JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY IN KRAKOW
CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN STUDIES

IMCEERES International Master in Central and East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies

UNIVERSITY of GLASGOW

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU · UNIVERSITAS TARTUENSIS · 1632

The Heritagization of the Communist Past: German Museums on the GDR

27,824 words

By Levi Bochantin
2337189

Masters thesis written under the supervision of
Dr. Krzysztof Kowalski
and Dr. Kirsti Jõesalu
Degree: International Masters in Central and East European, Russian
and Eurasian Studies and Master of Arts in European Studies

2 September 2019
Krakow, Poland

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Abstract

With Germany on the eve of its 30-year anniversary of reunification between the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR), a renewed look at the country's remembrance landscape of the GDR through its museums is both commemorative and necessary. Remembering the GDR past through museums has been a challenge for the country ever since reunification; the consequences of unemployment and stagnating production in the former East, as well as inadequacies in socially integrating East and West have led to points of contention on how to accurately display the GDR in museums. Today, the GDR museum landscape has diversified greatly, yet new literature on newer and updated exhibitions remains scarce.

This thesis will explore how German museums focused on the GDR are turning the GDR past into heritage for the public through a content analysis of the museums themselves. Therefore, it will draw upon the fields of heritage and memory studies in constructing its theoretical framework. Most importantly, this study will utilize the intertwining concepts of cultural memory and heritage. These will be used in examining which fragments of the past are chosen by the respective museum to include in their exhibitions, as well as how these chosen pasts are disseminated into the objects, displays, texts, and signs the museum chooses to include and mediate with the public. Moreover, particular attention will be given to new media and technology used in the newer exhibitions, such as touchscreens, electronic games and 3D-rendered films and images.

In this study, two museums will be examined: the DDR Museum in Berlin and the Zeitgeschichtliches Forum in Leipzig. Both museums have long been an established part of the German museum landscape, since 2006 and 1999 respectively. The DDR Museum has additionally been the focus of scholarly and public criticism since its opening, with many originally regarding the private institution as a site playing upon nostalgia and trivializing the GDR regime. However, much less academic work has been carried out on the Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, and as of November 2018 it has reopened following renovations and changes to the main exhibition. Thus, these two museums will provide a relevant comparative study on two different institutions' approach towards retelling the GDR past and creating GDR heritage.

Introduction

Museums have become defining landmarks across the globe that are instrumental in deciding what from the past should be displayed, retold and turned into heritage. They are, as Graham Black puts it, places that must "not only […] collect, conserve and document material evidence of the past but also […] make it publicly accessible."[1] Recently, the proliferation of new museums has become more so apparent in Central and Eastern Europe, a region partially characterized by its shared experience of its former Communist system and its subsequent reconciliation with this past. Thus, various stances, reinterpretations and narratives have been presented on this Communist past in the region within museums; trauma in the form of surveillance and deportations, totalitarian nature of former Communist regimes, economic failures and downfalls, and nostalgia for bygone days, among others, have all found places within museums in Central and Eastern Europe. Deciding which memories of this past should be remembered, how they should be remembered, and which should be claimed as heritage continues to be an ongoing process to this day.

Germany proves to be a unique case among other countries in the post-Communist sphere that has approached its past through museums in a number of ways. The country, once split in two with West Berlin remaining a Western enclave, was the epicenter of Europe's division during the Cold War. While conflict between East and West always remained on Germany's doorstep, it also provided for accessibility to both East and West Germany due to proximity and a shared language. Moreover, once the Iron Curtain fell and Eastern Bloc countries began holding free elections, East Germany was provided with an opportunity wholly unique from other transitioning countries: reunifying with a Western neighbor that shared a language and history, and was, most importantly, a strong free market economy. However, East Germany's transition did not prove to be entirely without fault, and its legacy persists to this day. Job losses and unemployment, as well as forced competition "within a more technologically productive national economy," led to a deindustrialization of the East that went so far as to affect the identity of many East Germans as much of it was "derived from its role as [an] industrial powerhouse."[2] Additionally, in the process of *Aufarbeitung*, or reworking of the GDR past, some of the efforts of to do so were seen as West

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[1] Graham Black, "Museums, Memory and History," *Cultural and Social History* 8, no. 3 (2011): 415.

[2] Charles Maier, *Dissolution: The Crisis of Communism and The End of East Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 301.

German through equating the GDR with the Nazi regime.[3] This led to a broader narrative of the SED as a dictatorship that further proliferated in public debate as well as museums.[4]

The complex nature of East-West German history and the subsequent economic, political and social shortcomings of the post-reunification years have resulted in contestation in remembering the past of the German Democratic Republic (in German: *Deutsche Demokratische Republic* or DDR; former East Germany, from now on referred to as the GDR). With a diminishing of East German identity, value on goods once produced in the GDR began to increase in value for those affected by the transition. As Daphne Berdahl notes, items that were once "relegated to storage houses, the depths of domestic closets, and even waste dumps, GDR goods often came to stand for the meaning of the transition itself."[5] This one form of remembering the GDR past, often called *Ostalgie* (a combination of the German words *Ost* [East] and *Nostalgie* [Nostalgia]), has found itself featured in museums such that displays "affirmed and constructed an image of socialist backwardness as reflected in and constituted by its quaint and outdated products."[6] Moreover, museums on the GDR have been demonstrated to be hold emotions that "played a significant social and political role in the period following the collapse of East German Communism," particularly "negative feelings of disappointment and reduced self-worth."[7]

Therefore, this thesis aims to examine how such German museums established in the post-reunification years have turned memories of the country's GDR past into heritage. The research will focus on two institutions in particular: the DDR Museum in Berlin and the Zeitgeschichtliches Forum (ZGF) in Leipzig, namely the latter's permanent exhibition titled "Our History: Democracy and Dictatorship since 1945" that was opened on 9 October 1999, the 10-year anniversary of the Leipzig Monday Demonstrations. These two institutions prominently display and discuss the GDR but diverge in how they display the past and the underlying narratives they wish to pass on. Additionally, they differ in their sources of funding, as the DDR Museum is openly a private institution while the ZGF is a part of the state-funded *Haus der Geschichte* foundation. Lastly, both are prominent GDR museums that have now long been part of Germany's museum landscape,

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[3] Anselma Gallinat, *Narratives in the Making: Writing the East German Past in the Democratic Present* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 42.

[4] Ibid 42-3.

[5] Daphne Berdahl, "'(N)Ostalgie' for the present: Memory, longing, and East German things," *Ethnos* 64, no. 2 (1999): 195.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Chloe Paver, "Exhibiting Negative Feelings: Writing a History of Emotions in German History Museums," *Museum & Society* 14, no. 3 (2016): 397.

and thus have evolved over the years. While a considerable amount of literature exists on the DDR Museum, there is very little written on the ZGF in Leipzig, and no such comparison between the two institutions exists. Therefore, this work aims to fill in this gap in literature by providing a comparison case between both the DDR Museum and the ZGF regarding what aspects of the GDR past they take and turn into heritage.

Methodology & research questions

The focus of this thesis will be a comparative case of two GDR-centric museums. The fieldwork done will undergo a content analysis, giving attention to the exhibitions' objects, displays, texts, images, space and websites. Through the analysis, attention will be given to observations made within each museum. A trip to visit both sites was made from 12 March to 10 April 2019. As the DDR Museum required an entry fee for visitors, all fieldwork within the institution were conducted during a whole-day visit on 13 March. Meanwhile, four separate visits were made to the ZGF in Leipzig on the 26, 27 and 28 March and 5 April. Additionally, I consulted other documents from the museums, including brochures and, in the case of the DDR Museum, a purchasable companion booklet to the main exhibition.

As this research pertains to analyzing any and all content within museums, such methodology becomes useful in determining how a given institution is creating heritage. Objects, while being a naturally important component of a museum, also "influence human actions […] by conditioning, facilitating, or hindering those actions and by communicating […] meanings of the people who originally made the objects to the people who are acting."[8] Within a museum environment, objects can help visitors to "add new content to their existing knowledge and understanding, and construct their own meanings."[9] Thus, objects within museums provide an interesting case of transmitting their original uses or relevance from the past to visitors, while also being influenced by what a particular museum may or may not want to pass on to the public.

Meanwhile, photos and images serve to pass on messages and influence others in their own right. Images can provide glimpses in the past, but "to understand what they say, questions have to be asked."[10] Additionally, they are often keepsakes with many meanings that "convey messages

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[8] Joost Beauving and Geert de Vries, *Doing Qualitative Research: The Craft of Naturalistic Inquiry* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), 128.
[9] Black, "Museums, Memory and History," 415.
[10] Beauving and de Vries, *Doing Qualitative Research*, 131.

about how we think about ourselves, or like to be seen by others."[11] Images are in abundance among museum collections, and can showcase relationships between people within the pictures as well as with those who possess them. Moreover, space plays an integral role that affect how people move and navigate through their surroundings. Such space can distinguish aspects of groups such as social status, prestige, behavior, and distinctions between in groups and out groups.[12]

With this content analysis in mind, the research will not test one given hypothesis, but rather answer a series of research questions relevant for exploring museum heritagization of the GDR past. Therefore, the following three research questions are proposed and will be answered by the end of this study:

1. What elements of the past are being displayed in the respective museums?
2. How are memories disseminated into object and displays?
   a. In what ways are media utilized to create heritage?

The first question will address the cultural memory represented within each institution; which events, stories and other aspects of the past that are included and excluded will be examined. Question two then looks at the heritagization of the memories through the various objects, images, spaces, etc. chosen to be displayed. Lastly, a sub question focuses primarily on the role of media and technology in both museums. As both the DDR Museum and the ZGF in their newest iterations rely heavily on technology, such as electronic games and touchscreens, this question will allow for an analysis on such technology present, much of which has not been touched upon in older literature.

Overview of chapters & structure

This thesis will be divided into three chapters and followed by concluding remarks that ensure the aforementioned research questions are answered. The first chapter will establish the necessary concepts for the research to guide the reader forward. Firstly, this chapter will delve into the broad concept of memory and how pivotal memory scholars, such as Pierre Nora, have juxtaposed memory with history. Debates will additionally be brought in that criticize this bipolarity between

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[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid 132.

memory and history by scholars who provide more nuanced conceptualizations of memory. One conceptualization, cultural memory, will provide the basis of the second overarching concept in this thesis. Cultural memory, as described by scholars such as Jan and Aleida Assmann, Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, has precedence in this thesis due to its focus on objects and displays. Lastly, the chapter will delve into the idea of heritage as a process of choosing memories of the past and disseminating them to the public through displays, objects, texts and space, among others.

Chapter 2 provides the historical backdrop of Germany from 1945 up through reunification, as well as touching on aspects of social history. This brief historical chapter will provide the reader with the necessary context of a divided Germany to understand the inclusion of particular moments in history in the museums or to note the absence thereof. Moreover, a look at aspects of social life in the GDR will give readers an understanding of some portions of East German identity and values. Emphasis will be given to historical developments in the former GDR from 1945-1989; however, events happening within the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany, from now referred to as the FRG) will also be touched upon so as to show what developments were occurring in both countries during the same time period. Post-reunification Germany, that is the present-day iteration of the German Federal Republic established in 1990, will also be included. Actions and issues such as the Treuhand, East German job loss and deindustrialization, labor movement and GDR remembrance policies all held precedence during this decade and undoubtedly affected the GDR museum landscape.

Lastly, Chapter 3 will center around the fieldwork done and the analysis of the DDR Museum and the Zeitgeschichtliches Forum. Additionally, before exploring the findings of the research, the chapter will provide background information for both institutions, explaining each institution's locations, foundation, visions and websites. Then, respective subsections will provide descriptions and content analyses of each institution individually, looking at objects, displays, texts, technology and spaces. Excerpts of wall texts and images of displays will be included throughout for visual context to the fieldwork. Lastly, concluding remarks will clarify the narratives found in both museums and provide comparative remarks on differences and similarities.

By the conclusion, this analysis will provide ample data on addressing the three guiding research questions. Answering the questions will demonstrate two cases of how German GDR museums are turning a still-contested communist memories into heritage, and how this heritage is

being mediated to the public in 2019. Additionally, the research aims to reveal two differing ways that the GDR past is mediated today. With the country nearing its 30-year anniversary of reunification, there are still clear divergences and disagreements as to how the legacy of GDR should be passed on, and the proliferation of museums on this past allow for these divergencies to be displayed to the public.

