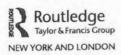# Public Space and the Challenges of Urban Transformation in Europe

Edited by Ali Madanipour, Sabine Knierbein, and Aglaée Degros

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Chapter 8

Memorials and Material Dislocation

The Politics of Public Space in Warsaw

Jerzy Elżanowski

The sphere of public commemoration in post-1989 Warsaw is both typical of, and unique for, the kind of redrawing of public memory experienced in central and eastern European cities. Typical, because it followed patterns of semiotic reconfiguration seen, for different reasons and in the service of different political agendas, in cities as diverse historically, ethnically, and politically as Bucharest, Tallinn, Dresden, or Moscow. Streets were renamed; religious institutions reinvigorated; statues of communist heroes removed and replaced with national (or nationalistic) figures from the past; socialist realist urban ensembles were repurposed, sometimes seamlessly, but often awkwardly, to suit the programmes of a market economy. However, beyond these general similarities lie two phenomena specific to Warsaw. The first is a sense of tremendous dislocation resulting from the scale and method of World War II destruction in the city—what the Polish sociologist Stanisław Ossowski has called the 'dehumanisation or deculturalisation of [Warsaw's urban] matter' (Ossowski, 1967, p. 396; cf. Chmielewska, 2012). The second, its correlate, is the uncommonly dense, complex, and contested system of plaques and monuments commemorating hundreds of sites of public mass executions, attacks on Polish and Jewish civilian and insurgent groups, mass deportations, zones of racial exclusion, and other forms of wartime and post-war Nazi and Stalinist repression. Consequently, making public space in Warsaw requires close and careful attention to the *local* layers of intersecting physical and discursive spaces, which testify to the oppression of the city's Polish and Jewish populations and the mass destruction of its urban infrastructures.

In this chapter, I present several commemorative interventions as examples of the numerous discursive layers that constitute a network of remembrance on Chłodna Street in Warsaw's northwestern Wola District. Among them, I do a close reading of two separate institutional projects initiated in December 2009 at the corner of Chłodna and Żelazna Streets by the Museum of the History of Polish Jews as well as the Wola District Office. As I will argue, both institutional projects were unsuccessful because they failed to recognize the semiotic relationships between existing objects on the street, the photographic and memorial representations of those objects, and the contiguous spaces of polemic.

Before its destruction in the war, Chłodna Street was a significant east–west artery and a neighbourhood centre for manufacturing and entertainment. Its housing stock was of higher quality than in the surrounding, primarily Jewish, working-class neighbourhoods of Wola, and its population was ethnically and economically more diverse (Piotrowski, 2007, pp. 19–21). During the war, as a military transport route through German-occupied Warsaw, parts of Chłodna's roadway were walled off from the surrounding Jewish ghetto. Starting in December 1941, ghetto inhabitants could only cross the street in one of two ways—either by waiting for special gates to be opened periodically at the corner of Żelazna Street, or by a pedestrian bridge erected nearby in January 1942 (Engelking & Leociak, 2009, p. 129). This footbridge, the largest of four similar ghetto crossings in Warsaw, was most probably removed after the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto in the late summer of the same year (Engelking & Leociak, 2009, pp. 115, 133).

Remembering the Chłodna Street footbridge was one of the objectives of the two projects in question—an art installation titled with the punctuation mark '(. . .)' (referred to here as *Ellipsis*) as well as a complex municipal pavement restoration scheme called the *Chłodna Street Revitalisation Plan*. *Ellipsis* attempted to counteract a perceived intellectual and cultural vacuum with respect to Polish–Jewish relations and the Holocaust on the site, but did not acknowledge previous public dialogue on the matter. Similarly, the *Revitalisation Plan*, which was meant to highlight Chłodna Street's contested histories, instead privileged two simplified historical narratives over complex others and thus, paradoxically, contributed to further erasures and silences.

