

Deconstructing Symbolic and Social Demarcation Through Holocaust Memorial: A Study of Hamburg's Stolpersteine and Community Contradictions

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Drawing on 32 semi structured interviews conducted in Hamburg, Germany's second largest city in the socioeconomic elite areas of Eppendorf and Rotherbaum this research explores community-based attitudes to the presence of Gunter Demnig's internationally acclaimed (Grimstad, 2018) *Stolpersteine* (stumbling stones) art project, a project designed to provide a multidimensional, contemporary, everyday commemoration with transformative potential (Roar, 2021; Fuksová, 2024) for those suffered and died under the Nazi regime between 1933 and 1945 (Arizti, 2018). We explore the impact of Demnig's Stolpersteine through the lens of cultural sociology and Lamont's (1922) theory of 'Symbolic Boundary Approach' (SBA), a theory that frames "conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorise people, practices, tastes, attitudes and manners in everyday life" (Jarness, 2017, p. 359). This lens captures aspects of the class–status nexus, social reinforcement and social inequality within a given environment (Mijić and Parzer, 2024). Our study indicates that the presence of Stolpersteine and their multimodal purpose encourages the renegotiation of social boundaries, underpins socioeconomic and cultural entanglement and facilitates the 'holistic' deconstruction of social spaces. However, data reveals problematic distinctions in relation to generational perceptions of the necessity of social boundaries and 'fear of contact', inter-class connections, and neighbourhood navigation from 'outsiders'. Moreover, the data reveals concerns with negative environmental mutation due to pre-existing, '*ursprünglich*' (original) social boundaries being eroded. The study contributes to the literature on Holocaust memorialisation, Holocaust education and reveals the social politics that still permeates Holocaust understanding.

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