2004 to outline a similar exhibition vetoed by the DHM academic board out of ‘fear of fostering a Führerkult’ (p. 72) and providing neo-Nazis with an external ‘place of pilgrimage’.

Barnard’s thesis challenges the viewpoint that the Hitler exhibition was staged with less, historical reservation and instead, it actually conformed to the Kollektivschuldthese. The attention placed on the relationship between the German people and their embrace of Hitler as a Führer figure ‘failed’ in
the authors viewpoint ‘to foster a more impartial and balanced insight into the Führer factor.’ (p. 73) Barnard offers an understanding for this based on his assessment of the hostility to the structuralist staging of the exhibition leaning on the collective guilt thesis and further questions to what extent taboos concerning the presentation of Hitler had actually been broken with the exhibition.

Barnard’s article traces the core narratives of the exhibition as viewed by its chief curator Hans-Ulrich Thamer and offers a broad account of intentionalist and structuralist positions relating to Hitler and the Holocaust. Barnard’s scrutiny of the undertones of the exhibition illustrate that the organisers had borne the idea from a clear structuralist viewpoint assuming a latent cooperation ‘from below’ involving the compliance of the masses. Therefore, as the author shows, the objective of the organisers was to disperse with the intentionalist approaches that Hitler was the sole embodiment of Nazism and the horrors of the crimes committed during this period were down to the figure of the Führer. This was emphasised in the museum with objects such as ‘letters of adoration to Hitler’ and ‘a photographic fan book.’ (p. 73) In response to what the author refers to as ‘an alleged historical immaturity concerning the musealisation of Hitler’, (p. 74) he applies the principles of content analysis to analyse supra-regional newspapers. In doing so he is able to show if an official collective guilt thesis was accepted or rejected by the German press and its readers. Barnard’s examination of newspaper sources highlights mixed reactions to the exhibition portraying intentionalist and structuralist accounts. These range from general praise of the exhibition, to questioning the actual achievement of the exhibition’s objectives of underlining the dependent relationship between Führer and Volk. Furthermore, Barnard’s highlights critiques of deficits in the exhibition’s content, particularly the low presence of Hitler’s personalised possessions and omission of resistance attempts against the regime amongst several others.

Finally, Barnard’s article offers a deeper insight in to the surface claim that new ground had been broken with a Hitler exhibition. As the author contends, for such an exhibition to have been opened in the capital, a watershed had been marked. However, the museums curators were still constrained by the obvious cultural and moral boundaries of objectifying Hitler. For example, Barnard shows the methods used to prevent a perceived glorification or the enticement of neo-Nazis: ‘co-curator Klaus-Jürgen Sembach evaded the problem by depicting busts of the Führer in miniature, thereby rendering adulating poses from right-wing extremists difficult.’ (p. 87) The question as to whether taboos had actually been broken is met with scepticism especially considering the lack of Hitler’s personal objects but, as he concludes, a musealisation of the Führer’s memory in such a way remains unprecedented.

In Archiving Berlin’s Past and Renewing the Ruhr Valley, Ana Souto applies the theories of Walter Benjamin to show how regional identities have been constructed in the respective cityscapes of Berlin and Essen. Using memorials and museums as the central objects of investigation, Souto explores the concepts of ‘barbarism’ and ‘renewal’ as defined in the writings of Benjamin to identify differentiating identity constructions. The author alerts us to the multiplicity of connotations hidden in the medium of the built environment. Past power struggles, positive and negative heritage and authenticity all meet within the web of structures in the urban landscape. As such, Souto contends it is possible to see how ‘the built environment supported the process of
coming to terms with the past with the conservation, transformation and construction of traces, museums and memorials.’ (p. 104)

With regards to Berlin, Souto highlights that most of the built environment pertains mainly to historical narratives of the Nazi past. The number of structures with direct and indirect connection to that period in history overrides that of the communist dictatorship. Nevertheless, the author argues it is possible to achieve ‘atonement’ (p. 104) through the overt emphasis on remembering. Focusing on the Reichstag, the Museum Otto Weidt, the Topography of Terror and Bebel Platz, Souto shows how the differing designs, locations and architectural interpretations invite visitors to engage with the past and negotiate German identity in the present.

In a further example, the awareness accorded to the space reserved for the collections of the Third Reich and the post 1945 period in the German History Museum reflects the importance these historical narratives have for contemporary German identity. Questions of authenticity are also considered by Souto using an assortment of different examples. The Holocaust Memorial and Jewish Museum are noted by the author to have been constructed on sites lacking authenticity i.e. built on neutral sites with no explicit link to what is being remembered. The reconstruction of the Royal Palace is taking place on an authentic site but the building itself will not be. Moreover, the design pertaining mostly to the original Prussian blueprints erases traces of the East German Palast der Republik from the memory landscape. Souto’s understanding of these is of being coded with Benjamin’s idea of barbarism. However, this coding offers an opportunity to reconsider the past from the vantage point of the present day and renew our sense of identity after connecting with the memory embodied in them.

Turning to Essen, Souto highlights a different dynamic associated with the links between the urban built environment and identity creation. This time the author applies Benjamin’s notion of ‘renewing the old’. Finding itself in the heart of the industrial Ruhrgebiet, Essen’s identity was intrinsically linked to industrialisation and the production of steel and coal. As Souto illustrates, the closure of coal mines left a void in the urban landscape and coupled with this came a loss of identity for the area. One option available was to turn the derelict sites into ‘museums, cultural centres, exhibition halls or places of recreation.’(p.112) Thereby, the ‘old’ had life breathed in to it as something new, although there was never a radical departure from the original site of construction. Lastly, Souto shows that the city of Essen has taken advantage of initiatives such as its ‘European Capital of Culture 2010’ title and the International Building Exhibition in 1999 to regenerate itself, primarily via the medium of its museums.

In keeping with the interdisciplinary nature of the journal, the collection of papers in this volume identifies just some of the numerous changes which have taken place within German politics and society over the last ten years. Germany has been subject to the same pressures of globalisation as many Western democracies. The way in which Germany has responded has been done against the constant backdrop of its self-understanding of being a motor of European integration and maintaining an adequate social welfare model. In part, Germany’s policies have been met with considerable success as in the case of higher education policies; the relatively open access, low-fee policies are proving popular with international students. On the other hand, the
considerable rise in informal and precarious work is a trend which has made its presence felt in almost every society world-over. The management of this in Germany seems to almost perpetuate this development as opposed to tackling it head on. With a renewed self confidence following the worldwide successful reception of its hosting of the World Cup in 2006, Germany entered in to a period of renegotiating self-identity based on patriotism towards the end of the decade. However, this was done within prescribed limits. One of the most important concerns of this decade which sets Germany apart, at least from its Western European counterparts, is the ongoing reappraisal and memory politics surrounding the approaches to remembrance for the two German dictatorships of the twentieth century. This, quite rightfully, has shown no signs of abating in the twenty-first century.

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