Since the mid-1940s, Warsaw has been saturated with memorials: first with informal plaques and wooden crosses, and later with several hundred stone tablets mounted near sites of execution. Over the last six decades, this commemorative landscape has been augmented, erased, reinscribed, and repositioned ideologically (Chmielewska, 2008; Janicka, 2011). One of Warsaw's rare symbols of Jewish heroism, Nathan Rapoport's Warsaw Ghetto Monument, was incorporated into Polish communist narratives of martyrdom and freedom-fighting immediately after its unveiling in 1948 (Bierut, 1951, pp. 202–204). Polish communists used the monument's representation of Jewish armed resistance in the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising to displace the memory of the later, primarily Polish, Warsaw Uprising of 1944, thereby silencing participants and supporters of the 1944 Uprising who were hostile to the Soviet-backed government (Young 1989, pp. 91–93). After 1989, in a forceful response by dissident groups to the persecution of former insurgents and their families, and, more recently, with the strengthening of nationalist and Christian fundamentalist political parties, monuments to the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, as well as those commemorating the victims of Soviet atrocities, have come to dominate public space and memory discourse in Poland's capital (Keff, 2011, p. 7). Bearing overtly Christian symbols with a martyrological tenor, these monuments have set a particularly nationalistic tone for commemoration in Warsaw. With a concurrent rise in interest in Jewish memory and culture, especially within Warsaw's post-Soviet left-wing groups, and with international support for projects such as the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, past and present competition between Polish and Jewish, communist and Roman Catholic, right and left wing political narratives has led to a complex and contested memorial topography.

In Warsaw, personal agendas of memory are deeply conflated with community memories as well as pre- and post-Soviet state narratives. Citizens commonly engage in historical debates and voice their ideological positions. They participate in a combination of historical reenactments, mass religious events, and commemorative state celebrations and actively support or condemn institutional actions. This was evident during the clashes between Catholic fundamentalists and Polish authorities over the planned removal by the government of a wooden cross spontaneously installed in front of the Presidential Palace in Warsaw to commemorate the sudden death of President Lech Kaczynski in April 2010. This participatory context often stands in opposition to pluralistic and local forms of remembrance because, as Bożena Keff warns (2011, pp. 9–10), ideological rivalries over imagined and desired national pasts have dominated Warsaw's social life.

However, within smaller groups such as historical societies, housing cooperatives, nonprofits, or citizen-journalist collectives, this exceptional engagement with political history can have positive consequences for a nonschematic remembering that privileges lived memory in the local space of the neighbourhood over municipal or national political and religious ideologies. In the following sections, I present the numerous forms of, mainly online, citizen-initiated information, polemic, pressure, and protest that have accompanied both the *Chłodna Street Revitalisation Plan* and the *Ellipsis* project. I suggest that there is a place for a kind of pluralistic public memory in Warsaw where enacting *difference* has the potential to productively destabilise rather than reinforce nationalist narratives (Bhabha, 2004, p. 221). Using the example of the Wola District, I unpack the relationships between personal viewing and remembering, and municipal ideology and rhetoric—what

Christine Boyer (2012, p. 326) characterises as the spaces between 'the eye of the spectator and the logic of governmentality'.

Viewing

In a contemporary photograph of Chłodna Street an elderly man peers into a brass box attached to a vertical structure before him (Figure 8.1). It is late afternoon on an autumn day; the sunset casts him in shadow as it lights the newly paved sidewalk on which he stands. The object is a new

Figure 8.1 Corner of Chłodna and Żelazna streets with the *Footbridge of Memory* designed by Tomasz de Tusch-Lec. Warsaw, 2011.

Figure 8.2 Contemporary photograph of an archival image of Chłodna Street in 1942, taken through one lens of a stereoscopic viewing device mounted on the *Footbridge of Memory*. Warsaw, 2011.

memorial entitled *Footbridge of Memory*—part of the recently completed *Chłodna Street Revitalisation Plan*, encompassing Chłodna and Elektoralna Streets from Aleja Jana Pawła II to Żelazna Street. The memorial consists of four painted steel posts, which recall the spatial configuration of the footbridge that spanned the street in 1942 and connected two sections of the Nazi-constructed Jewish ghetto. The pavement is an integral part of the memorial—patterns made with granite, brick, concrete, and cast iron represent pre-war, wartime, and early post-war cartographies. Coloured pavers trace the outlines of 19th century buildings demolished both during and after the war, indicate areas once occupied by these buildings and mark the approximate locations of Nazi objects of oppression: bunkers, ghetto walls, and the footbridge itself.

Inside the box, through a set of sturdy brass binoculars, the man sees a stereoscopic image of the site as it appeared in 1942 (Figure 8.2). Automobiles, trams, wagons, and pedestrians squeeze past two sets of brick walls and under the wooden footbridge. The walls flank the street along almost its entire length. As a primary military transport route for German armies, the cobblestone roadway of Chłodna remained open during the war, but the sidewalks and the buildings along the street belonged to the ghetto. A 1930s apartment building, visible in the background beyond the intersection that temporarily marked the ghetto perimeter, served as an inanimate witness to imprisonment and humiliation. From its windows, the Gestapo could survey the footbridge and the adjacent vehicular crossing. The building still exists today, and structures the composition in the present-day photograph of the man and the monument. Directly behind the man a steel and concrete inlay in the pavement follows the line of one of the ghetto walls.