Chapter 1: Memory and heritage

In proceeding with research on German museums and their role in handling and displaying the country's communist past, this chapter presents a series of concepts and scholarly works necessary to bridge theory with empirical findings. Therefore, the chapter will begin by conceptualizing the broad yet familiar term of memory, which will be accomplished by juxtaposing it with the similar yet divergent realm of history. Once the concept of memory is established, the chapter will build upon preexisting knowledge on how memory has been further disseminated into cultural and collective memory. Cultural memory, we will see, will be one of the cruxes of this research, whose focus resides in transmitting the past through the use of institutions and media. To apply this further to the study, cultural memory will be elaborated through showcasing its use in previous museum studies. Finally, this ties neatly into the last concept of heritage, which depicts a process of how individuals and institutions choose and remember their past. Heritage will be further discussed in this chapter by elaborating on its dissonant nature, referring to a disruption in space and time with the people and their heritage, and emphasizing contestation as a necessity for heritage to exist.

Memory and its relationship with history

As this thesis seeks to answer questions about how a given past is remembered, mediated and retold to the public by museological institutions, it is first important to establish what is meant by memory. Memory itself is broad in its conceptualization, being contested by many scholars; it is a concept that, as Andreas Huyssen notes, is "one of those elusive topics […] as soon as we try to define it, it starts slipping and sliding, eluding attempts to grasp it either culturally, sociologically, or scientifically.[1] The concept is often juxtaposed with that of history and is indeed what is done by Pierre Nora in his conceptualization of *lieux de mémoire*, or sites of memory. Nora puts both memory and history in the context of what he calls the "acceleration of history," in which society, for fear of losing the past both tangibly and intangibly, attempts to organize the past by collecting and archiving copious amounts of history. However, Nora paints a somewhat dichotomous differentiation between memory and history, two concepts which are seemingly at odds with one another. For Nora, "memory is life," while history presents a "reconstruction, always problematic

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[1] Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 3.

and incomplete, of what is no longer."[2] Simultaneously, memory also proves be an inconsistent force prone to influence and change, "susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived," while history, despite also changing, "calls for analysis and criticism" and contains "a critical discourse that is antithetical to spontaneous memory."[3] Yet memory and history are still, according to Nora, inevitably intertwined, as "the quest for memory is the search for one's history" and "the task of remembering makes everyone his own historian."[4]

While Nora conceptualizes memory and history as two entwined concepts at odds with one another, Aleida Assmann describes the relationship between the two as something "now considered complementary, each one adding something that the other cannot supply."[5] However, according to Assmann, this development has not always been the case; rather, she identifies three separate stages of memory and history's relationship. In its first stage, the two concepts "were not clearly distinguished," and the purpose of history was to "preserve the memory of a dynasty, the church, or a state in order to legitimize such institutions."[6] The second stage involved a polarization between memory and history, with the latter becoming a pool of inarguable truths defined by "its own standards of truth telling, including specific rules for verification and intersubjective argumentation."[7] In this category, Assmann includes the famed French scholar Maurice Halbwachs on his work on collective memory, who for him, she says, "histor(iograph)y is the universal memory of humanity, while collective memories are embodied by specific groups and therefore always partial and biased."[8]

Indeed, Assmann's modern-day conceptualization of memory and history having a symbiotic relationship is also shared by historians; nowadays, "memory is now as familiar a category for historians as politics, war or empire."[9] This outlook towards memory in the realm of history traces its roots back to the 1970s during the so-called "cultural turn," in which historians gravitated to memory studies to "set about uncovering the meaning that the social world held for men and women in the past by studying their representations of it."[10] It was during this time that

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[2] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," *Representations 26* (1989): 8.
[3] Ibid 8-9.
[4] Ibid 13-15.
[5] Aleida Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory," *Social Research* 75, no. 1 (2008): 61.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid 59.
[8] Ibid 60.
[9] Joan Tumblety, "Introduction: Working with memory as source and subject," in *Memory and History* (London: Routledge, 2013), 1.
[10] Ibid 3.

historians "recognized that their primary sources were rhetorical constructs" and that the sources they drew from similarly viewed the world "through a grid of thoughts and feelings – expressed in ideologically charged language – whose workings have to be grasped in order for the 'truth' of the past to be understood."[11] Not only did historians become aware of their sources' experiences affecting how they construct the world around them, but it also became clear that their work could not be entirely exempt from their own personal experiences.[12] Additionally, there were clear benefits for scholars of memory studies to welcome the work and theories of historians, as it "offers the means by which we can grasp the memory of memory," as well as "appreciate the contingency of the theorizations that dominate our own times."[13]

This importance of memory in historiography has been similarly attributed to political structures and a liberalization of memory among society. Arnold-de Simine notes how in recent decades, memory's role in discourse has hoped to "democratize society's relationship to the past," with history at times being casted in a negative light as "elitist" and suppressing "counter-narratives."[14] Memory thus has become a reaction to the stagnate, singular concept of history, which fails to be as critical and self-reflective as its counterpart.[15] However, Arnold-de Simine emphasizes the dangers of over-polarizing the two concepts, establishing instead that analyzing memory is "to analyse how people experience, relate to and narrative the past," with memory ultimately being understood to arise "through the mutual interactions of the past on the present and the present on the past."[16]

When putting memory and history into such a dichotomy, history can be associated with "modern, complex societies" and memory "with pre-modern, non-literate societies."[17] This is picked up by Bill Schwarz, who describes history's "sequential, future-driven" nature as "a sign of the modern" and a counter to memory, which "could appear *only* as dysfunctional, working to

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Peter J. Verovšek, "Collective Memory, politics, and the influence of the past: the politics of memory as a research paradigm," *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 4, no. 3 (2016): 532.

[13] Susanne Radstone and Bill Schwarz, "Introduction: Mapping Memory," in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 6.

[14] Silke Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 17.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid 18-19.

[17] Ibid 17.

interrupt the clear geometrical abstractions of the time of history."[18] However, Schwarz dismisses the idea that historians provide little use to memory studies, saying that the underlying basis of historical imagination is the relationship between past and present, which it shares with memory. What is up for debate, according to Schwarz, is "what kind of historical inquiry can best reach that which we, as historical actors, experience as the temporal dislocations of modern life, for which memory has come to function as the synecdoche," emphasizing that historiography's future must continue incorporating the now seemingly unattachable element of memory.[19]

This juxtaposing of memory and history as two opposing poles at odds with each other has also been criticized by scholars and deemed pointless for further research in memory studies. Astrid Erll calls the polarization between memory and history as a legacy of Halbwachs and Nora, and subsequently a notion that is "loaded with emotionally charged binary oppositions: good vs. bad, organic vs. artificial."[20] The concept of history, she notes, is also vague; there is no indication whether history refers to "meaningful memory vs. the unintelligible totality of *historic events*" or "authentic memory produced within small communities vs. ideologically charged, official *images of history*," among others.[21] Instead, Erll proposes instead using "different *modes of remembering* in culture," revolving around the premise that "the past is not a given, but must instead continually be re-constructed and re-presented."[22] These different "modes," such as through myth or political history, provide various means "of referring to the past."[23] In this regard, history in its various forms creates one of many frameworks for individuals and a collective to remember.

Clear contention permeates around the debate of memory and history. As has been shown, the conversation has shifted from the polarity between the two concepts that Nora and Halbwachs suggest, for example, and accepting a symbiotic relationship in which neither truly stands without the other. For this thesis, however, the concept of memory alone remains too broad and unsatisfying. Therefore, it is more beneficial to limit the scope of memory to better fit with analyzing the museums at hand, namely through conceptualizing memory at a collective and cultural level.

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[18] Bill Schwarz, "Memory, Temporality, Modernity: *Les lieux de memoire*," in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 43.

[19] Ibid 42-3.

[20] Astrid Erll, *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyer, 2008), 6.

[21] Ibid 6-7.

[22] Ibid 7.

[23] Ibid.

Cultural memory and its role in museums

The notion of studying the memory of a collective most prominently came about through French scholar Maurice Halbwachs' seminal work, *La Mémoire collective.* Halbwachs opened the door for research on memory in the realm of social sciences; rather than believing that recent memories remain with us in close proximity to time, Halbwachs states that "they are part of a totality of thoughts common to a group, the group of people with whom we have a relation at this moment, or with whom we have had a relation on the preceding day or days."[24] Furthermore, Halbwachs states that the age of the memory correlates to the group that one might relate with the memory. Older memories, Halbwachs provides as an example, might be most relatable with older social connections like that of a family, which is "accustomed to retrieving or reconstructing all its other memories following a logic of its own."[25] Of course, this concept has been further widened and used to conceptualize the collective memory of even larger and older connections, such as that of states, nations and societies. Halbwachs notes that while everyone has an individual memory that is wholly theirs and personal, "one cannot in fact think about the events of one's past without discoursing upon them," which requires the thoughts of both the individual and those in their circle.[26] Thus, Halbwachs' notion of collective identity brings together the systems of memory inherent in an individual while also including the social connections with which one can discuss and relate their memories.

The term collective memory has been a hotly debated term amongst memory scholars due to multiple factors. Primarily, the point of contestation has lied with how broadly the term is used and in the countless contexts it finds itself. When Halbwachs himself set out on his seminal work, he was criticized by some of his contemporaries for "simply transferring concepts from individual psychology to the level of the collective."[27] Jeffrey Olick additionally exemplifies the broadness of collective memory by listing how the term refers "to aggregated individual recollections, to official commemorations, to collective representations, and to disembodied constitutive features

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[24] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 52.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid 53.
[27] Erll, *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, 1.

of shared identities; it is said to be located in dreamy reminiscence, personal testimony, oral history, tradition, myth, style, language, art, popular culture, and the built world."[28]

Perhaps more important for this study is conceptualizing and emphasizing the notion of cultural memory rather than collective memory. As one of the first scholars of cultural memory, Jan Assmann proposes both a communicative memory and a cultural memory, with the former aligning to Halbwachs' collective memory and described as "varieties of collective memory that are based exclusively on everyday communications" constituting "non-specialization, reciprocity of roles, thematic instability, and disorganization."[29] Cultural memory then becomes dichotomous with communicative memory, with it being distant from everyday life and having fixed points whose horizon "does not change with the passing of time."[30] Such fixed points, according to Jan Assmann, become markers for past events that have their memories preserved "through cultural formations (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice observance)."[31] It is in this conception of cultural memory that "the distinction between myth and history vanishes," delving "into the past only so far as it can be reclaimed as 'ours.'"[32] Thus, by conceptualizing cultural memory apart from communicative memory, Assmann challenges Halbwachs' assumption that everyday communication's transfer into "objectivized culture" causes the collective memory to be lost due to the severing of "group relationship and the contemporary reference."[33] Cultural memory becomes a static, crystallized body available for future generations of a society that "serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image."[34]

Following Jan Assmann's conceptualization of cultural memory, it has been met with various reinterpretations and also critiques. Aleida Assmann denotes cultural memory as a subcategory of the "vague" term of collective memory, being "based on institutions such as libraries, museums, archives, monuments, institutions of education and of arts as well as ceremonies and commemorative dates and practices."[35] Meanwhile, Astrid Erll conceptualizes cultural memory as more synonymous with collective memory, choosing to use the term due to

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[28] Jeffrey K. Olick, "Collective Memory: The Two Cultures," *Sociological Theory* 17, no. 3 (1999): 336.

[29] Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique*, no. 65 (1995): 126.

[30] Ibid 129.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in *The theoretical foundations of Hungarian 'lieux de mémoire' studies (Loci Memoriae Hungaricae 1)*, Debrecen, 2013, 38.

[33] J. Assmann and J. Czpalicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 128.

[34] Ibid 132.

[35] A. Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory," 56.

latter's "controversial nature" and how cultural memory "accentuates the connection of memory on the one hand and the socio-cultural contexts on the other."[36] Furthermore, cultural memory replaces collective memory as the "umbrella term," fitting social memory, medial memory and cognitive memory all under its framework.[37]

In particular, the benefit of using the framework of cultural memory is indeed focusing on the mediums that shape the memories of the individual and the collective. Erll and Rigney state this as the basis of cultural memory, "that memory can only become collective as process whereby memories are shared with the help of symbolic artefacts that mediate between individuals and […] create communality across both space and time."[38] Such "symbolic artefacts" refer to a range of objects they consider "'media' of all sorts – spoken language, letters, books, photos, films."[39] Furthermore, cultural memory becomes an "ongoing process of remembrance and forgetting," in which media plays "an active role […] in 'mediating' between us (as readers, viewers, listeners) and past experiences, and hence in setting the agenda for future acts of remembrance within society."[40] In tying the concept of cultural memory back to its relation to history, the past does not become "history, that is, a record of past events," but rather "how those past events are represented and experienced, understood and imagined."[41]

With this in mind, for this thesis I have decided to conceptualize cultural memory using various aspects of previous definitions so that it fits the need of the research. Cultural memory will therefore refer broadly to fragments of a past way of life that are transmitted through human creations. Thus, objects (from the given time period or recreated), written narratives (be they from a person who lived the memory or recreated), oral testimonies, images, film, recreated spaces, and interactive media, among others, all become vessels that invoke a lifestyle now lost (or perceived lost). Additionally, as museums are the institution in question, attention will only be given to cultural memory's transmission through museums and not along broad institutional lines. This will allow for an analysis of how museums construct narratives pertaining to life in the past – in this case, their construction of the everyday and political life under the GDR.

