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**RE-DEFINING THE MEANING OF PLACE: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF
THE *HAUPTSTADTDEBATTE***

Master's Thesis for Transatlantic MA Program in East - Central European Studies

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I have written this Master's thesis independently. All works and major viewpoints of the other authors, data from other sources of literature and elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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I, as supervisor, confirm that this Master's thesis meets all requirements, and is suitable for defence.

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ABSTRACT

Since the reunification Germany has been closely connected to Berlin as its capital and also one of the main representative symbols of the state. However, it became the capital of the reunited Germany only after a 12-hour-long debate at the German Bundestag on June 20, 1991. Only couple of days ago in unofficial pools Bonn was leading, which meant that the arguments expressed at the debate were of the highest importance for the deputies as legislators and the representatives of the German people.

In this regard this thesis analyzes the *Hauptstadtdebatte* as a case study chosen to present how meanings could be attached to places and interpreted in relation to the particular purpose, which in this case was the reunification process where the debate symbolized a turning point in the way how Germany and Germans perceived themselves and their country.

Thus, this thesis argues that people create place out of space and attach meanings to this place by observing and interpreting signs that this environment has. In this context the aim of this study is to explore, what meaning did Berlin and Bonn obtain at the debate and whether it has changed in the course of time. The author has tried to answer to this question by interpreting the topic from the perspective of urban semiotics as a theory focusing on the semiotic meaning in the urban forms and its interpretation through signs. Accordingly, Berlin and Bonn are perceived as signs that represent Germany and, at the same time, they are also sign systems for people who perceive both cities as unique environments connected to particular habits and experiences exercised there.

The discourse analysis of the debate focuses on three interrelated narratives that will present what meaning both cities had from the past, what meaning did the deputies at the debate attach to them and, eventually, through looking at secondary sources from printed media the author provides a temporal perspective on presenting whether and how this meaning has changed in the course of time. Eventually, This thesis manages to verify the hypothesis and argues that the meaning attached to both cities at the debate was constructed as a narrative about the anticipated future development of Germany in relation to both cities as signs for it and, thus, deriving from the meaning that they already had. Furthermore, this meaning since the debate has a bit changed, particular for Bonn, which was not chosen as the capital city and had to reinvent itself anew

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INTRODUCTION

The Fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989 was one of the main events signifying the end of the Cold War. The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG, West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR, East Germany) reunified after more than 40 years of separation. At this time of transition and adapting Germany faced many challenges that were connected to the new role, image and identity of the state politically, socially, in economic and other terms. It was a new country with a new society. Germans from both parts of the previously divided country had to get used to living together. Thus, the *Wende* (or reunification, the turning-point or the big change) provided an opportunity to politically redefine, unite and shape Germany and people living in it. It gave a chance for a new beginning.

In this context the question of the national capital and the seat of the government became essential once more, the same as forty years ago. Then Bonn, a provincial city close to other Western democracies, was voted to serve as the seat of the state institutions of the FRG, whereas East Berlin became the symbol and centre of the socialist society of the GDR. Based on this historical context, also in early 1990s two options prevailed - Bonn or reunified Berlin.

Both cities had experience as capitals, which is why the debate on the capital (the *Hauptstadtdebatte*) was significant not only in political, but also societal terms. As important it was to focus on the role the New Germany will play in Europe and on the international stage, it was also essential to achieve the inner unity in German - German relations between *Ossis* (East Germans) and *Wessis* (East Germans). Thus, the main question was about the proper representation of Germany both to its people and the rest

of the world. As Biedenkopf and Wachs (2004) pointed out, "What we expect from our capital city shows how we see ourselves - as a state and as a nation."¹

The outcome of the *Hauptstadtdebatte* in favour of Berlin was vital, because it defined how Germany as a state and Germans as a society wanted to be seen by the world. Setting common goals that Germany would achieve in the future established a political commitment to carrying out these aims and, thus, helped promoting fulfilment of inner unity among Germans through creating ground for a shared future. The political rhetoric before as well as during and after the debate helped reinventing Berlin as the capital city both already in the past and now, since the *Wende*. Berlin was the Terra Nova, the city reborn in a time of big changes. (Töpfer 1996, 10) At the same time also Bonn discovered its new potential and role in the new Germany. From periphery it became the centre of German international relations, science and other important spheres.

In this context the aim of this thesis is to explore, what meaning was attached to both cities during the debate and whether the meaning that was created and ultimately institutionalized through the moving of the capital changed in the course of time. My working thesis would be that even though the deputies at the Bundestag did successfully define new historically grounded and future-oriented meanings for both cities, these did not necessarily become the dominant narrative after the move.

Thus, the thesis looks at how meaning was created through narrative processes that emerged during the decisive plenary debate in the Bundestag on June 20, 1991 that ended in a decision in favour of moving the capital city to Berlin. In order to understand how such narrative creation takes place, the debate will be placed within a theoretical context of urban semiotics that studies the interaction between people and the environment by observing and interpreting signs for meaning making in urban places as cities. Moreover, the insight gained from this will be linked to those of human geography in order to present how people create places out of spaces and, thus, interpret the environment in the context of particular functions or happenings that are connected to the place. That will set the analytical basis for the empirical part and, thus, the analysis of the *Hauptstadtdebatte* by means of discourse analysis.

¹ All German language texts that are not otherwise marked are translated by the author.

The thesis focuses thus on the meaning expressed in a narrative form and attached to Berlin and Bonn during a parliamentary debate and how the meaning has developed in the course of time. In this regard the main contribution of this thesis is that it attempts to present how narrative creation could be perceived in a more temporal way by looking at the debate from today`s viewpoint and discussing the evolution of the meaning of Berlin and Bonn from the time of the debate up to now. Furthermore, discourse analysis on the basis of urban semiotics is also an important input to the study about the meaning of places. Hence, the particular focus on the Berlin - Bonn debate is significant for presenting how meanings can change, what parts of the original narrative stay, vanish and even reappear.

In this context the role of the debate on the future development of Germany was of the highest importance, because this particular event gave Germany the right boost for gaining influence and recognition from both Germans and the rest of the world. "This was a national project to showcase German democracy and the German state." (Gittus 2002, 104) At the same time, it also triggered discussion about the ways how Germans wanted for them and their country to be perceived. As much as the debate signaled a new stage in the way Germans addressed their past and sought to re-define the historical meanings of both cities in both positive and negative terms, the debate was also about Germany`s future. Moreover, the debate was not only about the cities as capitals, but also about the future of the Germans as a united people and other important issues connected to the reunification. The decision between Bonn and Berlin was, thus, only the surface of the bigger picture behind the city cover. The debate provided a unique opportunity for German policy-makers to re-define the past and open a new chapter of Germany, the one which looks in the future. Hence, this particular event and its end decision was an integral part of the reunification. Furthermore, the move to Berlin was the first big political decision of the reunited Germany. (Kilz 1996) This is one reason among others why the debate is also widely known as the "rhetorically finest hour" (*rhetorische Sternstunde*) of German parliamentarism. (Deutscher Bundestag 2010)

The paper`s concentration on the Berlin - Bonn debate and the capital city issue is also worth elaborating more, because the capital city could be perceived as the most important city in the state. "A capital mediates between its urban space, the surrounding

society, and the nation no less than between the nation-state and the international world." (Daum and Mauch 2005, 3) Consequently, the status of the capital city comes with both domestic and international responsibilities. The vote in favour of moving the capital in the *Hauptstadtdebatte* delegated this central task to Berlin. Therefore, the city became the focal point of German politics and the symbol of the new beginning of the reunified state. Bonn, at the same time, had to define a new role for itself as a federal city instead of federal capital.

Furthermore, the focus on recent German history is relevant, because the debate as well as the *Wende* itself can be perceived as an event and happening that falls into category of both history and contemporary history (*Geschichte* and *Zeitgeschichte*). Due to the generation change there are Germans who have experienced democracy in the so called Bonn Republic and those people who have been born already in the Berlin Republic. Accordingly, also the vision and the meaning of Berlin as the representative of once divided German people differ. The same is with the perception of Germany as an important global political and economic player. What is more, some issues as the question of the complete move (*total Umzug*) to Berlin deriving from the debate have become a topical issue only now, in the course of time. Thereby, the author feels confident that the Berlin - Bonn debate as the stage where the ideas for the new Germany were created is still important also now, 23 years after the debate itself.

The *Hauptstadtdebatte* in Scholarly Works

The debate between Bonn and Berlin has become an important part of the historiography of the *Wende* and German reunification. Many scholars have looked at the debate and its implications from various points of view and in different time periods. In his thesis Salz (2006, 6) has identified six main research categories in relation to the *Hauptstadtdebatte*:

1. historical account;

2. historical considerations of Berlin and Bonn;
3. sociological and statistical analysis;
4. city-planning and urban development;
5. legal aspects of the terminology and regulations;
6. political studies regarding previous five categories.

Taking into consideration the study focus on the debate about possible move of the capital city it is important to note that the focus directly on the debate and the main arguments has been mainly presented through the first of these categories by looking at the debate from the historical perspective. In her work Humphreys (2011, 8) looked at the arguments from the debate that discuss how the German national history and the historical experience of Berlin and Bonn would suit either of the cities to appear as ready or rather appropriate to represent Germany internationally. She states that the relationship between history and memory was the central topic at the *Hauptstadtdebatte*. (Humphreys 2011, 57) Concerns about how to best address German national history in the new context of the reunited country as well as about the future of the state were persistent throughout most of the speeches. Furthermore, based on the birthplace, age, religion and other characteristics of the deputies, the decisions, according to Humphreys' findings, could also be perceived as deeply personal.

Also Salz focuses on historical aspects as they were presented at the debate. However, he does not single out past as the main argument: domestic issues, foreign policy, economic aspects and governance-related questions are four other equally important aspects he identifies as the main lines of argumentation. His research shows that domestic politics, economic challenges and historical aspects are those issues which are still present in Germany almost 15 years later. At the same time, promoting the role of the state in the international arena as well as dealing with the practical aspects of moving have been resolved. (Salz 2006, 58) Thereby, there is no doubt that Berlin is ready and able to pursue the role and functions that the capital city status entails. It has also been accepted as the centre and representative of Germany and Germans.

Apart from direct focus on the ideas expressed at the debate the scholarly works have mainly referred to the events on June 20, 1991 with the purpose to use this information as a justification for more broader aspects of the reunification and the changes it brought. So in relation whether the legislators made the right decision the literature stated ideas comparing the symbolic and physical potential of both cities to fulfill political functions and at the same time also represent Germany abroad. In this regard Germany with united Berlin as its main symbol provided the world with a narrative of a historic city which was also exciting, innovative, big, active and progressive-minded. Bonn as the German capital after the reunification would not be able to create such an image. (Bertram 1998, 193) Thus, this was the right decision. The debate put Berlin "back where it belongs" (Craig 1998, 161). Furthermore, it was also generally agreed that dealing with the practical issues of the reunification from Bonn as the main decision-making centre could not be comprehended; big decisions demanded big symbols to back them up. (Fack 1991)

Another important commonality in the scholarly works on the debate is to focus on the urban development and city-planning in Berlin as the place which was chosen to represent the reunited Germany. The city was presented as the starting point for creating a new beginning and show a mature and evolved city. (Gittus 2002, 91) Many infrastructural and architecture plans were started in order to make the city representable and able to perform political functions it had to ensure as the new capital. This architectural reinvention was closely connected to selective forgetting by emphasizing those aspects of the past which could be used as bricks for the new German identity. After all, memories are often connected to physical images. (Ladd 1997, 1)

In this regard after a close examination of the literature dealing with or referring to the Berlin - Bonn debate the author has to conclude that the analysis of the political discourse at the debates as well as of the meaning that both candidate cities had has been mostly of secondary purpose. Thus, the debate has been mainly left in the background of the analysis, which makes this study a significant contribution to the existing literature on the Berlin - Bonn debate.