The brass box instructs tourists (in English) to 'TURN THE KNOB UNDERNEATH UNTIL YOU SEE ALL 4 SLIDES IN 3D'. Each consecutive ghetto scene (Figure 8.3) is meant to be viewed stereoscopically, but photographing it for this chapter flattens the experience to two dimensions. At the same time, it captures information beyond the scene at the centre: layered
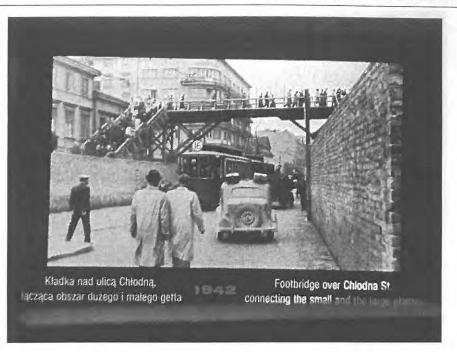
Figure 8.3 Contemporary photograph of an archival image of the Chłodna Street footbridge in 1942 taken through one lens of a stereoscopic viewing device mounted on the *Footbridge of Memory*. Warsaw, 2011.

apertures obscure the image of the footbridge grabbed quickly through the eyepiece. The English language descriptions, '1942' and 'Chlodna St., [*sic*] footbridge . . .' fade into the lower margin. The footbridge is truncated, and the descending crowd squeezed between the tectonically brutal raw brick wall, the refined details of the architecture of the city, and the apertures of contemporary viewing. From the archival fragment at the centre, faces stare through uncountable layers of representation. They stare at 'Amthor', identified in the Wehrmacht Propaganda Inventory as the photographer of the 1942 scene, stare at the elderly man standing in the shadow of the *Footbridge of Memory* in October 2011, stare obliquely at the photographer of the image under discussion, and stare at the reader of this text.

Layering

Since 2004, Grzegorz Lewandowski, co-founder of Chłodna 25, a trendy café and performance venue located in the 1930s apartment building visible in Figures 8.1 and 8.2, has been working with local residents deliberately at the point where culture and trauma intersect: Intellectually, by consistently hosting politically contentious discussions that address the place of the Warsaw Ghetto in Polish society, but also physically, by choosing Chłodna as the location for the club. Lewandowski's mission has been to encourage civil society in an area that has remained on the social and economic margins since the end of the war. Events organized at the café address topics from feminism and racism to public space and neighbourhood design. The results, as varied as the different groups of people who attend the events, have helped both to animate and silence the corner of Chłodna and Żelazna Streets. While most of the initiatives considered at Chłodna 25 have been extremely nuanced, others represent a troubling conflation of Holocaust and military history with tourism and urban regeneration.

In February 2005, neighbourhood residents met at café Chłodna 25 to discuss the future of their street. A group of community members recommended that the Wola District attract tourists by looking for ways to engage groups walking the street on their way back from the Warsaw Rising Museum (the institution uses a variation on the accepted term 'uprising') recently opened nearby. Among other requests, they asked that a horse-drawn tram be run on weekends along Chłodna (presumably to transport tourists to and from the museum), that the ghetto footbridge be 'recreated', and that a historical reenactment present battles fought on the street during the Warsaw Uprising (Zyśk, 2005).

In April 2007, Chłodna 25 hosted a much more focused intervention. In cooperation with the District Council, the café held a public dialogue with Marek Edelman, one of the few surviving leaders of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. After the event, directly across from the café windows, local graffiti artist Adam Jastrzębski (pseud. Adam X) unveiled the first commissioned monument to the footbridge titled simply *The Footbridge Was There* (Figure 8.4). The title was painted in three languages: Polish, Hebrew, and Yiddish—originally with basic errors in the Yiddish, later corrected with an additional text—an unplanned sign of both the disappearance and the trace survival of the Yiddish language in Polish culture. The mural takes advantage of the

Figure 8.4 Adam Jastrzębski, *The Footbridge Was There* (2007). Chłodna Street, Warsaw, 2009.

triptych-like quality of the three existing concrete panels used as its base—fragments of an abandoned billboard from the 1970s, the height and positioning of which roughly correspond to those of the former ghetto wall. The mural includes a simple map of the site indicating the location of the footbridge as well as a stylised perspectival view of Chłodna Street modelled after an archival photograph from 1942.