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[36] Astrid Erll, *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, 4.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, "Introduction: Cultural Memory and its Dynamics," in *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyver, 2009): 1.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid 2-3.
[41] Joshua Davies, *Visions and ruins: Cultural memory and the untimely Middle Ages* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 3.

Therefore, it is essential to highlight the role of museums in their use of cultural memory. In one way, museums act as a repository for cultural memory, possessing objects, images, testimonies and other media that actively shape representations of the past. In relaying this cultural memory to the public, museums become institutions that are "directly involved in creating and manipulating [cultural memory]."[42] In his work, Graham Black conceptualizes cultural memory more broadly than Erll & Rigney's paper, describing it as a concept represented through "objects" which "represent the visible and touchable outer world of the memory of past societies."[43] These objects become important for the visitor as they can "evoke a sense of time, place and society […] and can play a powerful role in defining a community's memories of its collective past."[44] Consequently, several purposes of objects and their role with cultural memory are categorized by Black, such as triggering individual memories, reflecting "the societies/cultures within which they were made and used," and passing on traditional skills and crafts.[45]

In addition to storing cultural memory, museums simultaneously work as a top-down process to the communities and nations of which they are part. While museums can be a "representation of the identities of a wide variety of communities," they are also capable of shaping a given community's identity.[46] Museums thus play a role in transmitting cultural memory with several moving parts affecting the transmission process, such as cultural policies (ultimately government intervention), "traditions and practices" of the museum and society and its values.[47] Susan Crane describes museums as cultural institutions placed "within the living memory of many people"; countless people now include museums as "ordinary, everyday events in modern western societies," and the vast majority of museum goers "do not consider themselves professionally responsible for the contents or existence of the museums, much less for historical memory."[48] Furthermore, Crane highlights how much museums teach the public in everyday behavior, as they hold sway over our "social codes of behavior, condition a sense of cultural literacy, and instill the value of art, the past, and science."[49] While museums collect and display the cultural memory of a

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[42] Graham Black, "Museums, Memory and History," *Cultural and Social History* 8, no. 3 (2011): 418.
[43] Ibid 417.
[44] Ibid 419.
[45] Ibid 418-9.
[46] Andrea Witcomb, "Thinking about Others through Museums and Heritage," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 136.
[47] Ibid 137.
[48] Susan Crane, "Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum," *History and Theory* 36, no. 4 (1997): 46.
[49] Ibid.

given community, they also influence which aspects of the past are remembered and how it is transmitted to a broader audience.

Heritage and dissonance

The final overarching concept presented in this research is that of heritage. Heritage becomes an end product in the line of conceptualizations presented in this chapter; Emma Waterton and Steve Watson describe the concept as a "version of the past received through objects and display, representations and engagements, spectacular locations and events, memories and commemorations, and the preparation of places for cultural purposes and consumption."[50] Indeed, important for understanding heritage is that it is a "version of the past," capable of being chosen or forgotten, emphasized or undervalued. For Kristin Kuutma, heritage is "a mode of cultural production with reformative significance," highlighting that heritage always serves a purpose that "can never assume a neutral ground of connotation."[51] Similarly important for heritage is its ownership; it is something that can be identified, managed and "defined by selection and ownership."[52]

The establishment of modern heritage studies can be traced back to 1980s Britain, where political decisions and rhetoric under the Conservative government led to scholarly debate and criticism on a renewal of heritage in the country. The Conservative government often promoted simultaneously "contradictory" values of "'enterprise' and 'tradition,'" promoting both a "free market economics" while simultaneously touting a return to classic values.[53] Corner and Harvey describe this "intensified rhetoricization of heritage" as a reaction to "the perceived threat of weakened group identity in the changing contexts of Europe and of global finance."[54] During this time, works from scholars such as David Lowenthal and Robert Hewison took center stage with regards to the expansion of heritage.[55] In particular, Robert Hewison in his book *The Heritage*

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[50] Emma Waterton and Steve Watson, "Heritage as a Focus of Research: Past, Present and New Directions," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 1.

[51] Kristin Kuutma, "Concepts and Contingencies in Heritage Politics," in *Anthropological Perspectives on Intangible Cultural Heritage* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2013): 1.

[52] Ibid 4.

[53] Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London: Verso, 1988), 85, quoted in Jessica Moody, "Heritage and History," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 118.

[54] John Corner and Sylvia Harvey, "Mediating tradition and modernity: the heritage/enterprise couplet," in *Enterprise and Heritage: Crosscurrents of National Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991), 49.

[55] Moody, "Heritage and History," 117.

Industry took aim at "the proliferation of new heritage sites across the country," spurred about partially by "nostalgic yearning for times gone by in lieu of contemporary cultural production or commercial and industrial production."[56] His frustration with this so-called heritage industry resided in the way that it represented the past, providing a clear demarcation that "heritage is not history."[57] Likewise, David Lowenthal similarly noted such nostalgia in the proliferation of heritage, saying that "many seem less concerned to find a past than to yearn for it."[58] While Hewison suggests that tourists "were being passively seduced by mindless nostalgia," invoking criticism from contemporaries, Lowenthal refrained from viewing nostalgia "as necessarily negative."[59]

In conceptualizing heritage itself, Lowenthal states that "history is for all, heritage is for ourselves alone," as heritage seeks to pass down myths and traditions from previous generations.[60] For heritage to function, heritage "not only tolerates but thrives on and even requires historical error."[61] However, there are purposes for heritage, and "the benefits the past provides transcends nostalgia."[62] These benefits, Lowenthal says, ranges from providing a sense of familiarity, possibly its "most essential and pervasive benefit"; validating "present attitudes and actions" due to their appearance in historical precedence; establishing identity, giving "existence meaning, purpose, and value"; teaching and providing guidance; enriching the world and allowing an escape from the present.[63] Therefore, Lowenthal recognizes that heritage does not hold purely negative values, but possesses inherent benefits.

Multiple approaches to defining heritage and setting parameters to it have been taken since the 1980s. David Harvey, in considering the scope of heritage studies, defines heritage as having "always been with us" and which "has always been produced by people according to their contemporary concerns and experiences."[64] Therefore, heritage lays in the hands of people in the present to decide how the past is remembered. Furthermore, Harvey stresses that "heritage is, first

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[56] Ibid 117-8.

[57] Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London: Methuen, 1987), 10.

[58] David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 7.

[59] Moody, "Heritage and History," 119.

[60] Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (Cambridge: Penguin Books, 1996), 128.

[61] Ibid 132.

[62] Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country,* 36.

[63] Ibid 36-52.

[64] David Harvey, "Heritage Pasts and Heritage Presents: temporality, meaning and the scope of heritage studies," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 7, no. 4 (2001): 320.

and foremost, a process."[65] At its heart, heritage is a "selective process in terms of designation, management, and interpretation policies."[66] Indeed, Arnold-de Simine describes heritage as pieces of the past that have undergone "selective remembrance," now seemingly "preserved in a decontextualized and 'fossilized' way through its tangible, material traces."[67] According to Dennis Hardy, this process can at times be "seen as a conservative concept […] used to support the *status quo*," with the invocation of nostalgia playing a leading role in its proliferation.[68] Laurajane Smith writes that there is "no such thing as heritage"; instead, what is meant by "heritage" is "a cultural practice, involved in the construction and regulation of a range of values and understandings."[69] For Smith, what is important for heritage are the discourses that surround it; what is said, pushed and manufactured about heritage, namely by authoritative figures such as experts and institutions, is ultimately what creates it.

Therefore, it is best to look at heritage as a current and active process, always reliant on choices and motivations by both individuals and institutions on what to do with the past. As Gregory Ashworth and Brian Graham note, "heritage is that part of the past which we select in the present for contemporary purposes […] and choose to bequeath to a future."[70] The decisions made by institutions on what is displayed in exhibitions is primarily the focus of the thesis; however, despite the influence such institutions have on heritage creation, the amount of people "who engage with heritage […] who visit sites, read books and watch films, write newspaper articles or blog posts; who are involved in the process of heritage as a public discourse" are much more in number and have a significant impact.[71] This is similarly backed by Lowenthal, who cites interest in visitors who "flock to kitchens and servant and slave quarters" or "folk museums [that] stress the humdrum over the exquisite, the ordinary in place of the unusual."[72] Nonetheless, he insists that "heritage remains more an elite than a folk domain."[73]

Whether heritage is consumed by the everyday person or the elite, it is never present without a use or purpose. As Hewison and Lowenthal witnessed in 1980s England, heritage can

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[65] Ibid 335.

[66] Britt Baille, et. al., "Packaging the Past," *Heritage Management* 3, no. 1 (2010): 56.

[67] Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, 58.

[68] Dennis Hardy, "Historical Geography and Heritage Studies," *Area* 20, no. 4 (1988): 334.

[69] Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006): 11.

[70] Gregory J. Ashworth and Brian Graham, *Senses of Place: Senses of Time* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 7.

[71] Moody, "Heritage and History," 114.

[72] Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade*, 14.

[73] Ibid.

serve an economic purpose and be exploited to help "promote tourism, economic development and rural and urban regeneration."[74] These places that hold heritage encourage consumption and are managed to do so, and once managed they are capable of freezing "artefacts in time whereas previously they had been constantly changing."[75] Economic uses for heritage, according to Kevin Walsh, are not due to particular demands by society but "imposed on society by capital" as a result of a broader leisure and tourism sector.[76] Ashworth and Graham also recognize Lowenthal's contribution to heritage uses in cultural and, indirectly, socio-political contexts. In using Lowenthal's aforementioned list of benefits of the past, they cite validation and legitimization as "associated with identity" where elements such as "language religion, ethnicity, nationalism and shared interpretations of the past" can be used to include and exclude, establishing a narrative and a community, as well as "the ways in which they are rendered specific and differentiated."[77]

Since heritage is used to define a group or a community, it must additionally be a pluralistic process that contests with other variations of heritage belonging to another group, and that has "contents and meanings of which change through time and across space."[78] Ashworth conceptualizes the more caveated notion of dissonant heritage to account for such contestation, referring to "the discordance or lack of agreement and consistency as to the meaning of heritage"[79] and as "a lack of congruence in time or space between people and their heritage."[80] For heritage to be created, according to Ashworth, someone must be disinherited "completely or partially" from its possession.[81] This is in heritage's nature through both its economic proliferation, in which it is sold on an international scale to those domestically and abroad, as well as through its "zero-sum characteristics."[82] Ultimately, heritage's dissonant nature is due to heritage being created through its various interpretations and by whom it is interpreted, creating "value and meaning of specific heritage places and the past it represents."[83] Therefore, possibilities arise for clashes between

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[74] Ashworth and Graham, *Senses of Place*, 7.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Kevin Walsh, *The Representation of the Past: Museums and heritage in the post-modern world* (London: Routledge, 1992), 116.
[77] Ashworth and Graham, *Senses of Place,* 9.
[78] Ibid 5.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ashworth, "Holocaust Tourism: The Experience of Kraków-Kazimierz," *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education 11*, no. 4 (2002): 363.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ashworth and Graham, *Senses of Place,* 5.
[83] Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 80.

groups on the heritagization process. Additionally, heritage can simply be perceived as dissonant between parties for contestation to arise, even if there is no actual divergence.[84]

At the center of intrigue for cases of dissonant heritage are sites that invoke remembrance of traumatic pasts. Ashworth notes this as somewhat paradoxical and that "it would seem self-evident that mankind would prefer to forget unpleasant pasts."[85] Moreover, heritage is often associated with a sense of comfort, contradicting the discomforting nature of sites such as former concentration camps and memorials of past wars.[86] Smith justifies these cases; in acknowledging Ashworth's conclusion that heritage is inherently dissonant, then all heritage must be "uncomfortable to someone" since heritage "has a particular power to legitimize – or not – someone's sense of place and thus their social and cultural experiences and memories."[87] Reasons for establishing heritage sites for such pasts could be enhancing group cohesion, using victimization as a "founding mythology" in nation building or as "a lesson for the present and hope for the future."[88]

Lastly, Smith draws an interesting conclusion on dissonant heritage and Ashworth's work on the subject – Ashworth argues that dissonance is intrinsically a part of heritage, while simultaneously he defines "heritage" and "dissonant heritage" as two separate concepts. Smith remarks that this is potentially problematic, indicating that there could be a "contested nature of heritage" separable from a "more comfortable and unproblematic sense of the term."[89] In her concluding marks, she finishes saying "heritage *is* dissonant" and part of its nature "is about working out, contesting and challenging a range of […] identities, sense of place, collective memories, values and meanings."[90]

For my thesis, heritage and heritagization are best defined as processes: they are the active choices made by individuals and institutions on what defines the past and how to transmit it. Additionally, there is no singular heritage, and by its nature it must exist in the plural as it defines inclusion and exclusion to a group. Therefore, contestation arises as another given aspect of heritage, leading to Ashworth's work on dissonant heritage; as heritage is contested, there must

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[84] Ibid 81.
[85] Ashworth, "Holocaust Tourism," 363.
[86] Smith, *Uses of Heritage,* 81.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ashworth, "Holocaust Tourism," 363-4.
[89] Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 82.
[90] Ibid.

exist various interpretations and meanings of heritage for various groups. Museums thus become sites of dissonance for heritage, as the museum itself must choose what "version of the past" to display as heritage.