Accordingly, his thesis, puts the *Hauptstadtdebatte* in the spotlight. The focus on the future-narrative as the basis for providing a new interpretation to old places, in this case

the capital city that particularly Germans would identify with, could be perceived as a novelty and, hence, a significant empirical contribution to the topic. After all, since the reunification Germany as a country has become as one of the biggest economic and political powers in the world. As the centre where decisions are being made, in many cases Berlin is, therefore, the first representative image that comes to mind when talking about German, European and even global politics. Thus, the awareness of the processes and ideas that led to the move of the legislative, executive as well as juridical institutions to Berlin as the new capital city helps understanding the political decisions that define contemporary German politics both in domestic terms as well as internationally. Furthermore, reflecting on the issues raised at the debate provides an insight into that kind of country the reunited Germany has become. (Bertram 1998, 188)

As Berlin was chosen to become the capital city of Germany, the focus on Bonn as the other candidate has been left almost unnoticed. Taking into consideration the temporal approach of this thesis, the discourse analysis includes also examination of the meaning of Bonn and the way how and whether it has changed, including what happened in and to the city after the decision was made. As a result, the investigation of Bonn and its development as the previous capital of Germany can be perceived as another contribution to the historiography of the debate where in the course of more than twenty years as a study topic this particular political decision-making process has been less attractive as the history the city entails or the urban development that happened there in relation to creating new meaning from existing urban landscape.

Structure of the Thesis

In order to test the hypothesis the anticipated outline of the paper will consist of five parts. The theoretical argumentation in Chapter One will be based on urban semiotics and focuses on how people perceive and interpret the urban environment around them. In this regard particular attention will be devoted to the role that cities as semiotic environments play in organizing the life of a society. The relationship between

individual and the environment could also be analyzed as a part of memory studies, identity, history, city planning and other alternative theories. However, when taking the empirical part into consideration of this study, the focus on semiotics and signs gives the impression of most suitable approach.

Chapter Two will introduce the methodological consideration for the study which will be based on a discourse analysis as a method of qualitative and explanatory research. The *Hauptstadtdebatte* will be used as the case study and the main source for presenting political meaning making through democratic representation. A single case study approach will provide discussion for the limitations of the study in terms of its scope. However, the author feels able to present the debate as a part of the wider reunification discussion, thus, overcoming this methodological obstacle.

Chapter Three will present an overview of the technical and discursive background preceding the plenary debate in June 1991. A historical account of both cities as German capitals will serve as a background information for understanding the rather intricate role that the past plays in German memory and politics. The discourse analysis of the main arguments that were expressed at the debate regarding the importance of the decision that had to be made will try to show that it was more than a choice between two cities. Furthermore, emphasis on the points that were already agreed upon before the debate gives an insight in the complexity of the issue as well as on the long-term implications it would entail.

After discussing the theoretical considerations of this thesis and presenting the debate as a process that in reality can be perceived as a course of action rather than one event, Chapter Four will turn to the analysis of the empirical data. Based on the methodology the discourse analysis of the case study will elaborate on two interrelated narratives present at the debate. Subsequent examination of media articles published in years after the debate up to now will provide a temporal perspective on how this new meaning and defined role for both cities in relation to the whole country has developed through years after the decision was made.

The concluding part will summarize the main arguments put forward throughout the thesis regarding the debate and the meaning of Bonn and Berlin as important places in

this discourse on the construction of the meaning of the reunified Germany. The question of being German instead of *Ossi* or *Wessi* after more than 40 years of separation in conjunction with the historical and future meaning of Berlin as the capital of the new Germany, as decided at the debate, has shown that memories of the past are an important cultural paradigm of every society. It takes both time and personal effort to shift the existing perceptions of a place and redefine a new meaning and new purpose that would be appealing and effective in a more wider context then defining a new political centre of the reunited Germany. Hence, treating a capital city which already has a particular historical meaning and image from the past could turn out to be an effective way of how to create a new beginning in political as well as societal and other terms.

CHAPTER 1: THE MEANING OF PLACE FROM A SEMIOTIC PERSPECTIVE

1.1. Semiotics of Space and Place

The theoretical framework will focus on the urban semiotics which discusses the interaction between people and the environment by looking at the semiotic meaning in urban forms, that way explaining the production of meaning based on the interpretation of signs. In this regard it will provide insight into ways how the meaning of a particular environment is constructed, maintained and sometimes even changed.

As this thesis argues that people create places out of spaces by attaching meanings to them, it is important to start the elaboration of the theoretical framework with distinguishing space from place. In this regard the discussion about signs and their interpretation is closely connected to the spatial dimension of the environment observed from a semiotic perspective. While semiotics of space focuses primarily on urban semiotics and, thus, the meaning of urban forms based on signs, symbols and other semiotic markers that shape the particular environment, the semiotics of place has mainly been discussed in relation to geography, trying to understand not only the role of urban place in human consciousness, but also what beliefs people hold about it (Krampen 1979, 25; Relph 1980, 3). Therefore, it can be argued that the former is mainly concerned with meanings that the signs in the urban environment represent, whereas the latter looks more at what the urban environment means to people.

Taking into consideration that the empirical focus of this thesis comprises both symbolic and functional meaning of the environment where human life happens

perceived through semiotic channels, it is essential for this study to make a distinction between space and place as two diverse settings for meaning making. For this reason it is also important to support urban semiotics with human geography that offers more physical connection to the place than the semiotic one. In this sense this thesis argues that in the first case this environment is perceived primarily as space and in the second - as place.

Urban semiotics perceives space as a stage where humans enter into relationship with each other as well as with the observed objects in it. (Krampen 1979, 25) Space represents the objects and signs to which people act by interpreting them. (Pellegrino and Jeanneret 2009, 269) It is the environment where human life happens. In this regard it is important to elaborate that, according to Peirce, who is one of the main contributors to the tradition of semiotics, the sign relation is triadic. A sign (first) relates an object (second) to an interpretant (third). (De Waal 2001, 70) For example, the bark of the dog (sign) relates a postman (object) to the woman (interpretant). Moreover, sign might appear through medium (sign vehicle) or the physical form of the sign, for example, a word, that is not a sign itself, but acts like one. (Ibid.) Thus, the sign is embodied in the sign vehicle that acts as the "first". Peirce concludes that object determines sign through representing it (perception), and the sign itself then determines the interpretant by giving a meaning that the sign produces (interpretation). (De Waal 2001, 71) At the same there is also the interaction between the object and the interpretant, which is called the action. (Määttänen 2007, 454) Together these three components fulfil the semiotic function representing relations between the individual and the environment.

Every sign induces interpretation of it that helps constructing a meaning for it. Furthermore, in different sign relations an object can become sign and an interpretant - object. They can substitute each other. De Waal (2001, 71) calls this the tri-relative influence that connects sign, object and interpreter together due to their interrelation. This quality of signs means that semiosis as the sign process is happening all the time and, according to the situation, new signs emerge to help the observer to construct a semiotic meaning about the environment he/she is in.

The same way as Peirce's triadic sign relations, also the parts constructing space are interrelated and based on three parts. In this regard Lefebvre, one of the most influential

contributors to the study of urban space, explains that the production of space consists of spatial practice, representations of space and spaces of representation. (Shields 1999, 160–161) Spatial practice corresponds to the perception of space in commonsensical manner by social action of noticing, ignoring, praising and diminishing the presence of spaces in everyday practice. Representations of space involve the scientific and professional discourse conceiving the space based on the knowledge of the observer. Last but not least, spaces of representation refer to the discourse of space involving possibility and imagination in shaping the awareness of space as it might be for the future. (Shields 1999, 160–161) Accordingly, the process of the production of space happens in several closely connected stages that eventually construct the space. Lefebvre calls this the spatial code or the means of understanding, interpreting, producing and even living the space. (Määttänen 2007, 456) This production of space also corresponds to the Peircean triad of action, perception and interpretation that forms the sign relations and shows how people as observers look at signs and interpret them by attaching meanings to signs.

By referring to Umberto Eco, Van Assche et al. (2012, 238) explain that spaces can be conceptually distinguished according to their function, appearance, historical character, economics and others. This corresponds to the argument by Grange (1999, 71) who states that space is concrete and charged with meaning. Furthermore, it also means that space can be interpreted in many different ways. After all, space consists of individually perceived objects. (Määttänen 2006, 18) Furthermore, according to Lefebvre, the nature of space is dialectic. (Shields 1999, 157) That being said, space involves social action and also spatial and geographic aspects. This social space exists as collective expectations of the behaviour that is carried out in particular situations. (Määttänen 2006, 15) It is both produced and productive. As a social environment space mediates and also affects human relations in it. It is the centre of meaning for the whole society.

In this relation it is important to refer to the semiotics of place and the fact that space can turn into place. By referring to human geographers, semiotics of place argues that space becomes place when it emerges as a sign to something else (for example, a historical event, Olympic Games, royal wedding and others). (Van Assche et al. 2012, 238) Thus, a certain environment will become visible among all the other relatively

similar spaces by becoming the focus of people's attention as the sign of a certain happening. According to the Peircean triadic sign relations, space becomes place when it relates to and is perceived as a sign for a particular object. This distinction is of the biggest importance for this study, because deriving from the above mentioned statement the particular urban environment whose meaning will be analyzed in the empirical part can be perceived as place. It is connected to a specific historical, social and political event in the past, which makes the urban setting in his sense more specific than other spaces. Thus, connection to a particular event leads to identification of the particular space in concern for this study as place.

In relation to the interaction between people and the environment semiotics of place argues that places are interrelated in space and produced through naming. (Shields 1999, 144) "'Space" is more abstract than "place". What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value." (Tuan 2001, 6) Therefore, place is space that has acquired certain qualities. Furthermore, these qualities can be of objective and material nature as well as of subjective and immaterial one. (Castello 2010, 2) That being said, space becomes place when it attaches to particular objects and happenings which can be historical, functional, aesthetic, spatial, social and others. This explanation of place is very similar to what Van Assche argued about space. However, the distinction lies in the fact that place is space that is connected to a particular and socially significant happening, whereas space itself carries a general notion of the object it represents. Consequently, in relation to the focus of this particular thesis, space is a relatively abstract spatial notion, a sign system, whereas place is more concrete, it is a sign signifying the unique and evident role of a particular happening in human life. Thus, in this study the emphasis is put on place defined as "space which has historical meaning, where some things have happened which are now remembered and which provide continuity and identity across generations". (Sheldrake 1999, 64) Correspondingly, place is perceived as a geographic environment with certain characteristics that help identifying and distinguishing it from other spaces.

In conclusion, space is where the interaction between people and the environment happens. According to Lefebvre, it is produced in several stages where signs as the representatives of the space are interpreted by focusing on both their actual and possible

or anticipated meaning. Place in this regard is space acting as sign. It is more explicit than space, because it is connected to particular happenings that make it unique among other spaces. This leads to the elaboration of how places and their meanings are created and shaped in relation to the purposes and well-being of the society as well as political decision-makers, which is the purpose of the next sub-chapter.

1.2. Interpreting Signs in the Urban Environment

The urban environment is a semiotic place that consists of signs representing it. The object or the place is observed by interpreting the meaning that is embodied in signs present in the particular environment. Accordingly, signs function as incentives for interpreting the environment through the meaning they carry. (Krampen 1979, 22) However, no site speaks for itself. It conveys its individual values through human interpretation. "It is after all people who make places, frequent them and use them. It is they who make space into place." (Castello 2010, 231) Thus, people are those who perceive these signs and interpret them, that way attaching meanings to the particular environment. For that reason, the interaction between people and the urban place is correlated.

People develop their relationship with the place or, in other words, between Self and the environment by identifying with the particular place and perceiving it through individual perspective. The interpretation of how meanings get attached to places is a very individual action. People are different and so are their perceptions and attitude towards places. "[...] different peoples might "see" different places in the same "place" [...]." (Myers 2002, 103) In this regard it can be argued that, as people have different interpretation of space, they use various methods (observe different signs) for creating a personal meaning of them. Different places might have diverse attributes that characterize them. (Relph 1980, 1) Furthermore, sign systems evolve through time (Van Assche et al. 2012, 236), leading to possible changes in the narrative attached to them. Places are not static or fixed, but rather "modifying and modified by our actions in the

present" (Farrar 2011, 733). Based on the semiotic principle, changes in the environment correspond to changes in the interpretation of individual signs in it. Therefore, the sign - object - interpretant relationship is an active and ever-changing process.

The meaning of the particular urban sign or sign system should be meaningful, becoming as a part of human life there to be accepted. The re-interpreted meaning has to be recognized and inscribed as a part of the city experience. (Remm 2011, 129) This also stands for the existing and present meaning.