Over a year later, in the fall of 2008, the City of Warsaw formally acknowledged the footbridge site with a compact memorial situated across the street from Jastrzębski's mural. The memorial, designed by architect and sculptor Tomasz de Tusch-Lec (the same artist who would be commissioned to design the *Footbridge of Memory* only a few months later), is part of a larger network of commemorative plaques, pavement inlays, and information pylons placed at key points along the path of the former ghetto wall. At the corner of Chłodna and Żelazna Streets, the installation consists of a standard patterned concrete pylon, reminiscent of a wall fragment, and a tactile brass map of the ghetto with a small knob marking the visitor's location in the city. The map is accompanied by a reproduction of the same archival photograph used by Adam X and a text, this time only in Polish and English, describing the wartime history of the site. A few metres away from the pylon, iron, and concrete panels, with the words 'Ghetto Wall 1940–1943' set in low relief, fragmentarily mark the approximate locations of the wall on either side of Chłodna.

The mural, the pylon, and the pavement inlays join a host of older memorials surrounding the neoclassical Roman Catholic Church of Saint Charles Borromeo. Plaques, stones, crosses, and sculptures commemorate events related to the wartime and post-war persecution of primarily non-Jewish Poles, including Polish soldiers sent to Soviet gulags in 1944, and the murder of the Solidarity martyr Father Jerzy Popiełuszko by Polish internal security services (*Służba Bezpieczeństwa*) in 1984. This kind of density of, and variation in, commemorative activity is ubiquitous in Warsaw, but, until recently, it was less common to see new monuments to the Warsaw Ghetto alongside Christian markers. The proximity of these markers may suggest a newfound interest in Jewish memory in Warsaw and the potential for a productive layering of Polish and Jewish memory in public space. However, as Ewa Malgorzata Tatar writes (2008; cf. Meng, 2011, p. 250), this proximity may also represent 'Polish-Polish rather than Polish-Jewish questions about the memory of the Holocaust . . . in the [local] space of culture'. Tatar is referring to a desire for the cultural reappropriation of Jewish wartime memory, observable in Polish politics since the erection of Rapoport's Warsaw Ghetto Monument, and its inscription into accepted and often ethnically homogenous Polish nationalist narratives.

Abbreviation

On December 29, 2009, just days after the Wola District announced the *Chłodna Street Revitalisation Plan*, but several months before construction started, Anna Baumgart and Agnieszka Kurant, working in cooperation with the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, stretched enormous silver Mylar balloons across Chłodna Street at the approximate wartime location of the ghetto footbridge (Figure 8.5). The installation consisted of three inflated spheres bracketed by two crescents intended as a three-dimensional representation of the punctuation mark '(. . .)'. According to the artists, *Ellipsis*—titled in promotional texts with the punctuation mark only—would 'instigate new and unpredictable social situations . . . in Warsaw's urban space, so saturated with traumatic past and so taboo-ridden.' The object was to travel the world and appear 'wherever there are unsolvable problems and near-inexpressible subjects'. At Chłodna, its test site, it was to signal to Varsovians that 'the mass murder of Jews happened before their very eyes.' The museum hoped that for local residents it 'may be the first collective experience . . . with their street's Jewish past' (Museum of the History of Polish Jews, 2011).

Figure 8.5 Anna Baumgart and Agnieszka Kurant, *Ellipsis* (2009), with one crescent shaped Mylar balloon missing, probably pierced by a firecracker set off during New Year's Eve celebrations. The corner of Chlodna and Zelazna Streets is visible directly behind the art installation, Warsaw, January 2010.

According to the most popular Polish daily newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, project curator Ewa Toniak saw *Ellipsis* as a revolutionary act: 'For many people the installation may be shocking. But it is an artistic revolt against the emptiness on the site of the footbridge. Until now, nothing has been done here to remember that trauma. We hope *Ellipsis* will incite . . . dialogue about our memory' (Urzykowski, 2009; some sources attribute these words to Agnieszka Kurant, see Sienkiewicz, 2010). By assuming that the local population knew nothing about the street's Jewish past, by omitting existing interventions on the site, and by taking for granted that Chłodna's residents would somehow find new meaning solely through *Ellipsis,* the project highlighted the artists' and the Museum's own omission of both institutional and community-based attempts to interact with the site's traumatic past. Citing a pamphlet, printed to publicize the project, which included Baumgart and Kurant's names in large type angled inside two brackets of a stylised ellipsis, Sebastian Schmidt-Tomczak (2010) argues that the installation was unsuccessful because the artists believed that they could speak an omission. In the end, *Ellipsis* was no omission at all, but a heavily narrated promotional campaign, with pamphlets, photographic materials, staged discussions, and an invited lecture by the art critic and editor of *Frieze* magazine, Jörg Heiser (2009), who then promoted the project in a blog post published on *Frieze*'s website.