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With this in mind, the concepts of cultural memory and heritage are pivotal in carrying out this analysis and in formulating the research questions. Cultural memory can be described as fragments of the past that are transmitted through manmade creations. Additionally, this past is constructed by institutions through these creations in order for a given institution to "'construct' an identity."[91] While cultural memory will be important in evaluating all research questions, it is predominantly examined in the first research question that will look at elements of the past on display in the respective institution. Heritage, on the other hand, is regarded as a process of choosing which pieces of the past should be represented the given institution and through what means. The second and third research question will be examining how heritagization is taking place in both museums, namely through questioning how cultural memory is being displayed to the public, and for whom and for which purpose the memory's ownership is being claimed.

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[91] Aleida Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory," 55.

Chapter 2: Germany from 1945 to the present

Before delving into the institutions and fieldwork, it is necessary to have an overview of the historical contexts that both institutions put on display, as well as to understand how both institutions came to be. This chapter will provide a chronological look at German history and politics since 1945, with particular emphasis on the German Democratic Republic. However, important developments in West Germany will also be provided at times to provide a sense of the political and social climates within both countries at similar time periods. The chapter will be broken down into four sections. The first section will look at both countries from 1945 to 1961, a period highlighted by post-World War II occupation, Cold War beginnings, East-West divisions and political consolidation, finally leading to the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Afterwards, the second section will focus on the second-half of the East-West German divide, marked with relative stability in the GDR with occasional periods of liberalization, unrest in FRG, Willy Brandt and *détente*, and the GDR under Erich Honecker, with the chapter ending on the 1989 demonstrations and subsequent fall of the Berlin Wall. A shorter third section will present challenges faced by the united Germany following reunification in 1990, as well as policy affecting GDR museology. Lastly, the chapter will take a step back and provide a glimpse of some social aspects in the GDR, many of which affected post-reunification integration and find a spot within the museums looked at.

1945-1961: An occupied state becomes divided

By May 1945, when World War II officially ended in Europe, the effects of the previous Nazi regime had been devasting to Germany and Europe. Tens of millions had perished, and those who had survived were met with a severe shortage of food and housing.[1] Germany, having been devasted by the effects of war, became divided among those powers who liberated and thereafter occupied the country; the western *Länder* (federal states) fell under the responsibility of the United States, France and Great Britain, while five eastern *Länder* were occupied and administered by the Soviet Union. The former capital of the Third Reich, Berlin, despite being deep within the Soviet-

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[1] Pól O'Dochartaigh, *Germany since 1945* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 4.

controlled sector, was to be treated as a separate entity under an Allied *Kommandatura*, with each occupying power administering a portion of the city.[2]

Beyond such agreements to divide the country and Berlin between the Allied victors, little else was planned for the subsequent post-war years. A few general points were hashed out and agreed upon by all four powers: the Reich was to be dismantled, political life resumed but closely monitored, and authorities were to maintain "a distrust of independent initiatives as harbingers of nationalist revival."[3] Shortly following the end of the war in Europe, the Potsdam Conference was held in Berlin from July to August 1945 to rectify these shortcomings. It was here that much of Germany's immediate post-war fate was carved out: the "five Ds" (demilitarization, denazification, democratization, disarmament and decentralization); an elimination of the country's armaments industry; central administrations for a few sectors; payment of reparations (most of which would go to the Soviet Union); territorial boundaries and the relocation of Germans from lost territories (namely Poland and Czechoslovakia).[4] Though the Potsdam Conference served as a roadmap for the handling of the country, the Allied powers administrating Germany soon became divided along an ideological schism that would last for the next four decades.

As part of the democratization aspect of the proposed "five Ds" and the resumption of German political life, parties consisting of Social Democrats, Center Christian Democrats and liberals that were active in the former Weimar Republic began entering the scene. Communists, while generally discouraged in the western sectors, found solidarity in the Soviet-occupied eastern sector.[5] It was generally agreed upon by all sides that the number of political parties active be kept to a much smaller amount than those during the Weimar Republic, as party fragmentation during this time was held as a contributing factor for the National Socialists' rise to power. In the western sectors, this resulted in the establishment of three dominant political parties that were the sole parties in West German parliament until the 1980s: the newly revised *Christlich Demokratische Union* (CDU) and their Bavarian counterpart *Christlich-Soziale Union* (CSU), a center-right Christian party that bridged previous gaps between Protestants and Catholics; the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD), a conglomerate of the Weimar-era liberal left

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[2] Peter Pulzer, *German Politics 1945-1995* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 24.

[3] Charles S. Maier, *Dissolution: The Crisis of Communism and The End of East Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 7.

[4] Pól O'Dochartaigh, *Germany since 1945*, 5-6.

[5] Maier, *Dissolution*, 7.

that aimed "to rebuild Germany along democratic and Socialist lines"; and the *Freie Demokratische Partei* (FDP), which came about only in 1948 as a pro-Western minority party in parliament, often playing the role as "kingmaker" in coalition building during the subsequent years.[6]

Meanwhile, the political fate of the eastern sector began taking a dramatically different, though not immediately expected, departure from pluralism. Following a series of reforms that Soviet authorities introduced, including redistributing agricultural land from previous large-scale landowners and purging the judiciary and elites, popularity for the authorities began to improve. Despite this, the Soviet-backed *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (KPD), reestablished again shortly after the war, failed in becoming the strongest party in the eastern sector. The result of this became a merger in April 1946 between the KPD and the SPD under the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei* (SED) that sought to beat the CDU and *Liberal-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands* (LDPD) in regional elections while touting a German *Sonderweg* to socialism.[7] However, even this merger of the two parties failed to receive an outright majority. Over the next few years, members of political parties in the eastern sector began to be purged, including those within the SPD wing of the SED who promoted the German socialist *Sonderweg.* By 1949, all other parties in the East were amalgamated under a National Front that was led by the SED, consolidating a one-party system in the Soviet sector. [8]

Alongside political developments in the split sectors, steps taken in both economic and foreign policy helped cement East and West divisions that would persist throughout the Cold War. One of the biggest splits took the form in attitudes towards reparations. While initially it was agreed upon that German industry should be dismantled, the Western allies soon began to realize the benefit of a functioning German industry to the reconstruction of Europe. This plan was scrapped, and with the creation of a US-British Bizone and the Marshall Aid program in 1947, West Germany soon found itself as the beneficiary of foreign funds rather than being the target of reprimands.[9] In March of the same year, US President Harry Truman set forth the so-called Truman Doctrine, vowing to stem the expansion of communism wherever it arose.[10] When, in June 1948,

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[6] Peter Pulzer, *German Politics 1945-1995* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 33-7.
[7] Volker R. Berghahn*, Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge Unversity Press, 1982), 194-5.
[8] Ibid 196 and O'Dochartaigh, *Germany since 1945,* 8-10.
[9] O'Dochartaigh, *Germany since 1945,* 22.
[10] Pulzer, *German Politics 1945-1995*, 40.

the three Western powers introduced a currency reform and the new *Deutschmark*, replacing the previous *Reichmark,* the division between the two Germanys was practically set in place. The Soviet sector introduced its own currency shortly thereafter, and uncertainty arose as to which currency would hold precedent in a divided Berlin.[11] As a result, the Soviets "suspend[ed] transport links between Berlin and the West," forcing the Western powers to transport goods into the western sectors of Berlin for almost a year.[12] The attempt by the Soviets to push the opposing powers out of Berlin ultimately failed, cementing the fate of a divided capital and nation. When Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) officially joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and had its constitution drafted in 1949, the East responded in kind with the drafting of its own constitution and establishing the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in October of that year.[13]

From 1949 onward, two German states functioned within Europe, one belonging to a pro-Western bloc spearheaded by the United States, and another among an Eastern communist bloc that worked in coordination with the Soviet Union. It is widely accepted by scholars that this division of Germany was never a planned nor foreseeable outcome of a post-war Germany from the outset; Stalin's desire for a buffer zone around the Soviet Union did not necessarily require an Eastern Germany, and the idea of a united but neutral Germany could have been a more desirable decision.[14] In fact, such a decision was actively pursued by the GDR and the Soviets in the 1952 "Stalin Note," which "offered the reunification of Germany within its post-Potsdam borders in exchange for its neutralization…and the withdrawal of all Allied occupation troops."[15]

This last hope for unification, however, proved ineffective as the Soviets disapproved of an all-German referendum supervised by the United Nations.[16] Nonetheless, both states continued down drastically different trajectories. The bedrock of the GDR's economic development revolved around "full employment and an increase in material wealth for all […] achieved through central planning coupled with state and collective rather than private ownership."[17]

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[11] Ibid 43-4.
[12] Paul G. Lewis, *Central Europe Since 1945* (London: Longman, 1994), 53.
[13] Ibid 53-4.
[14] Pulzer, *German Politics 1945-1995*, 90; Maier, *Dissolution*, 8; J. F. Brown, *Eastern Europe and Communist Rule* (London: Duke University Press, 1988), 32.
[15] Dirk Spilker, *The East German Leadership and the Division of Germany: Patriotism and Propaganda 1945-1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 227.
[16] Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, 216.
[17] O'Dochartaigh, *Germany since 1945,* 43.