A sign becomes meaningful when it is observed in relation to something else. (Grange 1999, 166) That corresponds to the semiotic principle of sign relations. Consequently, the meaning of a sign is closely connected to the environment and the context in which it is being interpreted. (Van Assche et al. 2012, 240) After all, people comprehend place by attaching meanings to the signs they perceive in the particular sign system.

Urban semiotics argues that these meanings exist as habits of social practice. "What a thing means is simply what habits it involves." (Määttänen 2006, 12) The urban environment is, thus, perceived based on what functional and psychological use it has for the interpreter. "Place is nothing but its relations." (Grange 1999, 51) Furthermore, these habits and practices are related to the object being signified. A perceived banana is interpreted by the observer based on his/her habits of action, hence, by eating it. (Määttänen 2006, 13) As a result, people perceive and interpret objects and signs through their usage. The human need is the prime influential reason for interpretation of signs. (Krampen 1979, 23) Objects gain meaning through the actions applied to them. (Pellegrino and Jeanneret 2009, 270) Eventually, this habit of action results in created space of urban reality where people live in. (Remm 2011, 124)

Here it is important to add that the usage of the object is only an instruction of how to interpret it. (Määttänen 2006, 19) If a banana is connected to the habit of eating, that does not mean it cannot be interpreted differently. The same is with intangible signs as sunshine or a historical event - there can be several narratives of one particular meaning and they are all true for the observer. Signs are open to be translated according to the situation. The point of view is what matters.

The interpretation and classification of these habits shaping the meaning of city as urban environment depends on the knowledge and the experience of the observer. People organize the way how they look at places and comprehend their particular use and meaning. The meaning making can, accordingly, happen in brains as well on a mental state. (De Waal 2001, 70) It comes about directly through senses and indirectly through mind (knowledge). (Tuan 1975, 153) Thus, it is connected to constant learning.

As people have developed their own individual experience and knowledge, they perceive and interpret the environment by connecting signs to different habits of action. In this context it is important to add that knowledge and experience have a historical character. People refer to what they already know and find trustworthy and true. Hence, habit of action involves personal and psychological aspects defining the use of the place, because people perceive the environment through senses. They are those who observe and interpret signs trying to create a personal attachment to them based on what their previous contact with the object has been.

This interpretation of signs in the urban environment is closely connected to the way how people feel about the place and in it. The attachment to a place is based on its unique nature. In this context city is an environment created by people for their personal and communal use. It is "a material place that visibly and tangibly expresses human needs and aspirations, supporting or hindering their fulfillment" (Tuan 1988, 316). Accordingly, the urban environment is a special place in human life that has its own significant characteristics developed in relation to symbolic, functional and wellbeing potential it has for the human life. By identifying with the place and attaching certain meanings to it people are then able to distinguish places from spaces. This habit of action is very important, because place as a social construct provides sense of belonging to it and, accordingly, also to the community there. Thus, when the whole society accepts the place and feels connected to it, inside the place, they accept the message that the semiotic system signals.

The acceptance and interpretation of signs by attaching meaning to them is closely connected to the aspect of communication that strengthens the community ties and people's social interaction. In this regard it is important to emphasize the role of language in the way how people observe and perceive the environment around them.

Määttänen (2006, 13) argues that language helps understanding, interpreting and experiencing the environment. It transforms space into place by creating a narrative and a meaning that is later on attached to the particular environment. Language also provides ways for decoding signs and communicating individual interpretation of the sign through sharing knowledge and experience among people. "Words have [...] the specific power to call places into being." (Tuan 1991, 686) It provides place with an appeal and reputation that attracts people. Moreover, language keeps places alive, because the message is passed on from one individual to another.

Language significantly contributes to interpreting signs and sharing this information among individuals. However, the weight of language should not be overestimated. As Van Assche et al. (2012, 235) argues, signs are not limited to linguistics. Thus, interpretation does not necessarily involve verbal communication only. Objects can also be perceived visually by observing the environment as built space, focusing on written form and others. Nevertheless, in relation to the empirical considerations for this study the interpretation of urban place is closely connected to the verbal scope and narrative constructing the political meaning of signs for the urban place they represent.

In this regard, the urban environment is not only a social place, but also a political one. It can serve as an arena where policy makers as the representatives of the society make certain decision that decide the development of the country. Thus, it can be argued that based on personal consideration of the interpreter, the place can also be manipulated with. (Van Assche et al. 2012, 238) Thus, it can be argued that the meaning or the message mediated to the public can be influenced politically by emphasizing selected signs as aspects for the narrative that contribute to the purpose of those in power. This leads to an observation that the urban place helps politicizing the way of order in a wider community by mediating a particular meaning. Correspondingly, the meaning of places might involve political considerations. Furthermore, the construction of places and their meaning can be performed as an institutional top-down procedure. Therefore, it can be argued that political decisions could serve as initiators for changing the meaning of place. In this context it is important to note that political activities are not necessarily negative and imposed. In democratic countries the political decisions are made by elected authorities emphasizing the representativeness of the people.

Furthermore, people are welcome to join the discussion and contribute with their opinion.

As a result, people attach meanings to places by interpreting signs it has. This meaning might change in the course of time due to changes in the environment itself or in the knowledge and experience of the observer. People perceive the urban environment depending on what use the place provides for human life. It is useful to them if people feel attached to the place and the meaning it represents. This is why language as means of communicating personal experiences matters, especially in political terms, which is the focus for this thesis. Relating to that the next section will pay particular attention to the city as the urban and communal place that has many qualities expressed through symbolic and functional signs that make it as one of the most important social settings in the life of individuals.

1.3. City as Semiotic and Functional Place

City is a semiotic space. (Remm 2011, 124) It is an urban wholeness containing systems of signs and elements that characterize it. At the same time, the urban space is also humanly constructed for their own use, which connects the city to particular happenings in human life. Accordingly, city creates both semiotic and material reality. (Remm 2011, 141) The meaning of city derives from both its functions and signs. Thus, city is a place with semiotic meaning and practical functions shaping the human life.

City is language communicating through signs as the text explaining different social, cultural, political and other organization of the society. (Krampen 1979, 32, 33) Meanings are attributed to city by perceiving and interpreting its urban signs. These signs can be material, functional, social, cultural and others. Hence, city is seen as a qualitative environment that contains various perceivable elements with certain meanings, characteristics and functional use. (Remm 2011, 125)

As there is ample amount of diverse signs in the city, it can also be argued that it is a system of signs. Furthermore, one sign can represent and be involved in multiple sign relations, that way providing meaning not only for different individuals, but also in relation to diverse conditions. Consequently, from a semiotic point of view city can be perceived as a system of signs for the people living in it. At the same time, city is also a sign itself when thinking of its meaning in relation to the whole country as the environment in which the city is placed and the object to which it is related as an observable sign with a meaning.

The interpretation of city depends on the signs that the objects there evoke. (Grange 1999, 4) Furthermore, this interpretation depends on the observer. As the urban environment is human made, people are those who interpret and shape the meaning of the city based on their previous experience there and knowledge about it.

Here it is important to add that city life happens in space and time that together shape the urban reality. City has a spatial and temporal dimension that characterizes its geographic boundaries and evolution in the course of time. (Remm 2011, 125) The spatial value of the city helps creating its unique nature as to its geographic boundaries and specific location in the country and others. The location also places city within a wider space and, therefore, takes on a referential function. (Remm 2011, 137) Thus, the city becomes a part of a wider semiotic system, for example, the country, to which it itself then becomes a sign, corresponding to the Peircean semiotic sign relations. Time as another feature of the semiotic landscape of the city brings in the temporal dimension by providing connection between the urban reality and both its past and future. (Remm 2011, 134) Past refers to the historical meaning of the city, whereas future is connected to the planned and anticipated value of it. That way the meaning of city gets expanded and obtains a comparative aspect in it when comparing to other relatively similar places in order to create a distinct and unique notion and association of the particular place. As a result, the presence of both space and time in the city meaning provides means for a wider interpretation of its signs deriving from the reference to the urban spatiality and temporal nature of the particular place.

The semiotic meaning of the city is also closely connected to the functional one. As Grange (1999, xv) argues in his book, the city is the place where people experience to

the fullest what the environment has to offer them. Consequently, cities serve symbolic meaning through signs in the urban environment, at the same time having also practical purpose that directly influences the human life through enjoying the functions that the city offers to individuals. In this regard Sheldrake (2007, 254) has distinguished several functions that city should have. He writes that a city should be just, beautiful, creative, ecological, "of easy contact", polycentric and diverse. These functions can be interpreted as signs signaling the possible use of the environment. Furthermore, they should represent the multifaceted nature of the city and create its own unique character so that people would be able to connect particular events from their life to the urban environment, that way also perceiving city as place instead of space.

Taking the empirical part into consideration, it is important to add here the elaboration on the functions of the capital city as the central place in a country. As a city *par excellence* (Dijkink 2000, 66) the capital has acquired wider and significant role in human life than any other cities in the country. Thus, it is a unique urban environment that can be easily distinguished from other relatively similar urban settings. Its functions serve for both people living there as well as the whole country. Consequently, in relation to the spatial dimension of places, the capital city is a sign system for its inhabitants and at the same time it can be also interpreted as a sign in relation to the country as the object it represents. Referring to Peirce, it is then involved in multiple sign relations.

Apart from the already mentioned functions of a city the capital is also fulfilling its task of being a sign and representative of the country. It is the main industrial centre, encompasses the spirit of the history and culture of the state, and in many cases is also the most populated urban area in the country. (Szente 2007, 28) Daum and Mauch (2005) have elaborated this idea more by distinguishing four functions that help explaining the role of capital cities in the countries they represent. It can also be argued that these functions could be interpreted as ways how people interact with the environment by perceiving them as signs with meaning - as habit of action in relation to their practical use.

Firstly, capital has political functions. They mostly include administrative functions such as serving as the seat of the government, of the head of the state, of the parliament

and other administrative institutions. Secondly, capital has economic functions, as in most of the cases it is the centre of the finance and trade of the country. Thirdly, as the capital is the place where common beliefs, ideology and values are created, it has social and ethnic functions, serving as an integrative symbol and platform for communication between diverse social, cultural, political and other views and characteristics that define people in the particular country. Finally, capital should also perform cultural mission which includes intellectual functions as the centre of educational institutions (universities); representative and symbolic functions through its architecture and urban planning; performative cultural functions as staging events that might contribute to the political mission of promoting the idea of national identity; as well as preservative functions by mediating the past, present and the future of the country through visual sites of memory (*lieux de mémoire*). (Daum and Mauch 2005, 13–19)

It is important to emphasize that the capital city is not always fulfilling all of the above mentioned functions. Therefore, national capitals can be very different in their purpose and delegated responsibilities, which is what makes them unique. There are many examples where the capital of a country is not the political (legislative) centre of it (e.g. Amsterdam and Tbilisi). The national capital is not invariably the biggest city in the country as well (e.g. Canberra, Ottawa, Ankara and Brasilia). It is also not always in the geographical middle of the country (e.g. London, Washington D.C., Helsinki and Moscow). Nevertheless, places, especially capitals, serve as environments for political action, even if they do not have any governmental functions. (Dijkink 2000, 65) After all, in many cases the capital city is the first thing that comes to people's mind when thinking of a particular state. It is first and foremost the main representative of the whole country serving as the central symbol of it. Consequently, capital city has a double meaning. Depending on the focus it is either a sign or system of signs.

To sum up, city is a sign system representing diverse realities in it. The meaning of this urban environment is closely connected to the spatial and temporal dimension of the place. In this context capital city is a semiotic place with certain qualities for human life. Its interpretation involves political considerations, because the capital can serve as sign for both its inhabitants and the country the city represents. Thus, capital city is a very significant urban place that stands out in space.

1.4. Summary

This chapter reviewed concepts directly related to the pursued research in question. It argued that the environment can be perceived through signs that represent it. Thus, there is a direct link between the sign and the object. Accordingly, meanings to places are attached by interpreting the signs they have. Furthermore, every place is a space in the beginning. They are human actions and aspirations that create space into place. In order for this to happen, the interaction between individuals and the environment happens on personal and social scope and involves physical and mental awareness of the city and its meaning based on the knowledge and the experience of the observer.