Apart from criticism of the project's technical failures in *Gazeta Wyborcza,* and two insightful articles by Ewa Malgorzata Tatar (2008) and Thomas Urban (2010), both the local and international press followed *Frieze*'s lead and simply summarized the artists' prescriptive project brief, as if it were their own interpretation of the object *in situ.* There was no recognition of the fact that narratives created around the artwork are not necessarily synonymous with the meanings of the work in urban space. Just because *Ellipsis* was *intended* to provoke neighbourhood discussion and highlight taboos does not mean it actually did so.

Ellipsis was supposed to be, simultaneously, a universal symbol of memorial omission, and an expression of extremely detailed curatorial content. But these notions were contradictory. If *Ellipsis*

was to promote dialogue on a subject that the artists assumed was foreign to the public, how could it do so through an ambiguous installation, which said nothing about the discursive spaces it intended to address? This volley of assumptions about the project's meaning and reach was symptomatic of a recent tendency in Warsaw to universalise the topography of mass murder through ambiguous performances of memory, negating the specificity of both marked and still unmarked discreet sites of execution, deportation, murder, and burial. After all, the corner of Chłodna and Żelazna represents tragic and humiliating events, but, as opposed to hundreds of other marked and unmarked locations in Warsaw, it was not, to my knowledge, a site of mass murder.

In the interview quoted above, Toniak (or Kurant) failed to mention all the projects, discussions, and events, both progressive and reactionary, that had been initiated over the years at Chłodna 25 and by the City of Warsaw to commemorate the site of the footbridge and 'incite dialogue' about Chłodna's wartime and Holocaust histories (Urzykowski, 2009; Sienkiewicz, 2010). Even a cursory glance at press material on the subject reveals that Chłodna's residents were not only well-informed about the location of the footbridge but had even voiced their intentions to install a representation of this object of Nazi oppression into the street's tourist landscape. If anything, *Ellipsis*, through its ambiguity and its pop art references, has only reinforced a disturbing combination of spectacle and Holocaust commemoration on the site.

Dislocation

In 2008, over one year before the installation of *Ellipsis*, but three years after residents had first gathered at café Chłodna 25 to discuss strategies for urban regeneration, the Wola District produced a feasibility study for the restoration of Chłodna Street. The plan took into account some of the residents' suggestions, including the idea for a horse-drawn tram, but also proposed to reorganise vehicular and pedestrian traffic on the street and to strip its 19th century cobblestone pavement (Kraj & Szczepaniuk, 2008). In response, 750 petitioners, headed by Maria Dąbrowska from the Zmiana [Change] Foundation (a nonprofit organization dedicated to educational initiatives as well the preservation of cultural heritage) reacted with a nuanced reading of the site. Petitioners demanded that the street's cobblestones be left in place, arguing that the 'planned changes to the street will result in the destruction of its historic layout to the point that it will no longer be possible to identify the space with archival photographs' (Fundacja Zmiana, 2009). Petitioners recognized that, in a topographically disturbed city, a valuable relationship had been preserved between photographic representations of the street, especially those dating from the war, and objects in the city.

By late December 2009, just days before the installation of *Ellipsis* on the same site, the District published the completely revised *Chłodna Street Revitalisation Plan* online, together with detailed drawings of all the project elements, including de Tusch-Lec's *Footbridge of Memory* discussed earlier. This time it seemed that the 19th century pavement was not only to be taken into account, but that it was to form the conceptual backbone for a restoration strategy, which included the permanent display of archival photographs on the site. The online brief outlined the project thus:

> The idea to revitalize Chłodna is based on a conscious decision to search for and highlight traces that testify to the street's former grandeur . . . the search for traces is limited to the ground plane where a large number of authentic historic elements have been preserved such as the cobblestone pavement with tram tracks, kerbstones with drainage grills cut into the sidewalk, and characteristic profiled granite carriageway entrances . . . [T]he purpose . . . is to create an uncommon composition in the pavement of Chłodna Street (with a background educational role) to be . . . an inspiration and guideline for future projects. (Urząd Dzielnicy Wola, 2010)

The District's 'search for traces' was tantamount to the destruction of the very 'authentic historic elements' that it aimed to preserve. Paradoxically, this also meant that, despite the project's focus on the photograph as a mode of commemoration, the relationship between the photograph and the city, so dear to Zmiana Foundation's petitioners, would soon be extinguished. The pavement would be stripped, cleaned, cut, sorted, and then, according to a promotional pamphlet published by the District Office, 'painstakingly . . . arranged just as [it was] before the war' (Urząd Dzielnicy Wola, 2011c, p. 35). This statement, of course, contradicts itself. *Arrangement* implies discretion on the part of the arranger, which negates the authenticity claim, itself a spurious one. The 'historic elements' could in fact only be 'arranged' as they were in 2010 at the outset of the project and not as they were in 1939, while those newly added manufactured elements meant to recall objects missing from an imagined and incomplete pre-war past (lampposts, benches, ornamental drainage grills, manicured trees, horse-drawn trams, etc.) are, of course, not historic.