The early 1950s also brought with it the consolidation of the GDR's political structures and continued establishment of the SED as the sole party of the state. The Politburo, modelled after its Soviet counterpart, became the decision-making vessel and the SED's General Secretary, Walter Ulbricht, its head. The *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* (commonly referred to as the Stasi) came into being in February of 1950, followed by the creation of the *nomenklatura* that gave the party full control of selecting and appointing government employees.[18] A Five-Year Plan was established in 1950, setting forth the centralized planned economy and the collectivization of agriculture, and in 1952 the GDR entered Soviet-created organization for communist countries, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance.[19] Meanwhile, the FRG held its first free elections in August 1949, with the subsequent appointment of Konrad Adenauer the following month. Adenauer's appointee for the Minister of Economic Affairs, Ludwig Erhard, is similarly renowned for leading the FRG's economy in an entirely different direction than the East in the 1950s; revitalizing production and industries under market-based reforms led to the consolidation of both the country as a whole, as well as the continued leadership and support of the CDU until the end of the 1960s.[20] This dramatic growth of a West German "social market economy" soon became dubbed as the *Wirtschaftswunder*, a term that Erhard himself disliked due to a combination of "sound economic planning, favourable external circumstances…and a constant supply of new labour from the GDR" all having a role in the West's success.[21]

The latter factor of the FRG's economic success, that of a supply of labor from the GDR, had the opposite effect for the East. In 1952 and 1953, roughly 180,000 East Germans per year fled the Democratic Republic for the FRG in what scholars often call "voting with their feet."[22] By 1961, this number is estimated to be over 2 million people, creating a brain drain and an economic net loss for the East and a labor source for the West.[23] Nonetheless, the GDR continued to grow its economy and industry despite its lack of a Marshall Aid program and its steep reparations that it had to pay to the Soviet Union, but the unrealistic nature of the established Five-Year Plan led to the regime resorting to more authoritarian means to achieve the country's

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[18] Pulzer, *German Politics 1945-1995*, 94.
[19] Ibid 95.
[20] Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, 201.
[21] O'Dochartaigh, *Germany since 1945*, 42.
[22] Martin Kitchen, *History of Modern Germany 1800-2000* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 329.
[23] O'Dochartaigh, *Germany since 1945*, 38.

productivity goals.[24] In 1953, such a drop in industrial productivity combined with crop failures and food shortages led to the cutting of welfare, an increased tax on small businesses and a 10% increase on work productivity, and ultimately spurring the flight of the hundreds of thousands of East Germans to the FRG.[25] It was along this backdrop, along with the death of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin early that year, that the 17 June 1953 protests in East Germany erupted, the first widespread demonstration of the country, and the last one to occur until the late 1980s. Following an indecisive 16 June meeting of accepting a Soviet "New Course" of slowing the process of socialization, workers in Berlin and subsequently in hundreds of places throughout the East went to the streets until the protests were forcibly put down by Soviet tanks.[26]

The 17 June protests set the tone for the rest of the decade in the GDR with regards to the country's approach towards reform and the original Five-Year Plan. Targets for the Plan were dramatically cut for heavy industry but increased for food production, social welfare and health care witnessed improvements, and prices slashed on thousands of food items.[27] To ease these economic reforms even more, reparations to the Soviet Union were completed the following August.[28] Additionally, the educational system in the GDR received reforms "designed to increase upward mobility and were based on the expectation that the beneficiaries would become the staunch supporter of the state," with the number of those participating in higher education (namely in the sciences) more than doubling in following years.[29] Politically, the GDR continued becoming more integrated into the Eastern Bloc and basing much of its operation along that of the Soviet model. The most noteworthy political move the GDR took was being a role as a founding member of the Warsaw Pact in 1955, the Eastern Bloc's response to the West's NATO.[30]

However, the most characteristic aspect of the 1950s within the GDR remains the refugees fleeing westward. Despite leniencies towards the socialization of the economy by GDR authorities following the 17 June Uprising, widespread suppression continued throughout the country. Those suppressed were often reformers or intellectuals; leading economists proposing further reforms were "forced to withdraw their proposals," and political rivals and critics continued to be pushed

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[24] Pulzer, *German Politics 1945-1995*, 95.
[25] Spilker, *The East German Leadership,* 240-1.
[26] Maier, *Dissolution*, 15-17.
[27] Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, 219.
[28] Ibid 217.
[29] Ibid 220-1.
[30] Lewis, *Central Europe since 1945*, 169.

out of office, often those who "argued for more realism and flexibility in economic planning."[31] Thus, when the GDR lost the millions of citizens by 1961, it was not simply hard labor that the country lost but people who "took valuable economic skills difficult to replace."[32] Though not initially the intention of East Germany or the Soviet Union, the "brain drain" flowing westwards, notably through Berlin as the border there remained open, had to be dealt with. Following multiple attempts by GDR and Soviet authorities in the late 1950s and early 1960s to negotiate an Ally withdrawal from West Berlin, hope for a unified Berlin under the GDR fell through, and on 13 August 1961 the barbed wire skeleton of the Berlin Wall appeared between the East and West sectors, resolving the issue of emigration.[33]

1961-1989: From *Mauer* to *Wende*

Up until the construction of the Berlin Wall, the FRG in contrast had steadily continued strengthening its democratic systems and "social market economy" under the Chancellery of Konrad Adenauer and the leadership of the CDU. However, the 1960s brought turbulent changes throughout West Germany, with the popularity of the party declining by the end of the decade. One of such events that rattled the country was the *Spiegel* Affair of 1963, in which the CDU chairman and defense minister Franz-Josef Strauss ordered the searching of the magazine *Der Spiegel*'s office and the arrest of multiple journalist after the publication of an article highlighting "drastic deficiencies in West Germany's defenses and a number of serious differences between the US and the Federal Republic over atomic weapons."[34] Adenauer, who stood by Strauss during the affair, was ultimately forced to step down in exchange for a coalition agreement between the CDU and the FDP after the affair shattered hopes of a grand CDU-SPD coalition.[35] Upon Adenauer's resignation, the West German parliament appointed the former economic minister Ludwig Erhard as chancellor, a decision that Adenauer himself rejected due to Erhard's lack of "forcefulness to be an effective head of government."[36]

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[31] Ibid 170.

[32] James F. Brown, *Eastern Europe and Communist Rule* (London: Duke University Press, 1988), 234.

[33] O'Dochartaigh, *Germany since 1945*, 66-7.

[34] Kitchen, *History of Modern Germany*, 340-1.

[35] Konrad H. Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1995* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 147.

[36] Ibid 148.

Meanwhile, the 1960s marked a decade of economic growth and slight liberalization within the GDR. However, it must be noted that such liberalization was never to the extent as seen in the West, and was always at the behest of the SED. The economic growth was spearheaded by reforms set forth in 1963 under the New Economic System for Planning and Management (NES) which aimed to decentralize factories, improve management within them and focus more on profits.[37] Additionally, the GDR middle class that arose from this was given "extensive consultative and often executive powers in the economy," leading to more "power, initiative and responsibility" for such educated leaders and contributing to more of an East German identity.[38] Living standards within the GDR likewise increased from these reforms, yet still lagged behind the FRG. While the NES proved to push the East ahead, the reforms were ultimately reformed again towards the end of the decade; conservative SED critics, along with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, signaled disapproval for reforms that they feared as pushing the economy closer towards the West, and the system was replaced with the "Economic System of Socialists" in 1967 that "may be seen only a half-reform."[39] Nonetheless, the achievements of the NES can be seen in East Germany's economic growth rate, which eclipsed that of the West's in 1966.[40] Persecutions for outspoken critics of the regime, while still occurring, similarly were lessened over the course of the 1960s. Rather, many of those dissenting from the state simply were removed from their positions or had state criticisms against them publicized, as was the case with the well-known writer Christa Wolf.[41]

This leniency that was prevalent throughout several countries in the Eastern Bloc was ultimately quelled in 1968 with the Warsaw Pact intervening militarily in the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia, a move that Ulbricht advocated for.[42] Despite uprisings in Prague and soon after in Poland in 1970, the GDR populace remained seemingly calmed. However, the West was anything but; protests in the late 1960s shook West Berlin with people taking a stand on both international and domestic issues. Most evident of these was anti-war protests against the American-led war in Vietnam. Education reform became another point of contention and led to protests; in 1964, it was noted that lecture halls were being overfilled, leading to "poor results and

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[37] Brown, *Eastern Europe and Communist Rule*, 236.
[38] Ibid.
[39] O'Dochartaigh, *Germany since 1945*, 86-7.
[40] Ibid 87.
[41] Brown, *Eastern Europe and Communist Rule,* 235.
[42] Maier, *Dissolution*, 25.

thus a shortage of qualified personnel."[43] However, student protests sparked debates and subsequent reforms at universities. The first of such protests on 22 June 1966 followed the rector of the Free University of Berlin dismissing an assistant of one if the university's institute "because he had the temerity to question the merits of anti-Communism."[44] Further demands were made to reform the distribution of power at the university, splitting university governance into thirds between professors, assistants and students.[45] Lastly, proposed emergency laws that aimed at giving the government more control in the case of countering a communist threat led to several protests between 1966-1968, in which many who were against it likened the laws to the authoritarian "enabling laws" employed by Hitler to dismantle other parties.[46] Following casualties in the protests and terrorist attacks, the protests took greater size and form, protesting against police aggression towards protestors and instigation by particular media outlets.[47]

Events and opposition in the late 1960s inevitably contributed to a decline in support for CDU leadership in government. Leading up to this shift was a steady decline in the Hallstein Doctrine, a West German policy followed since the FRG's creation that refused to recognize country's who recognized the GDR, and the beginnings of *Ostpolitik*.[48] When Willy Brandt took the Chancellery along with an SPD-FDP coalition in 1969, old Cold War politics of previous decades took a backseat to a period of *détente*, with the FRG seeking better relations with its East Bloc neighbors and, most importantly, the GDR. This was not simply a policy that the West wanted to pursue; it was recognized that both East and West had much to gain from a warming of relations between the Iron Curtain. A scraping of the Hallstein Doctrine and direct contact between the two German states further served to legitimize the existence of the East German state.[49] While Brandt made rounds to both Moscow and Poland, establishing treaties with the respective countries, Ulbricht vocally began speaking against the line the Soviet Union was walking, wishing to draw closer with the SPD and hoping for the FRG to help finance the country's economic system.[50] The result was Ulbricht being forced to step down from his position as First Secretary, replaced by

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[43] O'Dochartaigh, *Germany since 1945*, 95.
[44] Jarausch, *Recivilizing Germans*, 156.
[45] Ibid.
[46] O'Dochartaigh, *Germany since 1945*, 96-7.
[47] Ibid 99-100.
[48] Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, 229.
[49] Pulzer, *German Politics 1945-1995*, 111-2.
[50] Kitchen, *History of Modern Germany*, 357.

Erich Honecker, a rising star within the SED, the former head of the German Youth Organization (*Freie Deutsche Jugende*, or FDJ), and a persecuted Communist during the Third Reich.[51]

Despite Honecker's reputation as a hardline pro-party conservative, the path the GDR went down immediately following his appointment certainly did not follow the man's history. A treaty between the four occupying powers in September 1971 allowed West Berliners to "make regular visits…to East Berlin and to the rest of the GDR," resulting in 4 million visits from West Berlin in 1973.[52] The *Grundvertrag* (Basic Treaty) between East and West Germany in 1972 expanded upon the visions of *détente*, receiving *de facto* recognition from the FRG and full recognition from the rest of the world, even entering the United Nations the following year.[53] Perhaps even more so than the first half of the 1960s under Ulbricht, the GDR experienced a liberalization under Honecker that was unexpected. After Honecker himself mentioned in December 1971 that "there can in my view be no taboos in the realm of art and literature," a surge of writers released books that would have at once been banned, dissident films were played and Western style found its way onto East German streets.[54] In social policy, maternity leave was improved and expanded upon from previous iterations, and Honecker's economic policies brought East Germany's economy again growing faster than the West's.[55] By the mid-1970s, the GDR had established itself as an "important trade nation," and in 1975 the country's exports nearly equaled that of its Western counterpart.[56]

With the East German economy doing relatively well, another wave of liberalization taking over the country and complete international recognition, the GDR continued consolidating itself as a nation and establishing its own national identity. This marked a departure from the previous disposition of "two states, one nation" that dominated discourse in the years following 1949. Rather, steps were taken in 1974 to amend the East German constitution to eliminate "all references to German unity," and the country turned from a "socialist state of the German nation" to "a socialist state of workers and peasants."[57] Cars in the GDR were similarly affected, having the national symbol "D" removed from automobiles in place of the acronym "DDR."[58] At the same

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[51] Ibid.
[52] Brown, *Eastern Europe and Communist Rule,* 241.
[53] Ibid.
[54] O'Dochartaigh, *German since 1945*, 109-110.
[55] Ibid 110-1.
[56] Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, 231.
[57] Maier, *Dissolution*, 27.
[58] O'Dochartaigh, *Germany since 1945*, 112.

time, it is noted that the GDR "felt established enough so that 'German' was not a threat," and historians were able to again freely explore historical German figures from the past, leading to a "new emphasis on regional particularism."[59]

The wave of liberalization ushered in by Honecker was, similarly to liberalization under Ulbricht, ultimately quelled towards the end of the decade. This time, its symbolic end took the form of expelling East German musician Wolf Biermann from the GDR in 1976 and stripping him of his citizenship. Originally from Hamburg, Biermann had moved to the GDR in 1953 and became a critic of the Marxist-Leninist fundamentals that the country rested on.[60] Biermann, during a performance in Cologne, mocked and joked about decisions made during the Prague Spring of 1968, leading the East German regime to preventing him reentry into the country.[61] Thereafter, the end of the 1970s led to many writers and artists who, originally relishing in the openness allowed at the beginning of the decade, were forced into exile, had their works censored or were refused publication entirely.[62]

While the *Ostpolitik* undertaken by Brandt was a major geopolitical successful at the beginning of the 1970s, politics and social life proved rather turbulent in the West. Much of the challenges in the *Bundestag* resided in laws on civil liberties; one of which, the *Berufsverbot*, sought to prevent employment of those associated with extremist groups, but faced criticism for indiscriminately targeting "any kind of nonconformist behavior" and harkening back to authoritarian tendencies similar to the emergency laws.[63] The introduction of this law sat amidst the backdrop of terrorism in the country, although it mainly picked up towards the end of the decade. Brandt himself did not last long in office; in May 1974, he resigned after it became known that a close aid to him worked on behalf of the GDR.[64] When Brandt's successor, Helmut Schmidt, took office, the country faced a strengthened terrorist group that had splintered off from the opposition outside parliament. The group, called the Red Army Faction (RAF), were involved in kidnapping CDU politicians, and murdering a Chief Public prosecutor and the President of

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[59] Maier, *Dissolution*, 27-8.
[60] Andreas Glaeser, *Political Epistemics: The Secret Police, the Opposition, and the End of East German Socialism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 300.
[61] Ibid 30.
[62] Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, 236.
[63] Pulzer, *German Politics 1945-1995*, 124-6.
[64] Ibid 127.