Deriving from the theoretical discussion this thesis perceives city as a unique place that has certain spatial and temporal qualities which define it and help distinguishing from other relatively similar urban settings. Furthermore, city is interpreted as socially constructed environment, because it serves as a public place built for people's interaction with each other and their identification with the environment which in the case of capital cities in particular creates the connecting link to the whole country as well. Thus, according to the Peircean sign relations, it is involved in several sign relations simultaneously. The reason for this is that people are different, so their perception varies. Furthermore, the changes can also be observed in the course of time. In this context the role of language is vital for understanding the connection between the theoretical and empirical parts. It is a tool for understanding signs by discussing them and, consequently, sharing individual knowledge and experience. It is especially important when new narratives are created and there is the need to provide a meaningful message that people could identify with.

For this reason the thesis focuses on the urban semiotics and supports its arguments with insight from human geography. This approach complements the semiotic elaboration of spaces and their meaning with focusing on the functional role that the environment plays in human life, that way providing a conformable framework for the empirical part of the study. This method does not intend to be universal, because there are many ways how to look at places and their interaction with individuals. However, focus on both symbolic and practical meaning of places in human life provides suitable arguments for the upcoming analysis. But before the thesis turns to the empirical part, it

is important to elaborate on methodological considerations that will define the succeeding analysis.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Research Methods

This research focuses on the elaboration of the semiotic meaning of urban environment expressed by people in the form of narrative. In this regard the author has chosen to pursue discourse analysis and focus particularly on the narrative inquiry as one of the traditions of discursive research and, thus, also the method for meaning making.

Discourse analysis is concerned with ways in which information is observed, interpreted and shared. (Stubbs 1984, 30) Using discourse analysis provides clarity in relation to what and why is being researched. (Jaworski and Coupland 2000, 37) As Stubbs (1984, 4) writes, discourse analysis primarily involves study of particular texts, either spoken or written, which is also the reason why this thesis pursues discursive research as the method for analyzing the empirical data. However, researcher has to be careful with the sources, which is the main drawback for using this research method. Official transcripts are often deliberately edited. (Yin 2003, 87) Therefore, using them as basis for analysis requires the researcher to consult additional sources for justification in order to reveal the initial meaning. Furthermore, in many cases it is not enough with the chosen data, which means that discourse analysis has to be often complemented with other research methods that extends the scope and time of the particular research. (Jaworski and Coupland 2000, 36)

Narrative inquiry as a part of the discourse analysis helps comprehending the world by presenting people's understanding of it. (Jaworski and Coupland 2000, 32) It focuses on narrative as means of delivering particular interpretation of an occurrence. Accordingly,

it can be argued that narrative organizes people's experience of a particular happening in their life by giving sense to it. (Bruner 1991, 4) It explains events which take, have taken or will take place at a particular time. (Jaworski and Coupland 2000, 29–30) Thus, it has a temporal dimension and accounts the evolution of meanings over time. According to (Bruner 1991, 5, 7), this diachronicity constitutes the reality represented with the help of narrative. However, narrative inquiry can be rather challenging, because narrative involves expression and meaning, which not always are the same. Therefore, the interpretation can vary from the initial purpose of the discourse and only the creator of the message knows the true meaning of it.

Despite some shortcomings, discourse analysis is perceived as well-suited for pursuing this particular research focused on creating particular narratives and sharing them in the social environment in order to make sense, deal with and provide possible solutions and situation evaluations in relation to broader issues of a particular event. Accordingly, the discursive inquiry based on the narrative analysis as a research method for this thesis will be applied to the Berlin - Bonn debate at the German parliament as a single case study chosen to test the feasibility of the application of the theoretical framework discussing places as semiotic spaces to which meanings can be attached through creating narratives.

The author has chosen this case study for the empirical analysis, because as a political discourse it reflects not only the actual topic of the possible move from Bonn to Berlin, but provides an insight into broader changes that happened in the country after the reunification as well. Accordingly, while a case study research provides an in-depth analysis of a narrow topic, this particular debate also comprises the essential background information that was important in order to understand the significance of the decision, that way effectively dealing with the possible drawbacks of the scope of the research focus. Thus, by choosing to analyse the debate by focusing on the meaning of the capital city for the reunited Germany as it was constructed at the debate in Bundestag, the author feels able to pursue the research from a deductive perspective - from general insight into German politics shortly after the Wall fell until the particular focus on the narrative change as a necessary action for building the foundations for the new country.

2.2. Operationalization Process and Data Collection

The meaning of Berlin and Bonn as the central theoretical concept as well as its development in the course of time will be measured and operationalized through pursuing a discourse analysis of the speeches expressed at the debate with focus on the historical narrative and anticipated future role of both cities. For that reason, in order to find answer to the defined research aim and test the hypothesis, the discourse analysis will be based on the elaboration of:

1. the historical narrative providing the meaning that both cities already had at the time of the debate;
2. the projected narrative for the intended message and the meaning that the place will provide for both its people and country as the capital city of Germany;
3. the implementation of the decision and the subsequent development of the presented narratives after the debate.

The ideas expressed at the *Hauptstadtdebatte* will be singled out based on a topic-oriented sampling by identifying the main themes that correspond to the three above mentioned aspects. The author is convinced that this selected method for analysis of the meaning of Berlin and Bonn will provide qualitative reflection on the debate as a process and event where narratives were created in order to provide interpretation of the role that both cities could play as German capitals.

As the *Hauptstadtdebatte* will also be analyzed in relation to its impact for the future through pursuing a follow-up analysis of the development of the decisions made at this particular political event, this study provides a retrospective - prospective approach to the research. (Kumar 2005, 99) Furthermore, in this situation the use of a "before and after" analysis will also present the essence of using the particular case study around which the discourse evolved and was analyzed. As Schramm explains, case study approach tries to present analysis of a decision - why it was taken, how it was implemented and what result did this decision provide. (Yin 2003, 12) Hence, the temporal dimension to the research will help understanding the political considerations

shaping the particular narrative for Berlin and Bonn so that the message they have would suit the ambitions of the reunited country.

For this reason the discourse analysis with the emphasis on narrative inquiry will be carried out by focusing on the speeches expressed at the debate. According to the official protocol of the debate there were 107 politicians who expressed the wish to share their opinion publicly from the tribune and 106 statesmen who gave their speeches to the protocol. (Deutscher Bundestag 1991) Although all the speeches were important and are easily accessible, the analysis of the debate will be based on purposive sampling and, hence, include only those speeches, which addressed the fellow colleagues in the plenary hall. Accordingly, the discourse analysis will focus only on those speeches which were expressed as spoken narrative and, thus, leave out the speeches given to the protocol as written statements. The reason for this selection of speeches is due to the fact that only those ideas which were heard publicly can be perceived as influential for the deputies who had not previously decided which city to support until the very end of the debate. In this context particular attention will be paid to those speeches, which addressed the two proposals (see chapter 3.1.) that were put for the final vote (26 addresses for Bonn and 21 for Berlin) (Deutscher Bundestag 1991).

In this context the main actors in the process of creating meaning for the capital city of the reunified Germany through narrative construction were the deputies at the German Bundestag. According to the principles of parliamentary democracy, they were elected to represent the interests of the people. Hence, although the debate was widely discussed in the public and a referendum was an option, the legitimate decision was left for the 660 statesmen to decide. As a result, they created a political narrative that was intended to be meaningful for both domestic and international audience.

The speeches, protocol of the debate as well as other legal documents of the session as primary sources for the empirical research are available electronically. Some excerpts from main ideas are also summarised by the German Federal Agency for Civic Education (*Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, bpb) and its monthly publication *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (APuZ). The secondary sources will include publications and articles from academic journals on urban semiotics and psychology constructing the theoretical basis for the research. Articles and surveys from mass media (*Die Welt*,

Süddeutsche Zeitung and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* among others) will be used to highlight the aftermath of the decision and present the possible changes in the meaning constructed at the debate.

2.3. The Limitations and Falsification of Research Methods

It can be argued that the main limitation for this study is the fact that the inquiry into the meaning making is based on one single case study. However, as already stated previously in the thesis, the question between Bonn and Berlin was not only a question about the location of the capital, but also a question that revealed broader issues of the debate in relation to the social, economic and other changes brought by the reunification process. Furthermore, the approach of this study to discuss the interaction between people and the environment from the urban semiotics point of view does not intend to be universal method for discussing changes in meanings attached to places.

At the same time, the falsification of the research is mainly based on the choice of theory as well as the interpretation of the sources. In this regard Sheldrake (1999, 64) argues that any analysis of place is rather subjective by its nature. Accordingly, there is a threat that the author will eventually threat Berlin more favourable than Bonn due to the generation thing. As a distant observer the writer perceives Berlin as the only German capital she has ever know, thus, having more personal connection with it in comparison to Bonn. However, when pursuing the discourse analysis, it is possible to maintain balance and dis-attachment from both places when discussing them in relation to the considerations of this work. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that as representatives of people, the deputies and their speeches that were expressed at the debate did not necessarily represent all Germans. Accordingly, also public opinion polls did not represent the opinion of all the people, however, they showed the general trends. Nevertheless, if the results from surveys carried out by different research institutes and media will present recurring conclusion, the evidence could be perceived as relatively reliable.

2.4. Summary

The research method for this study is based on pursuing a discourse analysis with the focus on narrative inquiry that discusses how meanings are conveyed with the help of language, that way providing interpretation of particular happenings in human life. The operationalization categories for the empirical analysis in this thesis are defined according to the meaning making based on temporal considerations. Thus, the methodology focuses on the past, present and future as defining aspects for particular narrative creation in relation to Berlin - Bonn debate as the selected case study.

The chosen data for the narrative inquiry were selected based on the case study in concern and, thus, involve primarily the speeches given at the debate. In order to provide the evolution of the meaning that was created at the debate, the author also uses publications, online journals, newspaper articles and other sources. In this regard language can be perceived as a possible limitation for the research, although the author evaluates her knowledge as sufficient for pursuing the research.

In this regard the thesis will now turn to the analysis of the empirical data as set forth in the methodology by starting with the elaboration of procedures and outcomes that provided background for the debate and helped understanding why some issues at the discussion were emphasized more than others, that way creating the narrative the way it was.

CHAPTER 3: THE COURSE OF THE BERLIN- BONN DEBATE: PRECEDURAL BACKGROUND

3.1. Two Candidates and Five Proposals

The voting for the political centre of the reunited Germany was set for June 20, 1991. (Deutscher Bundestag 2010) Berlin and Bonn were the two options the deputies had to decide from. Berlin had already been German capital several times before the *Wende*. Furthermore, its status as the political centre of the country has been closely connected to the key events in German history. It was the seat of the royal government of the Kingdom of Prussia in the 18th century; capital of Prussia (1867-1870); double capital of Prussia and Imperial Germany after Otto von Bismarck unified the German states in 1871; capital during the Weimar republic and the Third Reich; and East Berlin was the seat for GDR after the World War II. (Ladd 1997, 3) In total Berlin had been the capital city under five different political systems. In the 20th century alone the city experienced seven distinct phases of political organization. (Daum and Mauch 2005, 23 and 32)

Bonn, contrary to Berlin, had been German capital only once. It became the political centre of the FRG in 1949. Starting as a peripheral village, after four decades of successful democratic governance and ties with international organizations Bonn had grown as an important city with good reputation, being able to challenge Berlin at the debate for the location of the seat of the government of the reunified Germany. That is why relatively small and insignificant Bonn was a strong opponent to the big and historically rich Berlin.

There were five proposals to discuss at the debate:

1. **The Bonn-proposal** (*Bonn Antrag, 12/814*) (Translation by the author, Deutscher Bundestag 1991a), also known as the Resolution of the Capital City (*Bundesstaatslösung*), intended on keeping the seat of the parliament and government in Bonn, and moving the seat of the president and the Federal Council (*Bundesrat*) to Berlin;
2. **The proposal for the Fulfilment of German Unity** (*Vollendung der Einheit Deutschlands, 12/815*) (Translation by the author, Deutscher Bundestag 1991b) proposed to move all four main political posts to Berlin, at the same time maintaining and promoting new work places and concentrating German as well as international institutions in Bonn;
3. **The proposal for the Maintenance of the Functionality** (*Erhaltung der Funktionsfähigkeit, 12/816*) (Translation by the author, Deutscher Bundestag 1991c) argued that the government and the parliament should not be divided between both cities;
4. **The Consensus proposal** (*Konsensantrag Berlin/Bonn, 12/817*) (Translation by the author, Deutscher Bundestag 1991d) appealed that the Bundestag would move to Berlin together with the president of Germany, whereas the government and the Federal Council would stay in Bonn;
5. **The Berlin-proposal** (*Berlin Antrag, 12/818*) (Translation by the author, Deutscher Bundestag 1991e) suggested that the parliament and government would move to Berlin.