According to the Haitian historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995, p. 26), 'silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of *sources*); the moment of fact assembly (the making of *archives*); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of *narratives*); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of *history* in the final instance)'. Silences, which accompany all stages of historical production, can be read through objects in the city—something that the architectural theorist Mark Jarzombek (2001, p. 65) has called (in relation to post-Soviet Dresden) 'object-lessons'—things in places 'intended to construct if not actually reconstruct the citizens' temporal and historical understanding of the city'. Jarzombek sees Dresden's object-lessons in two ways: controlled by layers of bureaucracy, but also as opportunities for citizens to read past intended meanings and take advantage of the 'democratic' nature of public space where no 'letter of introduction' is necessary to engage with urban objects. I use Trouillot's description of the process of historical production and Jarzombek's term 'object-lessons' because both ideas help to highlight the conceptual failures of the *Revitalisation Plan*. *Chłodna's* old/new object-lessons—repositioned older artefacts arranged alongside newly fabricated ones—are the result of the simultaneous production of sources, archives, and narratives, where the *creation, assembly,* and *retrieval* of facts, as well as the final retrospective historical interpretation, have been collapsed into one public works project (see Figure 8.6).

By shifting around old stones and attempting to redetermine what *is* and *is not* the street's 'authentic' history, the District administration's design and construction teams helped establish bureaucratic control over the *future* narration of these objects. As a consequence, they undermined the petitioners' strong voice—their understanding of the importance of stones *in situ*, of proximities in space. For the community represented by the petitioners, the cobblestones were points of temporal and spatial reference, facts assembled and available for retrieval at any time. They were the means by which the information in abstract historical documents, such as archival photographs, could be reified and invested with retrospective significance. This group saw the street as a different sort of archive than the highly curated District model. For them, it was an assemblage of *in situ* artefacts, the significance of which was determined not by perceived didactic opportunities, but by existing semiotic relationships.

With this analysis in mind, viewing the street can be understood as the *emplotment* (Ricoeur, 1984) of ever-changing proximities between objects. Although a single opening in an old wall or a single cobblestone—not yet *emplotted* sources—can partly inform the viewing of a street, only the reading of proximate relationships between objects, complemented by surrounding cultural discourses that acknowledge (or dismiss) the shifting of these proximities, can generate layered historical narratives. For example, two bricks removed from an existing fragment of the ghetto wall in Warsaw and sent to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, on their own

Figure 8.6 Pavement detail with reused 19th century cobblestones. Concrete and iron inlays in the foreground and background show the locations of ghetto walls at different times. Between the inlays, parallel strips of small dark pavers symbolize the wooden steps of the Chłodna Street footbridge, which existed on the site in 1942. Warsaw, 2011.

convey little, if any, information. But the empty spaces and the descriptive plaque left behind on the wall fragment, as well as a billboard announcing the EU-funded 'revitalisation of areas surrounding the Warsaw Ghetto wall' (Janicka, 2011, p. 37), speak strongly about the competition between local and international Holocaust narratives and the commodification of the Holocaust in general.

Material dislocations can produce violent silences, or project meaning onto object-lessons that were never *intended* to carry that meaning. On the other hand, dislocation is also a necessary part of city building. The quality of the emergent public space is dependent on how material dislocations are managed and narrated. In the case of Chłodna Street, in an effort to settle a particular representation of the past into a desired narrative, local authorities have literally set in stone a representation of that narrative. Chłodna's 'revitalised' pavement is a mosaic of reused original cobblestones interspersed with newly cut, multicoloured granite, brick, and concrete pavers of various sizes (see Figure 8.7). 'It was painstaking work,' said the project architect Krzysztof Pasternak in an interview for *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 'we overlaid the pre-war parcellation plan from cadastral maps and aerial photographs onto contemporary plans, which allowed us to "weave" the composition of the new pavement.' The new patterns trace the exterior walls of destroyed pre-war buildings or their lot lines, emphasize unused carriage entrances, inform of pre-war addresses, and commemorate German wartime infrastructures—the ghetto walls, the footbridge over Chłodna Street, and two bunkers. All this implies an experiment in geometry rather than a careful historical reflection. 'I like this kind of "busyness" in the sidewalks,' confesses Pasternak, 'why invent curlicues,' if the historical information about the street can 'render intriguing patterns?' (Bartoszewicz, 2011). Placed alongside commemorative structures such as the ghetto