Dresdner Bank. In 1977, RAF was responsible for the hijacking of a Lufthansa flight in exchange for prisoners, which ultimately proved unsuccessful.[65]

At the beginning of the 1980s, there was little evidence of the upheaval in the Eastern Bloc and in the GDR in particular that would soon shape the end of the decade. The country's economic development up until then has been described as "a success story which is in many ways no less striking than that of the Federal Republic."[66] Additionally, it had grown to 8th place among the economies of industrial nations by the mid-1980s.[67] Society in East Germany proved to be relatively quiet until 1989, with other forms of resistance throughout the Eastern Bloc, like Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia and the creation of Solidarity in Poland, having little ripple effect. Many intellectuals within the GDR still stood by the notion of the communist system's moral strength over that of the capitalist system, believing that the communist left needed to be reformed and reorganized.[68]

Despite some praising the East German economy, in the 1980s it undoubtedly struggled and failed to keep up with standards of West Germany while simultaneously having the highest standards of living among communist countries.[69] The country also touted its elimination of homelessness and lack of inflation, yet the former likely led to countless jobs created that were not necessary for the economy.[70] Additionally, the amount of debt owed by the GDR became unmanageable by the end of the 1980s. It was reported in 1989 to Egon Krenz, Honecker's successor who lasted less than two months in office, that the country had "accumulated a foreign debt of […] $26.5 billion.[71]

The majority of changes in public attitudes and opposition came following the accession of Mikhail Gorbachev to lead the Soviet Union in 1985, who implemented concepts of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring, referring to the economic system) within the Soviet Union and which was followed suit by other states in the Eastern Bloc. Honecker and the SED, however, remained adamantly against Gorbachev's policies.[72] From thereafter, opposition movements within the country began to build more steam than ever before, and in various forms.

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[65] Ibid 138.
[66] Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, 230.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Maier, *Dissolution*, 37.
[69] O'Dochartaigh, *Germany since 1945*, 171.
[70] Ibid 171-2.
[71] Maier, *Dissolution*, 59.
[72] Pulzer, *German Politics 1945-1995*, 151.

An important player in the 1980s German opposition movement was the Protestant Church, under which many other opposition groups operated despite many being non-Christians themselves.[73] Similarly, while the Protestant Church's views often sympathized with those of the dissidents, they wished that groups operating under the church remain "religious in nature," and continued support of a "socialist alternative to capitalism."[74] Much of the peace movements were advocated by the Church, and then similarly adopted by other oppositional groups. One example is the famous motto of the Protestant Church, "swords into plowshares," the symbol of which became a sew-on badge and "*the* symbol of dissenting opinion in the GDR."[75] Other prominent opposition groups independent of the Church followed suit, notably the *Neues Forum*, which hosted several East German intellectuals.[76]

The drastic changes in East Germany did not truly come about until May 1989, when Hungary liberalized their travel restrictions to the West and ultimately did not catch nor punish East Germans who decided to make the trip.[77] Shortly thereafter, East Germans began filling up in West German embassies in Budapest, Prague and East Berlin. A "Pan-European Picnic" on the Austrian-Hungarian border in August became a route through which East Germans fled for the West, and Austria scrapped visa requirements for East German citizens the same month, leading to the largest amount of GDR citizens fleeing for the West in a given month since before the construction of the Berlin Wall.[78] On 4 September, the Monday Demonstrations began in Leipzig and occurred every week, before eventually reaching the size of 70,000 people on the 9 October march.[79] The 9 October protest in Leipzig proved to be a turning point in the GDR; it remained peaceful despite police being deployed, and it later claimed that top decision-makers around Honecker, namely Egon Krenz, persuaded him to not use force against the protestors.[80] Krenz was named Honecker's successor on 19 October, yet his term was short-lived. He and the Politburo opened the border to Czechoslovakia on 1 November, and tens of thousands of East Germans fled to Bavaria through the country on the following weekend. An even more liberalized travel legislation was drawn up on 9 November, allowing passport-bearing East Germans to obtain an

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[73] O'Dochartaigh, *Germany since 1945*, 170.
[74] Maier, *Dissolution*, 173.
[75] Glaeser, *Political Epistemics,* 403-4.
[76] Pulzer, *German Politics 1945-1995*, 152.
[77] Maier, *Dissolution*, 125.
[78] O'Dochartaigh, *Germany since 1945*, 183.
[79] Pulzer, *German Politics 1945-1995*, 153.
[80] Maier, *Dissolution*, 143.

exit visa at any border crossing.[81] However, confusion surrounding specificities of the legislation led to a vague announcement of the policy and subsequent confusion from border guards ultimately resulted in the Berlin Wall symbolically collapsing later that night.

Reunification and subsequent challenges

The idea of a reunited Germany was not self-evident in November 1989; it would still take almost a year, until 3 October 1990, for the GDR's inclusion into the Federal Republic. Upon accession, it was clear that the collapse of the GDR's planned economy and its integration the FRG's free market economy would provide a series of challenges "that heightened discontents and disillusionments in both the old and the new *Länder*."[82] Among others, two major omissions are noted in the adjustment of the economy, namely the underestimated gap in production levels between both countries and playing down "the sacrifices that unification would enforce."[83] Additionally, the question of property of the former GDR and how state-owned property would be handled became a major point of contention in the post-reunification years.

To handle the issue of property, the *Treuhand*, or trust, was established during the last days of the GDR that was able to "mandate and restructure East German holdings for the state" and "attract joint-venture capital from the West."[84] Namely, this included widespread privatization of industries that were once ran by the state, and the rate at which privatization was carried out was alarmingly fast. June 1991 recorded "2583 firms into private ownership," the "East German car manufacture cased in 1991," and by the "end of 1994 it had privatised around 15,000 companies and shut down 3600."[85] Many of these cases involved western companies taking over, sometimes "for a symbolic DM1 while promising to revitalise them," but then later ridding them "of their best assets and personnel and then simply closed them down or gave them a minimal role in the new company."[86]

On top of the *Treuhand*, the newly admitted *Länder* of the former GDR faced a number of economic setbacks, such as "lower wages, higher rents and higher costs in general for most

[81] Ibid 160.
[82] Pulzer, *German Politics 1945-1995*, 171.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Maier, *Dissolution*, 293.
[85] O'Dochartaigh, *Germany since 1945*, 220-1.
[86] Ibid 221.

products."[87] Moreover, unemployment rates rose drastically following reunification that did not begin to plateau until 1993/4; by then, employment in the east "had fallen to 54 percent of those between 15 and 65 years of age, or 5.4 million jobs."[88] In the process, most East Germans ended up losing their jobs that were once safe, and were forced to either "take temporary and lower-paid [jobs] or to eke out their existence on unemployment money and social security."[89] This legacy of an East Germany needing to play catch-up to an economically stronger West persists until this day. Growth in the eastern states' economy has been on the decline since the late 1990s, and unemployment continues to rise.[90] The additional pressures of former East Germany entering into the European single market has also attributed to today's economic disparities.[91]

Beyond economic problems, socially integrating the former East into the rest of Germany brought added difficulties. Firstly, it is important to note that expectations of integration were heavily one-sided, as reunification was primarily a western-driven process of bringing the former GDR into the free market. However, in some ways socially integrating the east brought about modest changes in the rest of the country, particularly with regards to women's rights. Women in the GDR were able of receiving abortions "on demand in the first twelve weeks of pregnancy" as opposed to the west's law of allowing abortions only in particular cases.[92] This discrepancy led to a compromise in 1995 which, while not as liberal of a law as that in the GDR, allowed abortions in Germany to be conducted "on grounds based on a mixture of social and medical indicators within a fixed time scale and requiring medical consultation."[93] At the same time, women lacked the free child care provided by the state in the GDR, while also enjoying less sexism in the workplace.[94] Lastly, as the communist regime actively discouraged practicing religion, by the time of reunification many East Germans were not involved in organized religion. When required by the German education system to include religious instruction, the Brandenburg state parliament

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[87] Ibid.

[88] Maier, *Dissolution*, 300.

[89] Hanna Behrend. "Viewpoints on German partition and reunification," *Social Semiotics* 21, no. 1 (2011): 61.

[90] Michael Schädlich and Gerald Wagner, "Perspectives and Options for Economic Policy in Eastern Germany – With Special Reference to Aspects from the Spatial Sciences," in *Restructuring Eastern Germany. German Annual of Spatial Research and Policy* (Berlin: Springer, 2007): 8.

[91] Maier, *Dissolution*, 302.

[92] O'Dochartaigh, *Germany since 1945*, 224.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Maier, *Dissolution*, 302.

allowed a school subject called "Life – Ethics – Religious Knowledge" to be taught, an action that was later upheld in court.[95]

What followed after the shortcomings of reunification was disappointment from east and west Germans alike. Easterners, even those who supported reunification, never achieved economic equilibrium with the west to this day, with the subsequent post-reunification years being the most difficult. Meanwhile, west Germans faced a heavy economic burden on the costs of reunification, with the controversial Solidarity Tax still being paid today. As a reaction to failures to integrate, some easterners took to practicing what is now known as *Ostalgie*, a nostalgia for the former East that revisited its past securities and memories.[96] From the beginnings of reunification well into the 1990s, the country saw a "birth and boom of a nostalgia industry" for the former GDR "that […] entailed the revival, reproduction, and commercialization of GDR products as well as the 'museumification' of GDR everyday life."[97] Acts such as seeking out items and products once only found in the GDR, playing GDR-centric games and driving in Trabants all soon became a part of *Ostalgie*, to the extent that some of such practices became "routinized […] throughout eastern Germany."[98] Once this commercialization and creation of an *Ostalgie* industry occurred, Berdahl argues, objects sold began recalling "an East Germany that never existed," showing a process "through which things become informed with a remembering – and forgetting – capacity."[99]

The proliferation of the GDR *Alltag*, or the "everyday," in both east and west German consumer culture even led to policy decisions on museological institutions. A 2005 commission was established to coordinate "institutions dealing with the [GDR] past," eventually leading to what is now known as the 2006 Sabrow Report, named after the historian Martin Sabrow who headed the commission.[100] The report came to a rather controversial conclusion concerning the GDR's representation in museums. Primarily, the commission believed there had been "too much emphasis […] placed on the history of repression and division."[101] Because of this, institutions had skirted away from themes such as the *Alltag*, resistance, ideology and state and party control. There

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[95] O'Dochartaigh, *Germany since 1945*, 224-5.
[96] Ibid 232.
[97] Berdahl, "'(N)Ostalgie' for the present," 193.
[98] Ibid 197.
[99] Ibid 198.
[100] Sarah Jones, "(Extra)ordinary life: the rhetoric of representing the socialist everyday after unification," *German Politics and Society 33*, no. 1-2 (2015).
[101] Ibid.

were many critiques to the report for the suggestion of over-representing *Ostalgie*; however, as Jones argues, such suggestions were given "in order to adequately encompass the self-perception of former GDR citizens and their children and avoid leaving memories of the everyday to […] 'uncritical collections' of GDR material culture."[102] This suggestion was looked at once again in 2008 by the Federal Memorial Concept, which believed that the GDR *Alltag* "should be included in state-mandated public history" to act against both *Ostalgie* and any playing down of the former GDR's totalitarian nature.[103] However, Jones concludes that both the report and the government's response emphasize that the *Alltag* in "state-support museums" should counteract the "perceived dominance" of "positive memories of social and economic security."[104]