At first the Bundestag voted for the forth and third proposal. They both were objected, as neither of them got the majority of votes. Then Gysi as the representative of the third proposal removed it from voting by arguing that the voting process (several rounds) makes it less likely that their proposal would receive enough support. (Deutscher Bundestag 1991f) Thus, it was clear that the final decision will be made between the two proposals that were left: the first and the second proposal. The Bundestag had to choose between one of them.

The 12-hour-long debate ended with a vote where 338 deputies decided on Berlin and 320 - Bonn. (Lehmann 2011) Thus, the Bundestag voted in favour of the proposal for the Fulfilment of German Unity. As this proposal states, the decision was an investment of confidence in the development of the new Federal states; a symbol of a new beginning and coalescence between Germans; strengthening of the German federal system; and, eventually, as the title states, a fulfilment of German unity. At the same time, also Bonn would not be forgotten.

3.2. Decisions Made Already Before the Debate

The issues that had already been negotiated in the capital city context between the Fall of the Berlin Wall (November 9, 1989) and the day of the debate (June 20, 1991) were very important, because they shaped the decision in favour of any of the five previously discussed proposals. Furthermore, the meaning of place was discussed from diverse viewpoints. Not only the location of the capital city was at stake, but also economic and social concerns had to be addressed. (Castello 2010, 42) The five proposals discussed previously included these concerns.

The Bundestag had already voted against deciding the issue in a referendum. (Thierse 1991) As a result, the question of the seat of the government, parliament and other Federal institutions would be decided by voting at the Bundestag. Hence, the principles of parliamentary democracy gave the deputies the legitimacy to decide. The aspect of representativeness was very important, because it was closely connected to the political credibility of the Bundestag. The speeches showed that the deputies took this task very seriously, because there were many remarks at the debate on the weight of the decision for German people (see chapter 3.3.). Furthermore, the popular acceptance of the decision could later on backfire as a low threshold in the elections. (Iwersen 1991)

One of the most important and influential aspects the deputies favouring both sides agreed on was that the Unification Treaty (*Einigungsvertrag*) from the Summer of 1990 had to be taken into consideration. It stated that the capital of Germany is Berlin and

that the question about the seat of the parliament and government will be decided after the reunification will take place [after October 3, 1990]. (Matthäus-Maier 1991) Hence, even if the government would stay in Bonn, making it the political centre of the country, Berlin would still be the capital city that would represent Germany as a whole. (Deutscher Bundestag 1991a) An alternative option that was denied was to refer to the 1949 Constitution (*Grundgesetz*) of the FRG, which foresaw that Bonn would serve as the temporary seat of the Federal institutions until both parts would unite again. Then Berlin would become the legitimate capital once more. (Görtemaker 2011) Deriving from these two perspectives also the possible division of the capital city functions was discussed.

From the discourse analysis of the speeches given at the debate it could be seen that the Bonn-proponents used to express their arguments in relation to the agreement formulated at the Unification Treaty. The deputies used this Treaty to emphasize that the first proposal, which put forward the division of responsibilities between Berlin and Bonn, was legitimate and that the decision was not set in stone. “I understood this formulation then, ladies and gentlemen, as a way to speak both for Berlin and Bonn.” (Translation by the author; Reuter 1991) On the other hand, when speaking in favour of Berlin, de Maizière (1991) argued that the GDR accepted the constitution of the FRG as the Basic Law for the reunified Germany. Accordingly, there should be no questions about which city to vote for. Also Brandt (1991) stated that the new decision should be the same as the one made in 1949. Therefore, by agreeing that Berlin will be the capital of Germany the idea was that it would be a capital city where also the state institutions would be situated. The cultural centre of Germany should also be the political one. (Schäfer 1991)

In this context Bonn-supporter Ehmke (1991) argued that “no one decides for the eternity”. After all, in the Unification Treaty Bonn was declared as a provisory capital, not a permanent one. (Hintze 1991) Therefore, the decision from 1949 had to be reconsidered according to the new situation. The striving for freedom, unity, fulfilment of all the hopes and dealing with all the worries were put in a new setting on October 3, 1990. Glotz added to that saying: “What was self-evident in 1949, considering the circumstances, can be wrong in 1991” (Translation by the author; Glotz 1991). Thereby,

the present and the aspirations for the future were set at that time, not 40 years ago. (Geißler 1991) At the same time, when defending the second proposal de Maizière (1991) said that those who showed courage and determination in 1990, should show consistency and say "yes" to Berlin also on this particular day.

Consequently, the debate was not about the capital city *per se*, but about deciding on the political centre of the country. Deriving from this decision about *de jure* and *de facto* capital city status Berlin would have to be taken into consideration in any case and that created two narratives presented in the proposals of how to assess the situation in relation to Bonn or Berlin as the capital city with political functions.

Another decision connected to the possible division of capital city responsibilities between Bonn and Berlin was to think based on a future-perspective. The deputies discussed how to implement the end decision after it would be made. They agreed that a regulation was needed to set forth the financial matters, especially those concerning the implementation of the outcome of the debate. (Deutscher Bundestag 1991b) Accordingly, the main guidelines for setting out the key points in preparing Bonn or Berlin for the political capital city status were defined. They were included in the five proposals put for the vote and in the end became a part of the Berlin/Bonn Law that served as the framework for setting the procedure, cost assessment and timeline for making Berlin or Bonn as ready to fulfil political functions. (Möller 2002, 76) Both cities would be supported, so that they could continue functioning according to their role countrywide as well as at the federal level. Furthermore, although the decision was made, it was more or less clear that the move of the institutions will take some time. Thus, Bonn would stay as the provisory capital city for a little longer.

Last but not least, it was also decided that financial resources would need to be shifted to the structural development of the old GDR. It was important to help the people in the five new federal lands, including the residents of once divided Berlin. (Reuter 1991) “The destiny of the nation won’t be decided with today’s decision, but based on the advancement in all the new federal lands [..].” (Translation by the author; Schwalbe 1991) Due to the forty years of separation and German lives in two different political as well as economic systems, there were many disparities in the living conditions in both divided parts that had to be addressed and diminished now, after the reunification.

(Baum 1991) Thus, it was essential that the *Deutschmarke* (German currency) would be primarily used for social, economic and other purposes that were important for German people in the five new federal states in particular, instead of spending the finances on the improvement of government buildings and so on. (Matthäus-Maier 1991)

There was the awareness that the re-unification will be costly. However, there was money intended for the reunification and all the tasks this goal involved. (Matthäus-Maier 1991) These expenses were perceived as necessary investment in order to fulfil the inner unity of Germany and Germans by weakening and, eventually, erasing the economic, social and other differences between what used to be the GDR and the FRG.

To sum up, the deputies emphasized these aspects at the debate in the context of the proposal they supported. No matter the end result, they all had to perceive Berlin as the representative capital, develop a regulation concerning the distribution of finances between both cities; and focus on mechanisms that would bring both parts of Germany together through tasks focusing on structural and regional development. The understanding of the weight of the decision and these tasks helped comprehending various advantages and drawbacks that the changes would bring. Hence, the deputies became aware that the vote was only the beginning and that the real work would come only afterwards.

3.3. The Significance of the Debate

The historical and symbolic meaning of the capital city as expressed during the debates mostly depended on who interpreted it and which side (which city) did this person support. While for Bonn-proponents Berlin as the new capital was a decision of a "capital mistake" (*Kapitaler Irrtum*), for Berlin-supporters the outcome of the debate was a symbolic gesture of the completion of the German unification. (Daum and Mauch 2005, 12) The deputies were aware of the significance of the decision, as it would bring both clarity and new changes at the time of the *Wende*. After all, the voting would define which direction Germany would choose - the safe and reliable West or the risky

and yet unknown East. (Zawatka-Gerlach 2011) Furthermore, due to this East - West polarization also the aspect of German - German relations was essential. Thus, the decision was not only about the political governance of Germany, but about its future and German inner unity as well.

In what is considered as the most important and influential speech during the debates,² Schäuble, the Minister of the Interior, emphasized that the discussion was not a competition between two cities, between Bonn and Berlin. It was also not about new working places, costs or reforms the decision will bring either. "In reality [the debate] is about the future of Germany. That is the decisive question." (Translation by the author, Schäuble 1991) By emphasizing what the city is going to be, instead of focusing on what it has been in the past, he managed to present the debate as a vital part of the reunification process that could even have decisive consequences for the way how Germany will develop further on.

Baum agreed to Schäuble's opinion stating that the true meaning of the debate was not about the city *per se*, but rather about the way how Germany and Germans saw their country and themselves; about how Germans would define the future direction the country was about to take in the international arena. "[The debate is about] our future expectations and about our self-awareness." (Translation by the author, Baum 1991) Also Thierse argued that the cities themselves were of secondary importance: "No, [the debate] today is not a dispute between two cities. It is in fact about the future social and political development [of the country], respectively, the last conclusive step towards the fulfilment of German unity." (Translation by the author, Thierse 1991) The debate was about the common identity of both parts of Germany, the same as it was about German relations with the past that both cities were connected to. Also the continuity of democracy from the Bonn Republic and the new beginning as one country with one people instead of two mattered. Therefore, the question was not as much about the city

² Many deputies and political experts (see, for example: Herles 1991; Görtemaker 2011; Töpfer 1996; Link 201) have identified W. Schäuble's speech as the turning point in the debates. Only four days before the vote on the June 20, 1991, according to unofficial polls, Bonn was leading with 343 versus 267 votes. (Görtemaker 2011). However, as the results show, the debate ended with a slight, but sufficient 18 vote majority in favor of the Berlin-proposal. Also German people have expressed that this speech was "on the button". (See, for example: Schäuble 2011 and Deutscher Bundestag 2010)

itself, as it was about the solidarity between Germans in the course of fulfilling political, social and human unity of Germany.

The task of the statesmen was to stand for the whole Germany and German people, not only the local municipality that elected them. (Geiger 1991) The deputies were the representatives of all the German people, not only *Ossis* or *Wessis*. That is why the decision had to be well-weighed and responsible. This was an important statement, because even though the unity of Germany as a country was already achieved and celebrated on the October 3, 1990, the decision regarding the capital would serve as a sign of bringing also *Ossis* and *Wessis* together. The focus had to be on restoring and rebuilding the German unity. (Zurheide 1991) Thereby, as Rauen (1991) argued, perceiving the decision as a victory of Bonn or Berlin was less important as it was to interpret it as a triumph of democracy. The deputies had to show that to them there was no distinction between German people, i.e., that *Ossis* and *Wessis* were one nation. This sign would, thus, serve as a signal for other decisions that would have to be made in the future. (Genscher 1991) Eventually, the debate was much more than just about the capital city. It was the beginning of change. Furthermore, the whole Germany had to feel the change. "Nothing stays as it once was." (Translation by the author, Ullmann 1991) Only this way the solidarity with all Germans could be achieved. There were no winners or losers from the decision. It was a step towards a new future and every German had to feel the change.

In this context it was also important that the question in concern would not downplay the impact of the reunification - "the joy of becoming one free and reunited German nation". (Translation by the author, Blüm 1991) With the Fall of the Berlin Wall the division between the GDR and the FRG as well as *Ossis* and *Wessis* had been overcome. Germany reunified into a new country with new self-awareness and goals. (Blüm 1991) Therefore, the next step was to build a strong country. Eventually, the decision in favour of Berlin or Bonn was a long-term choice that would also influence the next generations. (Bernrath 1991) Thus, the voting had to be focused on the future of Germany and its people. The city was not the priority, but rather the meaning it carried and how it would reflect on domestic as well as international scope.