Figure 8.7 Two courses of red brick (parallel to ghetto wall inlay) outline the perimeters of buildings destroyed during the war or dismantled after 1945; shorter pavers, darker in hue, placed between the brick perimeters and the vegetation in the background, show areas once occupied by these buildings. A broad strip of lighter pavers marks a former carriageway entrance (diagonally across the frame in front of the pedestrians). Chłodna Street, Warsaw, 2011.

perimeter monument, but without any explanatory texts, these patterns are confusing rather than intriguing. Pasternak's passive voice with respect to history reveals an implicit problem with responsibility; after all, rather than the autonomous force of 'history', it was the architect who rendered the patterns.

The dislocated original fabric and the new cadastral puzzle are impossible to read because the distinctions between cartography and archaeology, between what once existed and what exists still as detritus, have been blurred. With the recent addition of inlays that mark the location of the ghetto wall on Chłodna Street between January and August 1942 *only*, the ensemble has become a topography of limits with serious implications, which go far beyond the appeal of geometric motifs. All these red lines, borders, patches, and symbols are not just, as Pasternak says, intriguing patterns. Given that building walls often doubled as ghetto perimeter walls, and in the presence of contemporary anti-Semitism, they map onto the city, and potentially reinforce, Nazi-imposed racial boundaries.

Staging

The local press keenly followed the technical developments of the *Chłodna Street Revitalisation Plan*, but failed to notice the inconsistencies between the District's rhetoric, which promised to bring back the street's 'former grandeur', and the accompanying physical shifts of the pavement, street furniture, and commemorative markers. Official municipal documents popularised an image of pre-war Chłodna as an exciting metropolitan thoroughfare with numerous cinemas, cafés, and restaurants—in short, an extraordinary nightlife. Accurate or exaggerated, these descriptions have shaped the now-disappointed public's expectations for the 'revitalised' street.

The District promised to bring vibrant cosmopolitan life to Chłodna, but from a planning or zoning perspective, apart from designating parts of the street for pedestrian use, nothing was done to densify the street or bring services to its ground floors. Instead, the *Revitalisation Plan* has focused on commemorating the street's destruction and its traumatic Holocaust past. This inconsistency has resulted in an uneasy combination of local entertainment and cultural tourism on the one hand, and commemoration and Holocaust tourism on the other. 'Former grandeur', the catch phrase for the entire project, is tightly bound up with a desire for a Polish–Jewish multiethnic past. At Chłodna, representations of ghetto history have eclipsed other historical narratives, producing heritage caricatures. Chłodna's revitalisation was pitched as an enjoyable reconstructed cosmopolitan throwback to an interwar period filled with Polish and Jewish culture, but materially the project focuses on the commemoration of objects of the later Nazi oppression of both Jews and Poles.

A colourful map, published by the District and sponsored by museums and media organisations, shows the length of Chłodna Street populated by pictograms of key buildings and numbers inside splashes of colour, which index monuments, restaurants, and nightclubs (Urząd Dzielnicy Wola, 2011b). The black background and neon colour scheme hint that Chłodna is to be enjoyed at night. The map quotes from one nightclub's pamphlet: 'Our tradition is rock'n'roll and we *are* our tradition' (my emphasis). Directly below the pink box advertising the club, there is a cartoon of a horse-drawn tram, which, until it was cancelled for financial reasons, was to ferry tourists a few hundred metres from one end of the pedestrian section of the street to the other and back again. The tram is not just an anachronism, but a deeply disturbing reenactment of events that took place in the Warsaw Ghetto. Because the ghetto interrupted main tramlines through the city and because Jews and non-Jews were not allowed to share trams after 1940, horse-drawn buses and trams partly served the Jewish population inside the ghetto walls (Engelking & Leociak, 2009, p. 110). More importantly, horse-drawn vehicles were used to transport Jews, bound for Treblinka, to deportation points (Engelking & Leociak, 2009, p. 134). During the war, a horse-drawn tram or bus would not have travelled regularly down Chłodna Street, which was, for the most part, excluded from the ghetto.