Aspects of social life in the GDR

The nature of the former East German state which was heavily structured around ideological lines led to generations of East Germans down a separate route of socialization than their West German neighbors. One of the most famous descriptions of East German society was from West Germany's Representative to the GDR, Günter Gaus, in which he described it as a "niche society."[105] This "niche society" held the family as the center of GDR life, and favored a sense of "private authenticity" while displaying outward conformity; in other words, East German citizens were "more open and free with each other" in the confines of their private spaces.[106] However, this concept of civic disengagement and purely retreating to the private sphere has been contested by other historians with the notion of *Eigen-Sinn*, emphasizing a need to maintain "one's own […] sphere of autonomous action within public institutions, the workplace above all."[107] Furthermore, a shared "pride of work" contributed to strengthening of bonds and connections within the workplace and between coworkers that became a separate entity from the socialist state constructed around them.[108] This connection of GDR workers and the workspace they shared has similarly been attributed to post-Reunification East German identity. In her study on East German nostalgia and identity, Daphne Berdahl highlights the importance of the workplace in the former country,

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[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.
[105] O'Dochartaigh, *Germany since 1945*, 164; and Maier, *Dissolution*, 36.
[106] O'Dochartaigh, *Germany since 1945*, 164-5.
[107] Maier, *Dissolution*, 36.
[108] Ibid.

mentioning even how factories and industrial sites hosted facilities one might normally find purely in the private sphere:

> "Many East German factories housed a daycare center, a general store, and even a doctor's officer on factory grounds. Such policies and practices were not only a way of making it easier for women to enter the workforce, they were also part of a process through which the state attempted to supplant certain roles and functions of the private sphere – child rearing, family meals, and so forth – with the public sphere of the socialist workplace. In the GDR, the workplace was thus not only the center of everyday sociality, it was also a symbolic place of community and national belonging."[109]

Nonetheless, the prevalence of the private sphere in the workplace still highlights how important such space was for East Germans. An additional aspect of the private sphere that proved to be important to space at home was the television, which reached high levels of coverage to families by the 1970s.[110] Erich Honecker, who took office in the early 1970s and who used to actively work towards regulating television broadcasting, became more lax with the increased access to television.[111] By the 1980s, every citizen of East Germany could have access to West German television, providing a glimpse into the realities on the other side of the wall. Several reasons are provided for tolerance towards broadcasting: blocking access would cost time and money, programs could be seen as "condemning the Western way of life," and it exuded confidence of the GDR's existence and the regime's right to govern.[112] While television is only a minor aspect of the private sphere, it must be reminded of East Germany's unique position within the East Bloc; it was the only communist country to have a neighboring country that shared the same language and which operated under a capitalist system. Access to West German airwaves undoubtedly shaped the private spheres of East Germans in the last decades of the GDR.

A unique aspect of the GDR state that permeated into the social life is the vast and extensive operations of the Stasi throughout the regime's existence. Even following reunification, the Stasi became somewhat of a fascination; the availability of Stasi files, allowing former GDR citizens to view their Stasi records, led to revelations and encounters with friends and family members who

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[109] Berdahl, "'(N)Ostalgie' for the present," 194.
[110] Lewis, *Central Europe since 1945*, 131.
[111] Brown, *Eastern Europe and Communist Rule*, 245.
[112] Ibid 253.

acted as Stasi informants, and television segments reconciling Stasi pasts appeared shortly thereafter. The actual numbers of those working for or on behalf of the Stasi were remarkable. At its height, the number of paid Stasi agents was around 85,000 and the number of "unofficial collaborators" around 180,000.[113] While overt purpose of the institution was to gather information and root out potentially subversive actors wishing to undermine the state, it also created a "power of mystification on which its capacity to corrupt independent action, stifle dissent, and preclude the emergence of a public realm depended," with many collaborating intellectuals repressing and forgetting memories of helping the Stasi.[114] However, intellectuals were simultaneously heavily spied upon, with their actions affecting the publication of their work and the security of their careers. In the end, the primary objective of the Stasi was control rather than information; associations for writers and artists helped establish what works were acceptable and were responsible for travel permissions, and "scientists and department heads were expected to report on their colleagues' contacts."[115] The nature of the Stasi's presence in GDR society thus cannot be ignored in the operations of daily life of East Germans, with it contributing to the retreat of citizens into their own spheres.

Important for the GDR throughout its existence was the country's youth population, and its emphasis on youth education and organization is evident of this. The primary youth organization, the FDJ, operated alongside the national education system, and as a result nearly 100% of 6-13 year-olds were members.[116] As the FDJ was an organization working under the SED party, the SED heralded itself as a "guardian of young people that protected and promoted the interests of the state's youth," with both Honecker and Krenz heading the organization before they became First Secretary.[117] Naturally, an aim of the youth organization was to instill socialist values and a "socialist personality" onto East German youth; however, it also aimed to propagate patriotic values, forming not only the basis of a socialist identity but a national identity as well.[118] The youth organization was also behind many state-propagated campaigns, most notable of which was the campaign against the access to West German television in 1961, ironically under the leadership of

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[113] Maier, *Dissolution*, 47.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid 42.
[116] Anna Saunders, *Honecker's Children: Youth and Patriotism in East(ern) Germany, 1979-2002* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 13.
[117] Ibid 11.
[118] Ibid 13.

Erich Honecker.[119] In an attempt to create a "livelier image" of the state, the FDJ also hosted events in the 1960s in which Western music was played and even performances by controversial artists, such as Wolf Biermann.[120] Ultimately, the underlying motives of the organization rested on its purpose as a state apparatus that fostered community and belonging "to the new, socialist state that was being created."[121]

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This chapter provided an overview of German history from 1945 to 1990, a look at the reunified Federal Republic and policies towards GDR museology, and various aspects of GDR social life and identity. The split in trajectories taken by both the FRG and the GDR defined much of the country's history in the second half of the 20th Century, while also playing a major role in post-reunification Germany and integration. In a plethora of ways, the GDR state was antithetical to the FRG, following in line with the Soviet regime; political opponents and opposition were imprisoned or exiled, freedom of speech was curbed, and there were no free elections. Nonetheless, East Germans developed their own identity distinct from the West, valuing productivity and close connections at work and at home. As will be seen in the following chapter, museums actively choose which aspects of the past to display, at times sacrificing the focus on identity and everyday life in favor a stricter political and historical interpretation, and vice versa.

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[119] O'Dochartaigh, *Germany since 1945*, 84.
[120] Ibid 87-8.
[121] Ibid 162.

Chapter 3: Fieldwork and analysis

The following chapter provides an analysis of two institutions containing exhibitions of the GDR: the DDR Museum in Berlin and the Zeitgeschichtliches Forum in Leipzig. Visits to both exhibitions took place from 13-28 March 2019. The focus for both visits was examining the collections each exhibition had on display, the accompanying texts (if any), interactive objects and multimedia, and the space and layout of the exhibition. This chapter will therefore provide a contextual analysis of each exhibition that will supplement answering the three research questions proposed in the research's introduction: What elements of the past are being displayed in the respective museum? How are memories disseminated into objects and displays? And in what ways are media utilized to create heritage?

Before beginning the analysis, however, it is important to establish the contexts of the institutions themselves, as the space surrounding the museums and their visions greatly affect the displays and the narratives put forth within each exhibition. Most notably, Berlin became a major site of museum construction in Germany following 1989, and symbolic fall of the Berlin Wall similarly ushered in "a rush to remember and a desire to represent the city's ruptured past."[1] Prior to the DDR Museum's establishment in Berlin in 2006 (which also happened to be the same year as the release of the Sabrow Report mentioned last chapter), GDR museums in the city primarily focused on aspects oppression and division. Among others of such museums is the Gedenkstätte Hohenschönhausen, a former Stasi prison that housed a number of political prisoners in the Soviet Occupation Zone and in the GDR.[2] Rooms and cells at the site of the prison are "reconstructed to appear as they would have done during their time of use."[3] The presentation of the Gedenkstätte Hohenschönhausen, Byrnes concludes, is heavily focused around "accounts of deprivation and incarceration," with a narrative that "is controlled and that the performance is a choreographed one."[4] The museum allows for "recalling and enacting trauma as a way of working through and

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[1] Deirdre Byrnes, "Remembering at the margins: trauma, memory practices and the recovery of marginalised voices at the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen memorial," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 25, no. 4 (2017): 455.

[2] "Geschichte," *Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen*, accessed 7 August 2019, https://www.stiftung-hsh.de/geschichte/.

[3] Jones, "(Extra)ordinary Life."

[4] Byrnes, "Remembering the margins," 466.

regaining control of the past,"[5] yet nonetheless provides a darker narrative of the GDR that, as mentioned before, focuses on state oppression.

In addition to the Gedenkstätte Hohenschönhausen is the Berlin Wall memorial. According to the memorial's website, it is "the central memorial site of German division" and located in the middle of the city on Bernauer Straße.[6] Moreover, the memorial contains the last portion of the Berlin Wall "with the preserved grounds behind it," allowing it to "convey an impression of how the border fortifications developed until the end of the 1980s."[7] The section of the wall at Bernauer Straße was preserved starting from spring of 1990, and the memorial itself was approved by the Berlin Senate in August 1991.[8] However, before the memorial was even constructed, there was sharp criticism against it, with locals being against the Wall memorial "for psychological" reasons, and the nearby hospital cited the stress that the presence of the Wall induced upon patients.[9] The site of the wall at Bernauer Straße is not the only portion of wall still intact and preserved in the city, however; sites such as Checkpoint Charlie and the East Side Gallery both additionally memorialize the Berlin Wall in their own way. Jonathan Bach cites these three places of Berlin Wall remembrance as places where the Wall has been "re-temporalized" and that have been elevated "by dint of their exclusive association with the Wall."[10] Each three sections of the Wall temporalize it in their own way; Berliner Straße's segment becomes a site of "the temporality of trauma" through "production of an 'authentic' landscape,"[11] Checkpoint Charlie being a space that has been erased and now a site of anticipation with something "always waiting to happen,"[12] and the East Side Gallery produces "unusual counters" through its colorful paintings created during the reunification era."[13] Despite these three Berlin Wall sites showcasing their own stance towards the GDR past, the Berlin Wall undoubtedly memorializes German division in each form it takes.

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[5] Ibid.

[6] "Berlin Wall Memorial," *Berlin Wall Memorial*, accessed 9 August 2019, https://www.berliner-mauer-gedenkstaette.de/en/index.html.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Gerd Knischewski and Ulla Spittler, "Remembering the Berlin Wall: The Wall Memorial Ensemble Bernauer Strasse," *German Life and Letters* 59, no. 2 (2006): 282-3.

[9] Ibid 283.

[10] Jonathan Bach, "The Berlin Wall after the Berlin Wall: Site into sight," *Memory Studies* 9, no. 1 (2016): 58.

[11] Ibid 54.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid 56.

The DDR Museum in Berlin and Zeitgeschichtliches Forum in Leipzig

Located on the Spree River in the heart of Berlin, the DDR Museum was established in 2006 by ethnologist Peter Kenzelmann and Robert Rückel as a private institution depicting the everyday life of East Germans in the former GDR.[14] The idea for the museum came about when Kenzelmann, a West German from Freiburg, visited Berlin but was unable to find a museum about the GDR that deviated away from Stasi or the Berlin Wall.[15] The museum is heavily participatory in nature, and indeed is its primary draw and marketing point from the first words on its website describing the institution as "the most interactive museum in the world,"[16] to its brochure marketing the museum as "a hands-on experience of history."[17] The location is nestled along the prominent museum route in the city across from Museum Island, which features iconic public museums such as the Altes Museum and the Pergamon Museum, allowing it to draw in large numbers of visitors over the years.[18] However, "only 24 percent of visitors are former GDR citizens," with most visitors being "either too young or […] are tourists from other countries."[19] This location for the museum can be seen as significant for its image, as it is excluded as an "official part of Museum Island," yet its proximity to the slew of public museums makes it seem like an official part of it, lending the museum "credibility and political power it would not have otherwise held."[20] As a private institution, the DDR Museum relies on admission tickets from around 600,000 visitors per year, as well as through providing "a range of educational services," "educational games," and financing "programmes of academic research."[21] Additionally, the museum allows objects from the exhibition to be loaned out, and its website provides an exhaustive list of items that are being sought by the museum from potential donors. However, as Arnold-de

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[14] Maria Bartholomäus, "What you always wanted to know about the DDR Museum…" *DDR Museum*, 12 August 2015, accessed 24 July 2019, https://www.ddr-museum.de/en/blog/archive/what-you-always-wanted-know-about-ddr-museum.

[15] Ibid.

[16] "DDR Museum." *DDR Museum*. Accessed 19 June 2019. https://www.ddr-museum.de/de.

[17] DDR Museum, *DDR Museum*, Brochure, Spring 2019.