3.4. Summary

This chapter reflected on what had already been done before the debate. The deputies voted in favour of one of the five proposals that could change the way how people would perceive both cities and also Germany. At the same time, parliamentarians were also those who created these documents beforehand. Hence, the end result was closely connected to the progress that the deputies had made before June 20, 1991. As the debate was progressing, two final proposals were left. In this regard it is important to mention that, based on the Unification Treaty, in both of these documents Berlin was regarded as the capital city that would represent Germany as a country. Thus, the question was about the political functions of the capital, not the capital city status itself. Furthermore, after narrowing down the amount of proposals many deputies had to reconsider their choice. As a result, the arguments expressed during the debates were important, because the outcome of the debate was not only close, but also significantly different from the opinion of deputies only several days before the voting (see footnote 1). Bonn was lacking only 9 votes (Möller 2002, 65) Consequently, it can be argued that in many cases the decision was made at the last moment, only at the day of the debate. The end result of the debate, where Berlin won with only a slight, eighteen-vote advantage over Bonn approves this statement. Hence, it was both a personal and a state-wide decision.

CHAPTER 4: THE ANALYSIS OF THE *HAUPTSTADTDEBATTE*

4.1. The Historical Meaning of Bonn and Berlin

Taking into consideration the extensive wide-scale transformation period that Germany was going through after the reunification, it was important to present the new country in a new way by being aware of its history, particularly in relation to Bonn or Berlin as the previous and, possibly, also the future political centres of the state. According to Cebik (1986, 71), narrative provides explanation for changes that happen in the environment. Furthermore, these changes themselves are the reason for narrative creation. Consequently, presenting Bonn and Berlin in an engaging manner by attaching meanings to them helped creating an emotional attachment to the particular places through which to look at the whole country as well.

The historical aspect at the Berlin - Bonn debate was essential, because it was important to understand what both cities stood for. (Lamers 1991) Places matter, because as environments with history "locations stand for contents." (Görtemaker 2011) "To know a place is also to know the past." (Tuan 1975, 164) Therefore, the historical meaning that Berlin and Bonn had was central when creating a sense of belonging and identification with the city as the representative of the whole country in the present and also for the future. For this reason the awareness of the meaning of place the city already had was of the highest importance.

The debate on the capital city status made the discussion about the relationship between past, present and future of Germany important and widely discussed. In this sense narrative helps explaining events which take, have taken or will take place at a particular time. (Jaworski and Coupland 2000, 29–30) Thus, it has a temporal dimension and accounts the evolution of meanings over time. For that reason the focus

on Berlin and Bonn as the possible capitals was important, because memorable cities contain historical evidence and, therefore, help understanding the past and the present circumstances. (Farrar 2011, 733) At the same time, it was also important to understand that the debate was not only about the location of the capital. As Verheugen (1991) argued at the debate, the people identify themselves not with the city in particular, but rather with the meaning it stands for.

Due to their historical and symbolic meaning Bonn-supporters argued that this city as a capital of reunited Germany was perceived as modest and democratically credible decision. Berlin, at the same time, symbolized megalomania and policy dictated by those in power. (Görtemaker 2011) Berlin-proponents, on the other hand, claimed that their favoured city represented the cosmopolitan nature of the new German society, whereas Bonn was an isolated and peripheral bureaucratic village, a provisory capital. (Daum and Mauch 2005, 45; Vogel 1991) The historical meaning of Bonn was, thus, connected to the fresh start after the Second World War in a peaceful "small town" environment, whereas Berlin was a global and diverse city connected to the dark chapters of German history and the National Socialism in particular. Furthermore, these positions of historical narrative show that the discourse at the debate covered diverse aspects of the reunification and not only the past: "The capital debate was about history, about the burdens of the past, about the kind of future Germany wanted, about the way it would be treated by the rest of the world." (Daum and Mauch 2005, 43) Accordingly, the intentions of the legislators as the narrative creators were to present and argumentatively prove that Germany's new goals and state-building went hand in hand with the international practices. It was important for Germany that foreign actors would see Germany as a trustworthy partner. (Iwersen 1991)

The experience as divided countries and societies was the central one when interpreting the meaning that both cities already had. Deputies in favour of Bonn as the city with political functions argued that the city was the symbol of forty years of successful democracy. It represented stability, prosperity and economic development. As the city was located relatively close to the main European institutions in Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg, Bonn was also closely associated with the orientation towards West and European Community and appearance on the world stage. (Galetti 2012, 287) At the

same time, Berlin proponents emphasized that this city was the place where the reunification could be best felt and experienced. As a previously divided city Berlin was the symbol of resistance, freedom, unity and the credibility for Germany to move forward. Being located in the centre of Europe and relatively close to the German Eastern border it was also perceived as a bridge between East and West and the connector to the Eastern European countries (Ibid.) As city of diversity it was also the cultural metropolis of Germany.

From this historical meaning of both cities it can be argued that in many respects they were diametrically opposed. Also Verheugen (1991) argued that despite the fact that both cities represented the new beginning for Germany and the striving for democracy, as national symbols Bonn and Berlin could not be more different as they already were. Accordingly, it could be observed at the debate that the arguments put forward during the debates were sometimes contradictory, as there were many channels through which to direct the message. In the debate it could be seen that the same topic created conflicting effect on Berlin or Bonn as the possible capital city of Germany. For example, the question of Unification Treaty versus the Constitution of the year 1949 provided big contrasts in the way how both sides of the argument (Bonn-proponents versus Berlin-supporters) constructed their discourse around their representative meaning for Germany. Hence, putting both cities under the magnifying glass promoted city rivalry, that way making them visible or, putting the idea in semiotic terms, connecting city as a sign to an event as the object it represents made the city into place that was recognizable and unique among other relatively similar urban settings in space.

Referring to the chancellor of that time - Helmut Kohl - Pflüger (1991) emphasized that without Berlin there would be no unity. At the same time, if there would be no Bonn and the forty-year-long democratic experience for the FRG politicians, achieving freedom as well as unity would be much harder. Thus, both cities were of the biggest importance for the reunified Germany and the way it wished to present itself both to its people and also abroad. The German identity was closely connected to both cities. "Our identity had a double meaning: Berlin as a symbol of forty years of fighting for freedom and being the bridge to the East; Bonn as the connector to the West and also the symbol of the best forty years of democratic governance German history has ever had."

(Translation by the author, Matthäus-Maier 1991) In this context it is important to add that for a historical narrative to provide the desired explanation and effect, the narrator must emphasize only those aspects that correspond to the intention. (Cebik 1986, 60) Accordingly, narrative creation is connected to emphasizing selectively chosen facts that supplement the meaning of the message and the aims of the speaker. Regarding the discussed historical narrative it can be argued that this choice of particular things to narrate provided means for boosting German self-consciousness and starting from a new beginning where past was remembered, but at the same time also left behind.

To conclude, it can be argued that both cities as the representatives of German history were important for defining the historical foundations for the new country. This could explain the tendency to perceive the meaning of Bonn and Berlin in relation to the German history of the period of division primarily. After all, in the memory of German people they were the capitals of the FRG and the GDR. There was the awareness of the time before and during the Second World War as well as of the events with rather negative connotation during the forty years of separation (as terrorist attacks in the FRG and Stasi in the GDR), however, German people and the deputies as their representatives were for the most part preoccupied with the most recent historical legacy as the starting point for the new beginning in the reunified Germany. Consequently, the historical narrative of Berlin and Bonn was based on selectively chosen events from the past that were emphasized in order to create a new message as the foundation on which to build the new narrative. "In everyday life history should recede into the background." (Van Assche et al. 2012, 246) The past is appreciated the most when it is not overwhelmingly present. That was the setting on which the new, future-oriented meaning of both cities was created.

4.2. The Attached Narrative to both Capital City Candidates

The awareness of the historical legacy of Bonn and Berlin as capitals representing the whole country provided Germany with a turning point where it could define its new role

as a reunified state. In this context the new narrative of Germany was constructed and, if needed, re-defined based on the meaning that the possible capital city already had. Thus, it can be argued that the sign interpretation and narrative construction based on the previous meanings and experience in the particular urban environment could also serve as a starting point for anticipating the possible future meaning and use of the city as a semiotic environment representing both people in it as well as the country the city is in.

When discussing the possible meaning of both candidates for the future of Germany the deputies from both sides of the argument emphasized that the Germany they were discussing on June 20, 1991 was a new state formation and so it should be understood. "We did not reunify into the German Reich, but into a strong federal state." (Blüm 1991) The reunified Germany was not a continuation of the FRG. It was also not the same country as the one in early 1900s.

In relation to the discussion about what kind of Germany the deputies are deciding on there was a general agreement that Germany is focusing on achieving the unity among its people and all the federal lands. At the same time, it is also positioning itself as a European political player. In this regard, according to Blüm (1991), the new Germany should be based on two cornerstones - Europeanization and regionalism. Therefore, it can be argued that as a federation Germany stood for and will be a country with strong and diverse regions that would, consequently, suit well to the multicultural face of European Community as well. The future of Germany was in Europe. Furthermore, Germany should be as a house that opens its doors to both East and West. (Schneider 1991) That way the new country will present itself as a reliable and politically credible partner to other countries.

The emphasis on both Europeanization and regionalism was connected to the awareness that the reunification provided Germany with the opportunity to look forward in the future. Europe is developing together and Germany should be on the train when it leaves. (Zurheide 1991) Therefore, it can be argued that the main purpose for the new Germany was to present itself in the framework of future development by defining aims it wishes to achieve.

In this regard it is important to note that for a narrative to be accepted it should be relevant and engaging. (Bruner 1991, 7) Therefore, it was essential to show German people that the legislators are representing the common interests of the whole society, not only their personal ones. As Süßmuth (1991) emphasized at the debate, it was important to show to all the German people that deputies are there for them and the aspects of the people's unity are of the biggest importance. Also Matthäus-Maier (1991) emphasized that the German people were those, why she and her colleagues had come together. Furthermore, based on the decision to take the Unification Treaty into consideration, the end result of the debate would benefit Berlin, that way symbolizing former East Germans that their decision to join the FRG would result in putting Berlin in the cover of Germany's representation to the world. The city might not be the political capital, but it could and would have all the other capital city functions. Thus, the deputies had to show that their personal feelings as former Ossis or Wessis were left out. Or, as Bonn-proponent Pflüger (1991) argued at the debate: "I am in favour of Bonn, but not against Berlin." Rephrasing his idea: the decision was an all-German decision.

Taking into consideration the historical meaning of Berlin it was argued that as a city that reunified and welcomed new beginning it would become the symbol of changes and new beginning. Residing less than 100 km from the border with Poland, Berlin represented the striving for Germany to get closer and connected to the East, starting from the new federal lands and its closest neighbouring countries that also underwent significant changes in their statehood. (Ehmke 1991) At the same time, Germany with Berlin as its frontrunner would be a part of the European Community, signifying its role as the connector of Europe. (Fuchs 1991) Due to the fact that Berlin was a divided city of a divided country, its status as a capital would also signify overcoming the past and getting together united. (Ladd 1997, 225) It would represent Germany as a country that has accepted its past and moves forward. Moreover, being a city of diversity and change, Berlin would undoubtedly be the cultural and economic metropolis of Germany as well.

The anticipated future-narrative for Bonn, on the other hand, stood for the Western integration. As a capital it would, thus, represent federal Germany in Europe of regions,

that way accommodating the principle of strong federal state. (Baum 1991) Furthermore, due to the reason that Bonn already was a fully functioning capital, continuing to serve the political functions would mean that the costs meant for adjusting the urban environment to the new task could be limited and that way more money would go for diminishing the economic, infrastructural and other differences between the old and new federal lands. (Matthäus-Maier 1991) That would signify focus on the development of regions instead of constructing new governmental premises. Furthermore, Bonn would also serve as the sign that the future of Germany and the unity of German people would evolve in a peaceful and friendly environment.

The new future-oriented narrative of both cities was also closely connected to the examples from other countries and their capitals that were used as arguments at the debate to signify either of the possible options. When looking from the semiotic perspective, it could be argued that German politicians learned from other states and tried to take into consideration their knowledge and experience as the basis for creating a new meaning for their own country - Germany.