The District's justification that the tram represents the public's nostalgia for 19th century Chłodna is problematic in light of the project's focus on Holocaust history. On the map, the tram is placed among several graphically equivalent yellow pictograms, including an elevation sketch of the footbridge slung awkwardly across a broad blue line indicating Chłodna Street. Because the memorial to the footbridge is missing from the map and because all other pictograms show elevations or perspectives of existing buildings, the map implies that the destroyed footbridge exists in its original location and form. This is of course inaccurate and indicative of what appears to be the municipality's tendency to confuse real objects with their representations. It might be necessary to indicate the *location* of the footbridge as a key element of the street's ghetto history, but it is problematic not to make graphically clear that what is being shown no longer exists. Placing an image of the footbridge on an entertainment and tourist map of Chłodna raises questions about Holocaust tourism and the motivations behind having the memorial to the footbridge function as the beacon for the whole revitalisation project.

The Wola District enticed Warsovians to join the official opening ceremonies for 'new' Chłodna Street, promising that it will be 'filled with pre-war automobiles and rickshaws, and "Warsaw's tricksters" will entertain pedestrians' (Bartoszewicz, 2010; Urząd Dzielnicy Wola, 2011a). The theme for the festivities was the pre-war marketplace with local businesses and craftspeople advertising their wares. At the end of the street party, in the dark and in keeping with the promotion of its nightlife, the district chose ceremonially to illuminate the footbridge monument—a final act of staging aimed to present Holocaust memory and contemporary longings and desires in one palatable package.

In the end, *Ellipsis* and the *Revitalisation Plan* attempted both to *take place at* and *take the place of* the memory of the footbridge, silencing Chłodna Street by bracketing out the residents' capability to remember. This hijacking of the discursive space extends to the street. Both projects attempted to override the existing material absences on Chłodna—missing cobblestones, bricks, lanterns, and, perhaps most importantly, the missing footbridge itself—by labelling as absent the very discursive spaces that guaranteed the presence of these absences. Assumed absence allowed for the space to be filled with objects, in this case, specifically didactic 'object-lessons' intended to carry memory in finite directions, which precluded absence as productive to remembering. Because of their pretentions to fill rather than acknowledge the value of absence and discontinuity on Chłodna, both *Ellipsis* and the *Revitalisation Plan* dominated, or at least dulled, certain citizen groups' more complex and disputative readings and performances of the street's history. The projects *occupied* the physical and the discursive spaces of Chłodna, but failed to engage with the street as a complete historical source, any of the existing commemorative objects, or the residents' voices.

This occupation could be felt viscerally in the autumn of 2010. Instead of delicate restoration, one could see an urban dissection: The pavement was stripped; its torn elements lay in piles reminiscent of rubble. Workers with rotary saws cut old kerbstones and created a heady fog that enveloped the area (see Figure 8.8). Cobblestones were piled high and the ground was broken. Archaeologists hovered nervously and watched bulldozers push around shapeless mounds of clay. Old iron tram tracks sat in heaps waiting to be cleaned, straightened, and reused. Those still in place led directly to the construction site and abruptly stopped at a set of gates almost as wide as the road. Past the open gates and the edge of the deconstructed pavement, tightly bound cobblestones gave way to looser patterns and then single granite blocks dispersed in the beige clay that defined the construction area. All this took place behind a tall fence, blue on the outside and white inside, which ran on either side of the street almost exactly along the same lines as the former ghetto walls.

Figure 8.8 Chłodna Street under construction. Warsaw, 2010.

I do not argue here that the answer for Warsaw is to attempt to preserve everything unchanged. Dislocation is not only necessary to a vital city, but it is also essential to remembering—something that humans can only do through a recognition of difference. It is nonetheless important to embrace the process, rather than the product, of change. When Ossowski wrote in 1945 of the 'dehumanisation' of Warsaw, he referred to the city's 'matter', its transformation into something resembling its 'raw' or 'deculturalised' state. He saw this rawness as antithetical to the existence of an urban condition because matter in the city is almost always cultural. This means, impractically for rapid post-socialist urban development, that the entire city—its material manifestations together with the discursive spaces that modify and mediate them—must be questioned as a historical source and read for what has been excluded from schematised memory (Gross, 2000, pp. 136, 141). To adapt a controversial idea from Jochen Gerz's *2,146 Stones Against Racism* in Saarbrücken (Young, 2000, pp.140–144), if Chłodna's residents were to remove the street's cobblestones by hand, pile them up, and then relocate them one by one, this kind of interaction with the city as a primary source—this making of *difference*—could unearth silences and reinforce local, lived memory.