In this sense Bonn-supporters argued that there are many metropolis-like cities in the world which do not have main state governing institutions there. (Roth 1991) Americans did not choose New York City or San Francisco, Canadians did not choose Montreal or Toronto, Swiss did not choose Zurich and so on. (Blüm 1991) One dominant central city, thus, would be a bad decision for the regional principle of Germany. Glotz (1991) added that Lyon in France and Barcelona in Spain could play much bigger roles in their countries. Therefore, the division of responsibilities between Bonn and Berlin would be a good sign for the sustainability of the German federalism.

On the other hand, bestowing upon Berlin, Böhm responded that 95% of all the countries in the world do not have division of political functions between cities. “The capital is where the parliament and the government of the country reside.” (Translation by the author; Böhm 1991) A city is not the capital city, if it does not have the main state institutions there. When the time came, also France did not choose Wichy over Paris. (Brandt 1991) Furthermore, the Netherlands cannot be taken as an example, because the Hague and Amsterdam are only 30 km away from each other, the same as is

Wannsee from the centre of Berlin. (Böhm 1991) Therefore, keeping the parliament and the government close was important for the political functioning of the state.

To sum up, the historical narrative shaped the arguments constructing the future meaning of Berlin and Bonn in relation to their role as representatives of the reunited Germany. As Berlin was presented as the city that would connect the whole Europe by being located in the middle of it and, thus, also in the middle of the European affairs, it could be argued that this narrative provided politically self-sufficient option to position Germany as a country open to Europe-wide cooperation. Furthermore, as previously divided and now unified city Berlin would also serve as a sign that the *Ossi-Wessi* gap as well as the differences between the old and new federal lands will be eventually diminished based on Berlin as the first positive symbol of physical reunification. On the other hand, this decision would most likely involve costs. In this regard Bonn was perceived as the financially most pragmatic decision that would benefit the regions and, thus, contribute to the reunification by investing money in diminishing the disparities between both previously divided parts of Germany. Being a rather small city when compared to Berlin, Bonn positioned itself as the city which would steer Germany towards bold political achievements in the European Community, UN, NATO and other organisations shaping the political order of the world. Based on the forty years of good democratic practice it had also already earned the political trust which the new country could need.

4.3. The Evolution of the Meanings Attached to Berlin and Bonn Over Time

The outcome of the debate meant that Berlin as a united city would replace the functions that Bonn and East Berlin performed during the Cold war period when Germany was divided in two parts, two countries. It officially became the Federal capital (*Bundeshauptstadt*) of Germany. Bonn, on the other hand, had to adapt to the new situation that meant reorganizing its city functions and also the positioning in the German political landscape. Therefore, the narratives or meanings that were attached to

both cities (see chapters 4.1. and 4.2.) were justified according to the new situation that the decision at the debate provided.

As Bonn was not chosen to become the political centre of Germany, the development of the narrative attached to the city at the debate can be discussed mainly in relation to the ways how Bonn dealt with the consequences that the decision brought. The first big sign signalling the new role of Bonn was what the German government decided that eight ministries will stay in Bonn. (Weber 1992) Thus, as a city with political functions Bonn acquired the status of a federal city (*Bundesstadt*). It was important, because due to regionalism Bonn was not the administrative centre of the North Rhein-Westphalia. Therefore, this decision provided Bonn with the opportunity to pursue political functions and shape its political narrative also then, when it was not the capital anymore. This also corresponded to the already before the debate decided aspect to take the Unification Treaty into consideration. Accordingly, the narrative of Bonn was interrelated to the capital city functions of Berlin, even if the latter would become the seat of the government and other state institutions. In this regard, the decision at the debate was supposed to provide positive development for both cities. It was a decision for both cities, a double-decision (*Doppel-Beschluss*), a Berlin plus Bonn decision that provided the opportunity to level the interests coming from both camps. (Möller 2002, 73)

When in 1994 the Berlin/Bonn Law (*Berlin/Bonn Gesetz*) was ratified, the development of Bonn as *Bundesstadt* obtained clear direction. The Law set the guidelines for implementation of the transfer of the parliament and the government to the Federal capital, as decided on June 20, 1991. It stated that the seat of the government as well as the parliament would be in Berlin, whereas ministries would be in both cities. Those ministries which would be in Bonn, would have a representative office in Berlin and *vice versa*. Furthermore, for Bonn the Law proposed that the loss of the capital city status would be compensated with emphasizing its functions as a center of international organizations, culture and science by fostering its economy, improving the infrastructure and others. (Deutscher Bundestag 1994) The move would happen in several stages and be completed in 2000. Eventually, six instead of eight ministries stayed in Bonn. (Petersen 2008) Furthermore, this situation provided ground for change

in the meaning that was attached to Bonn at the debate by making Bonn into *Bundesstadt* and, thus, positioning it below Berlin as the capital, but above all the other German cities as the city which served as the second seat of the president and other political figures that after the debate moved to Berlin.

In this regard Bonn started to prepare its urban environment for the political functions the city was delegated to pursue. Although the city already had the appropriate infrastructure for locating the state institutions there, due to the reason that the existing buildings were old, partly rented and dispersed in different parts of Bonn, it turned out that it was financially profitable to build new buildings. (Engelken 2004) Furthermore, the demand for workforce was bigger than ever before. People came to Bonn, which also reflected on positive birth rates and other social indicators. Thus, even if Bonn lost its status as the sole capital city, it was still the "power in the Rhine valley" (Engelken 2004). Thus, change of focus and functional role does not always harms the city. In reality this experience for Bonn was the other way around.

Furthermore, due to the reason that the status of Bonn in Germany changed, the city received material compensation from the state. (Daum and Mauch 2005, 49) The money was spent not only on the new state office buildings, but also on improving the infrastructure in the city among other reasons. As Petersen (2008) writes, Bonn was booming. The cityscape has changed significantly in the last twenty years. (Kolbe 2011) Also the employment rates and other economic indicators are growing from year to year. And not only in Bonn, but in the whole North Rhein-Westphalia. However, in this context it should be added that in general the old Federal lands performed better than the five new ones. That also corresponds to Bonn and Berlin as being located in one or another part of Germany and, in semiotic terms, provides explanation for the influence that the spatial aspects might have on cities.

With the arrival of United Nations in 1996 the city positioned itself as the place for international organisations and companies in Germany, as it was defined in the Berlin/Bonn Law. (UN Deutschland 1995) This brought new people to the city and the buildings, that were left empty after the move to Berlin in year 2000, were used as their new offices. Furthermore, several big German companies as Deutsch Post and Deutsch

Telekom also moved to Bonn and built their bureau buildings that have now become an integral part of Bonn's image. (Kolbe 2011)

In the end, it can be argued that as Bonn was not chosen to become the political capital of Germany, its narrative was reoriented according to selected political, cultural, international and other roles that were attached to the city in order for Bonn not to suffer significantly from the big changes that the decision at the debate brought.

Contrary to Bonn, the evolution of the constructed narrative of Berlin as the capital city of Germany was directly influenced by the decision at the debate and the subsequent Berlin/Bonn Law. In this sense the discourse analysis depended on the way how Berlin positioned itself as the capital city and, accordingly, as a semiotic sign system for German people and also a sign for the international community. Thus, the city was involved in several sign relations at the same time.

After the debate Berlin was immediately perceived as the sign for saying goodbye to the past and creating a new beginning for Germany that positions itself on the world's political stage. (Fack 1991) Accordingly, with the parliamentary decision this meaning of Germany as a new country appearing in the political and geographic centre of Europe became real. The aspect of location was particularly emphasized in relation to Germany's leading role in Europe and particularly Central Europe. (Radunski 1992) The location was, thus, the main sign that connected the narrative to Germany's focal place in Europe. Furthermore, it also positioned Germany as the bridge between East and West. In this sense it is important to add that this imaginary bridge eventually provided means for Europe-wide communication, but also for improving the German - German relations. Correspondingly, Berlin also became the symbol of uniting the country and its people. Furthermore, the meaning of Berlin as the main element of unity was also perceived in terms of European unity, which directly corresponds to the narrative created at the debate.

This narrative also strongly emphasized the bold nature of Berlin as the city which will become the metropolis, the economic and cultural centre of Germany. However, mainly due to strong federalism and the aspect that there are many big cities in Germany that have already proven themselves as Frankfurt, Dresden or Munich, the meaning of Berlin

as the leading urban environment in diverse fields has not come true. (Kilz 1996) In this regard, it should be noted that the city has become attractive to foreign entrepreneurs, especially from Eastern Europe and Russia. (Wuschick 1998) It is becoming more and more recognized as an international economic hub.

The competition that Berlin creates for other cities in this sense is obvious, however, it is not the sole centre of everything. According to Prinz (1999), Berlin as the political capital is in no way the economic metropolis. The only sphere where Berlin can be perceived as a global city is its ability to provide different kind of services, particularly economic. Also Bude (2001) states the same argument. He explains that in order for Germany to become a global city what the Berlin-supporters at the debate intended, it has to attract more entrepreneurs and find its niche as the finance centre Frankfurt or the harbour-city Hamburg. Otherwise, apart from political centre it is the metropolis of street sweeper brigades and security officers. (Bude 2001) As a result, in relation to the extensive work that has already been done for creating functional political environment, the city should start feeling sense of fulfilment for what it has already achieved, instead of looking forward. In this context nine years later Almstedt (2010) argued that Berlin is still looking forward. Hence, in an independent study by European Cities Monitor it has been observed that Berlin has overtaken Munich as potential European economic hub based on various criteria as the accessibility to office space, traffic situation, qualified personnel and others. Consequently, it can be argued that Berlin wants to be the global city it was intended to become according to the narrative at the debate. In many respects the move to Berlin as the changes it brought to the cityscape made this "victory" over Munich possible. It has become as a diverse and cosmopolitan urban environment whose potential has not yet been fulfilled.

In the end, the narrative of Berlin after it became the capital city has stayed emphasizing the connection between Berlin as the capital and Germany as the country. In this sense the bold idea of Berlin as global city is one of the main aspects of the narrative that has somewhat changed in the course of time.

Deriving from the way how media reflected on the change of meaning of both cities it is worth mentioning that a particular observation in the public narrative on the effects of the debate could be distinguished. Namely, in the first years after the debate the media

continued to emphasize the projected future-oriented meaning of Berlin as the capital city and what kind of changes were about to happen in Bonn. In this regard the decision to locate ministries in both cities made the future of Bonn more tangible. When in 1994 the Berlin/Bonn Law was ratified the changes brought by the decision at the debate became more observable in the sense of city-planning in Berlin and the move of the United Nations office from Geneva to Bonn. Thus, media started to focus on what both cities had become since the day of the debate. Eventually, when in 1999 the move of the parliament, government and other institutions finally happened, the reflection on the meaning change of Bonn and Berlin started to slowly disappear from the public discussion and instead, media brought in a new debate which is also actual now, in 2014. To be exact, since Berlin and Bonn are sharing the administrative functions of the capital city there is the question of whether there should be a total move (*total Umzug*) from Bonn to Berlin. (Bröcker 2013) This sharing of responsibilities is inconvenient for the state officials and it is also costly. Two thirds of the deputies are already favouring this step. However, as a political decision it might cost much, especially in the election year. Therefore, the new debate-related narrative is there, but as a rather sensitive question it is not developing fast. That might be the discussion for another significant game-changing debate at the Bundestag.

4.4. Summary

This thesis argues that the Berlin - Bonn debate can be perceived as an event where particular narratives were created in order to explain the changes that were connected to the German reunification. In this regard the analytic part of the *Hauptstadtdebatte* emphasized the historical meaning of Berlin and Bonn as the candidates for the capital city role and looked how the narrative was reshaped at the debate with the focus on the anticipated development of Germany where one of the two cities would symbolize the way how the country would develop in the future. Eventually, it reflected on how this anticipated meaning from the debate has evolved in the course of time and how the decision in favour of Berlin influenced both cities afterwards.

In this regard the historical narrative of Berlin and Bonn was closely connected to the last forty years and the way how both cities had developed. Mainly due to the geographic location of Bonn it was perceived as a city with focus towards West. Berlin, on the other hand, was a city that was in the middle of European politics based on the fact that it had previously been divided and represented two different worlds that the city now connects. Referring to its size, Berlin-proponents diminished the significance of Bonn as a peripheral village that was in fact only supposed to be the provisory capital of Germany until both parts would unite and new elections would be held. The narrative of Berlin, on the other hand, was dominated by such terms as "metropolis", "the true capital" of Germany and others. Furthermore, based on their historical experience Bonn was considered as a safe and pragmatic decision, whereas Berlin was the decision signifying freedom and unity. Consequently, meanings were attached to both cities for the same reason - create a new beginning of the reunified and reunited country. However, the way how the attached historical meanings emphasized this differed.

The new narrative for Berlin or Bonn as the capital city of the reunified Germany was based on the historical meaning that both cities already had. In this regard the deputies from both sites of the argument shared the thought that the Germany they are deciding about will be a new country. Therefore, also its capital will signify new beginning, striving for democracy and, in relation to the reunification - also the unity of German people and the country. In this context the new country would also focus on the development of its federal lands and try to position itself on the political map of Europe. At the debate these domestic and international aspects were of the highest importance, because internally it was aimed at bringing *Ossis* and *Wessis* together, whereas in foreign policy terms the main purpose was to show that the new, reunited Germany would be a democratic country and reliable political partner. In this regard, the narrative showed that both cities would like to position itself in the future based on their historical meaning and experience as German capitals. However, as already mentioned, despite having the same aim for Germany, both city-narratives developed in rather different ways. In this regard the anticipated role of Berlin as Germany's political centre would primarily accommodate domestic aims of the country, whereas with Bonn the country would steer towards Brussels and European affairs, paving the way to international recognition and cooperation.

Last but not least, based on the content analysis of the media articles since the debate up to present it could be observed that Berlin has not become the grand European mega city that its supporters at the debate imagined. However, already being diverse and cosmopolitan city it has the potential to develop into an even more considerable rival to other European capitals and other big cities and federal centres in Germany. In this sense Berlin has already become as an attractive place to visit and live in, which was not the case before. This meaning complemented the narrative of Berlin as the centre of Europe, mediator between East and West, symbol of the new Germany, new beginning and German unity among others. Bonn, on the other hand, maintained its status as the representative of German federalism. As the city was not chosen to become the political centre of the state, in the course of time Bonn managed to reinvent itself and, thus, also its meaning by obtaining new role in the region as well as in Germany. In many respects the Bonn/Berlin Law was the main reason why Bonn was not left on its own and in relation to other German cities is still fulfilling important state-wide functions.

CONCLUSION

This thesis was written with the purpose to explore, what meaning was attached to the two capitals of Berlin and Bonn during the parliamentary debate that preceded the decision for or against moving the capital and whether this meaning has changed in the course of time. Thus, it looked at the change of meaning attached to an urban environment and used urban semiotics for constructing the theoretical framework for the study and show how this meaning developed in the course of time based on diverse historical, functional and other signs that both cities as semiotic systems entailed.

The theory argues that the urban environment is represented through signs. Accordingly, people connect to place by attaching meaning to it through observing and interpreting the signs that the urban environment has. In this context both capital city candidates can be perceived as semiotic signs representing particular meanings attached to them. Accordingly, the speeches given at the debate were aimed at interpreting these signs and mediating the message to the fellow deputies primarily and also to the general public afterwards. At the same time, as both cities were perceived as the main representatives of the reunited Germany and the main objects that the new meaning was created around, in semiotic terms they were also serving the function of being signs to a bigger object that in this particular case was Germany. Either way, the meaning of Berlin and Bonn was interpreted in relation to debate as a particular event that made these cities into semiotic places. Furthermore, signs are connected, so when one sign in the sign system is influenced, also other signs get affected. Accordingly, in relation to the empirical part, when discussing Berlin, also the meaning of Bonn was affected and vice versa.

Furthermore, in the light of the changes brought by the reunification it can be stated that the debate was only a piece in a bigger puzzle that was meant at creating a new Germany. The arguments on the importance of the decision showed that the city itself was not the primary concern. Not only the location, but also its representativeness and the way how people would interpret the capital in the wider context of German unity and post-unification identity were important aspects that politicians had to take into consideration. More important was the symbolic meaning of Bonn and Berlin and how unified Germany would use it to shape its new identity both domestically and internationally. Thus, the situation had to be assessed from historical, cultural, political and other perspectives.

Relating to the interpretation of signs and the reunification as the time of change it should be noted that as people or the environment change, so does the meaning of signs and the objects they represent. They perceive the urban environment by assessing what use does the objects and signs there have for human life. Thus, the interpretation is based on the habit of use and, accordingly, the meaning of a place is connected to how people have previously interpreted it. In this regard discourse of language serves as a tool for communicating the message. That way the urban environment serves as a place for social interaction between people and, eventually, also the exchange of their knowledge and experience in relation to the way how they interpret places through the observed signs they have. Furthermore, this participation and social interaction helps giving the city functions and role to fulfill from which every individual could find some aspects to associate with and, thus, feel attached and satisfied with the place, creating their individual sense of place.

In this regard it is important to reflect on capital city as a semiotic urban environment which has the most functions and use for human life. It has historical meaning and also a functional meaning among many others depending on what signs of the sign system people interpret. Thus, being attached to particular event in human life the capital becomes as a unique place in the space and can be distinguished from other cities based on its exclusive meaning. Furthermore, being located in a particular place and having historical meaning capital has spatial and temporal qualities. Thus, it represents certain place and also involves reference to time in it.

Deriving from the aim of the research the methodology was based on narrative analysis as a tradition of the discursive inquiry. This analysis was done on the *Hauptstadtdebatte* - the Berlin - Bonn debate on June 20, 1991 about the location of the capital of Germany after the reunification. The author chose this particular case because of several reasons. Firstly, the debate was a part of the wider reunification debate, therefore, the decision reflected not only the move of the political centre of the country, but also diverse other issues connected to the changes in Germany in early 1990s such as the aspect of German inner unity, the positioning of Germany on the European political stage, question of the costs connected to the move in relation to all the other expanses that were meant for diminishing the differences between the old and the new Federal lands and others. That way the limitation of narrow focus was avoided as a possible threat to the research. Secondly, based on literature review the author observed that although widely discussed from various perspectives, the debate itself has not been much researched as the main focus of inquiry. Also, main aspects of previous analysis were focused on the historical legacy connected to both cities and the city-planning after the debate, particularly in Bonn. Thus, in relation to the study focus this thesis could significantly contribute to filling the blank gaps in the existing knowledge on the debate. Furthermore, also the particular theoretical framework to assess the issue from a semiotic perspective can be perceived as a novelty.

However, the main contribution of this research is based on its particular focus on assessing the construction of meaning at the debate from a temporal perspective. In this context the speeches at the debate were analyzed in three phases. At first the researcher identified the historical meaning of both cities that they already have. Then, the author tried to provide an insight into how this existing meaning was interpreted in relation to the anticipated role that both cities could play if elected as capitals. And last but not least, the analysis brought in the temporal dimension by focusing on secondary sources accessed from archives in the time frame from the debate until now in order to identify the main themes that were discussed in the printed media in relation to how and whether this attached meaning distinguished from the discourse analysis of the debate has changed in the course of time. Hence, the meaning of places was analyzed through pursuing a discourse analysis on the ways how narratives about the meaning of both cities were created. Consequently, the political discourse at the German parliament in

favour of Bonn or Berlin could be perceived as the process of attaching meanings to both cities by linking them to particular events, role and functions the places were connected to. In this context it can be argued that the political discourse provided a semantic interpretation of the history and the anticipated future narrative of both cities as the possible capitals and, thus, representatives and symbols of the new Germany.

In relation to the discourse analysis of the debate it is also important to emphasize that already before the debate deputies from both sides of the argument reached an agreement on several points that later on defined also the course of the actual debate and the way how deputies argued in favour of one of another city. One of the main aspects that influenced the end result already before the debate took place was the agreement that the Unification Treaty will be taken into consideration. Accordingly, even if Bonn would become the political capital of the country, Berlin would still be perceived as the capital of Germany what would represent the state as its central place. Regarding the reunification process the deputies decided to think in future perspective, thus, focusing on the role that the new country would serve for itself in domestic terms as well as on the outside, primarily focusing on Germany's place in European affairs.

Deriving from these decisions the analytical part of the thesis tried to present the discourse as a narrative about attaching particular historical meanings to Berlin and Bonn and using them as point of reference when emphasizing the possible future role of the city in various spheres that it as capital would represent. In this context it should be added that the deputies as narrators focused on selectively chosen facts that were emphasized in order to persuade the colleagues who were still undecided until the very last moment. That does not mean that the aspects from the past that everyone knew about as the National Socialist times, for example, and the legacy that was put on Berlin as the German capital at that time. However, the main aspect was to focus on the bright and useful history that would then shape the way how the new country would position itself for the future.

The meaning of Bonn was closely connected to its forty years of successful democracy, which, accordingly, were interpreted as the basis for representing the future Germany defined by prosperity, economic development and orientation towards Western Europe as the positive example of good governance and economic development. Furthermore,

an important aspect was the focus on German federalism, because as a city located rather in the periphery of Germany and not being a significant contender in any field to other German cities it represented the power of regions as opposed to the threat of megacities. In this regard Berlin was the city that posed this particular threat to German federalism as a possible future cultural and economic metropolis. Also for this city the historical narrative was created on the basis of the last forty years. Thus, it was interpreted as symbol of resistance, freedom, unity and the credibility for Germany to move forward and, in international terms also perceived as a bridge between East and West due to its location relatively close to the Polish border and in the middle of Europe.

In relation to the way how the meaning of both cities attached to them at the debate develop in the course of time it has to be emphasized that as Berlin became the capital city of Germany, this future-oriented narrative was directly connected to the interpretation that the city acquired at the debate. In this context the city managed to maintain the meaning attached to it at the debate. It can be argued that from all the qualities that Berlin was connected as the possible future capital of Germany the aspect of the city becoming as a global city has not yet fulfilled. It is undoubtedly a cosmopolitan city and cultural Mecca. However, other cities in Germany create constant competition for Berlin to develop into more influential actor in economic, cultural and other terms that it has already become. Close ties to East and particularly Russia prove that this is only a question of time.

The meaning of Bonn, on the other hand, developed slightly different direction as the one of Berlin. It did not become the capital, however, six ministries were delegated to work from there. Thus, Bonn became the second seat of the government and other institutions. In relation to its anticipated future narrative it can be argued that after the debate the city acquired new meaning deriving from the Berlin/Bonn Law that set the guidelines for moving to Berlin, but, at the same time, not leaving Bonn on its own. The city received a significant influx of financial resources that help it reinventing itself and now it has become as a very attractive place for German entrepreneurs as well as international organizations to locate their offices there. Furthermore, being the symbol

for regions Bonn proved that also the "peripheral village" can become important and outstanding in its own way.

In the end, it can also be mentioned that based on the media analysis it can be argued that although the debate took place already 23 years ago, the *Hauptstadtdebatte* as an event where narratives were created has not entirely reached its closure. On the one hand, it was a twelve-hour-debate with an end. On the other hand, the practical move from Bonn to Berlin is still in question, because six ministries are still located in Bonn and there is an open discussion going on for several years now on the total move to Berlin.

In the end, the discourse analysis applied to the Berlin - Bonn debate showed that the hypothesis has been verified. As already before the debate the deputies emphasized the future-oriented approach to the debate in relation to constructing the new Germany around this new capital, both cities acquired new forward looking meaning that was grounded on the historical narrative that they represented at the time of the debate. Furthermore, as the analysis of the evolution of the meaning of both cities showed, the role and place of both cities in German politics has somewhat changed. As Bonn lost its status as *Bundeshauptstadt*, this change was more connected to its new positioning in the reunited Germany. However, based on its historical legacy it has still maintained some valuable qualities from the past.

As for the future research, the author suggests to compare the *Hauptstadtdebatte* from 1991 with the one in 1949 when Bonn was the city that became the capital of Germany. Upon the field research the author became acquainted with this debate and there are many similarities in the course of the debate as well as the background aspects pressuring the decision. That way the feasibility of the application of the theoretical framework could be tested by comparing results from both analyses. Furthermore, also other countries all over the world have had rather similar experience in the way how they decided on the capital city and what kind of arguments and the context this even entailed. In this regard Daum and Mauch (2005) have reflected on the debate between Washington, D.C. and the New York City.

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