[18] Silke Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2013): 178.

[19] Ibid 178-9.

[20] Joshua Atkinson, "Hiding Hedonism in Plain Sight: Acoustic Participatory Camouflage at the DDR Museum in Berlin," *Javnost – The Public* 23, no. 3 (2016): 242.

[21] Sören Möritz, et. al., *DDR Museum Guide: A Companion to the Permanent Exhibition* (Karlsruhe: DDR Museum Verlag, 2017): 5.

Simine notes, those who donate to the museum "are not systematically interviewed, their accounts are not recorded" and the contexts to individual objects are provided by the working historians.[22]

Above all, the overarching mission for the DDR Museum is a much more personal interaction with history of the GDR and of how East Germans went about their lives. The director of the DDR Museum, Gordon von Godin, and managing director Quirin Adelmann wrote that the exhibition attempts to put "the visitor in the shoes of the average East German" in order to answer questions such as "How would I have reacted? Would I have done as was expected? What if anything is different about then and now?"[23] This is achieved through the exhibition tracing the "popular perception of and response to [living in the GDR]."[24] Therefore, the museum does not simply aim to retell narratives and life of everyday people in the GDR, but to recreate an experience of the GDR for its visitors.

The DDR Museum is divided into three main sections that are divided into themes rather than taking the visitor chronologically through the exhibition. Visitors first come in contact with the section titled "Public Life" that explores the everyday in the GDR. It is here where visitors are shown topics such as consumption, work, education and leisure time. An iconic part of the museum, the "drivable" Trabi, is featured close to the entrance, a recreated Kindergarten acts as a playroom for children, and a recreated cinema allows visitors to sit and watch films. Following this is the section titled "Party and State" where the museum addresses larger economic, political and societal aspects of the country. At the forefront of the room is a large office desk mimicking what one might find in a politburo office, and two rooms off to the side recreate a Stasi interrogation room and a prison cell respectively. Lastly, the DDR Museum takes visitors into the section, "Life in a Tower Block." Upon walking through a small room outfitted as an elevator, visitors can explore a recreated GDR apartment with several rooms and interactable objects.

In addition to the museum proper, the DDR Museum also makes extensive use of its website, social media outreach, blog and online collection that shapes the expectations of visitors before the visit the museum, as well as provide further outreach once visitors leave. Magdelena Banaszkiewicz notes this prescriptive nature of online media in her exploration of the Crazy Guides tour in Krakow, where the website plays an important role for the visitor as it "leads to the

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[22] Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, 181.
[23] Möritz, et. al., 4.
[24] Ibid. More specifically, the editors say "living under a constant bombardment of propaganda and the shadow of coercion and servility."

visitors having some anticipation prior to the excursion" due to the website's use of imagery.[25] In the case of the DDR Museum, the website's focus resides in the interactivity and ability for visitors to experience history, while the history itself seemingly plays a lesser role, as can be noted in the description of the exhibition on the website's homepage:

> "**Willkommen in einem der interaktivsten Museen der Welt!**
> Das DDR Museum ist einzigartig, außergewöhnlich und eines der meistbesuchten Museen Berlins. Wir zeigen den Alltag eines vergangenen Staates zum Anfassen. Dabei wird Geschichte lebendig, interaktiv und trotzdem wissenschaftlich fundiert vermittelt. Alltag – Mauer – Stasi: Die DDR auf einen Blick."[26]

This short description places the nature of the museum as the primary drawing point for German-speaking visitors; its interactivity and uniqueness (*einzigartig*) seemingly takes precedence. Indeed, the fact that the museum pertains retelling the GDR past appears unimportant, with the GDR not being referred to by name but instead as a "past state" or simply "history" until the last sentence, where it is simplified to the everyday, Berlin Wall and Stasi. Additionally, the museum looks at the DDR "*auf einen Blick*" (at a glance), hinting that the exhibition is more comprehensive in nature.

The heavier focus on interactivity within the DDR Museum is a reoccurring element throughout the webpage, indicating a goal of not only wanting to tell visitors the past but have them play a role in creating it for themselves. Several adjectives are deployed to describe the word "history" (*Geschichte*): "living" (*lebendig*), "up close" (*hautnah*), and, once again, "interactive" (*interaktiv*). Additionally, the history is available "to be touched and tried out" (*angefasst und ausprobiert zu werden*). While such descriptions back up the participatory nature of the museum, they also exemplify how the institution gives a malleable attribute to the history exhibited, allowing the visitor to react and adjust to it how they see fit. These textual descriptions are further backed by various images of the exhibit itself. A man and a woman drive a simulation of an East German Trabant, a group of girls seemingly role-play around an office table with Karl Marx and

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[25] Magdalena Banaszkiewicz, "A dissonant heritage site revisited – the case of Nowa Huta in Krakow," *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 15, no. 2 (2017): 187-8.

[26] "DDR Museum." https://www.ddr-museum.de/de.

Vladimir Lenin watching from the wall behind them, and a model Berlin Wall is exhibited with police figures on guard and pedestrians going about their day on the other side.

The DDR Museum's blog provides another medium for visitors to interact with both before and after visiting the institution. Prominently featured in the blog are items and objects from the museum's collection that are accompanied by an article about them. In some cases, the articles are written by an author of GDR design, Günter Höhne, while others are categorized under the subcategory "Object of the Month." The blog articles range from discussing electronics, to furniture, to everyday objects such as kitchenware or tools. While the blog posts are published on a much less frequent basis, the museum's Facebook page posts almost daily with much similar, albeit shortened content. Often, the Facebook page uploads photos of objects in their collection with short captions, and viewers are welcomed to engage with the content through the photos' comment section.

Meanwhile, the **Zeitgeschichtliches Forum (ZGF)** sits at the heart of Leipzig's center, just across the street from the city's market square. The institution has been a part of the city since 9 October 1999, when it was established as part of the ten year anniversary of Leipzig's Monday Demonstrations.[27] It is a part of the *Stiftung Haus der Geschichte*, a foundation consisting of four museums across Germany that was initially sparked by Helmet Kohl's 1982 government declaration suggesting "a collection of German history since 1945."[28] Entry into the ZGF is free, as the institution is a part of a national foundation and receives its funding from the German government. The permanent exhibition and the primary focus for this study, titled "Our History: Dictatorship and Democracy after 1945" (German: *Unsere Geschichte: Diktatur und Demokratie nach 1945*), has been recently renovated and was reopened to the public on 6 November 2018. This transformation of the permanent exhibition was very transparent, with the ZGF creating a blog featuring articles, videos and interviews that chronicled the entire renovation process from beginning to end. The new exhibition is entirely bilingual in both German and English, and chronicles the history of East Germany until reunification in 1990, as well as the history of reunified Germany to the present. While the vast majority of the exhibition focuses on the history,

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[27] "Organisation," *Zeitgeschichtliches Forum Leipzig*, Accessed 29 June 2019,
    https://www.hdg.de/zeitgeschichtliches-forum/organisation/.
[28] "Organisation," *Stiftung Haus der Geschichte*, Accessed 29 June 2019,
    https://www.hdg.de/stiftung/organisation/#c5339.

politics and everyday of East Germany, the end of the exhibition is quite significant and chronicles the problems Germany faces today, such as terrorism and the refugee crisis.

The new exhibition is divided into 6 subject areas that visitors progress through chronologically. It first picks up immediately after the Second World War in a short section called "Germany and Europe 1945," focusing primarily on the liberation and occupation of Germany using Leipzig as an example, as well as the creation of a bipolar world. The exhibition then transitions into a section called "Utopia and Power: The GDR until the end of the 1960s," in which the exhibition explains the power structure of East Germany, highlights the uprising of 17 June 1953, the creation of the Berlin Wall and the era of Walter Ulbricht. Then, the exhibition takes a less chronological and political recounting of the GDR and focuses on the 1970s and 1980s in a section called "Agony and Erosion: Everyday in the GDR." Here, more attention is given to the country's economic and technological developments, education, living, shopping, space, and everyday life, with a separated ending portion that discusses surveillance and resistance. Upon walking through a narrow corridor, the visitor enters the fourth portion entirely dedicated to the revolution and reunification process in 1989/90, titled "Peaceful Revolution and Reunification." The last two sections tell the story of a reunited Germany and contemporary problems the country faces today; "Transformation process of the 1990s" highlights the changes in people's lives and economic changes during the years following reunification, while "Challenges of the Present" poses questions to the future of Europe and the consequences of globalization and digitalization.[29]

The primary motto of the ZGF that is featured on its website, brochure and within the institution proper is *Geschichte erleben* ("experience history"). The museum touts its roughly 2000 objects, photos, documents and media that it provides to visitors.[30] This is done, according to the ZGF, through its "exhibitions, events, online services and publications" that present "German history from the end of the Second World War until the present."[31] Moreover, the ZGF presents itself more as a museum; indeed, it is called a "forum," as it holds discussions, seminars, lectures, showcases films, and generally provides a platform for prominent speakers in politics, science, culture and the media.[32] It describes itself as "a special place for exchanging individual experiences

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[29] Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, *Neue Dauerausstellung im Zeitgeschichtlichen Forum Leipzig ab 6. November 2018*, Flyer, Leipzig, November 2018.

[30] Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, *Unsere Geschichte: Diktatur und Demokratie nach 1945*, Brochure, Leipzig, October 2018.

[31] "Organisation," https://www.hdg.de/zeitgeschichtliches-forum/organisation/.

[32] Ibid.

and various perspectives on the past and present," with space following the permanent exhibition to begin discussions with other visitors and museum workers.[33]

Additionally, the museum is active in social media through its Facebook page. While it does not command the outreach that the DDR Museum achieves, posts are made on a regular basis that highlight important events that happened in the GDR. The ZGF also posts pictures of objects within the exhibition with descriptions of them, shares articles from various sites pertaining to GDR history, and passes on events taking place at the ZGF. In some cases, interviews and videos of experts in the institution are posted that discuss aspects of the GDR's history or particular displays and objects within the permanent exhibition.

While literature on the ZGF is relatively sparse, it has not entirely escaped criticism. Most notably, Daphne Berdahl described previous iteration of the exhibition in the institution as one that "makes a very valuable contribution […] to intellectual life and historical work in Leipzig and beyond," that focuses primarily on repression and resistance.[34] Furthermore, the exhibition presented "stories and images of suffering, repression, and state violence" that "are foregrounded alongside a narrative of resistance and opposition."[35] However, it must be noted again that this was an older version of the exhibition that Berdahl looked at in 2005. Additionally, she cited controversies within the institution and criticism from the local community. Workers interviewed in 2005, she remarked, must agree to the museum's narrative concept when being screened, and pressure to adhere to it was so strong that it created "an occasional atmosphere of fear and suspicion in the workplace."[36] Locals she interviewed at times also showed dislike towards the institution, describing it as western propaganda and portraying a false image of the GDR in which "many visitors from the East cannot find themselves here."[37] The causes of this, Berdahl argues, are much broader "devaluation of East German histories since reunification,"[38] including ridiculing aspects of East German identity as was described in Chapter 2.

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[33] Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Brochure, Leipzig, October 2018.
[34] Daphne Berdahl, "Expressions of Experience and Experiences of Expression: Museum Re-Presentations of GDR History," *Anthology and Humanism* 30, no. 2 (2005): 158.
[35] Ibid 159.
[36] Ibid 160.
[37] Ibid 161.
[38] Ibid.

Analysis: The DDR Museum

As previously mentioned, the DDR Museum focuses on creating a narrative of the GDR through the emphasis of everyday life, with hope that upon experiencing the narrative provided, visitors will "engage with the wider and more significant questions of historical and political importance relevant for our life here and now and the future of our society."[39] To accomplish this, the DDR Museum uses its interactive objects, games and media to assist visitors in personalizing the museum experience and tailoring it towards the individual. This is firstly recognizable through wall texts that accompany objects and set pieces. One method that the museum uses to pass on its narrative is through using such display texts to recreate a story rather than retelling an explicitly personal account. These recreated stories become less biographical in nature and more hypothetical; at times, they mimic storytelling techniques by creating a setting and exposition as opposed to sharing a personal narrative from a former GDR citizen. One example is evident with the museum's recreated interrogation room meant to highlight the level of Stasi surveillance and interference in everyday East German life. Before entering the room itself, a sign outside the room attempts to recreate the average scene one might expect in witnessing a Stasi interrogation:

> **You will talk!**
>
> "Don't worry, we have plenty of time," said the interrogator repeatedly. The same questions for hours and the monotonous tapping of the typewriter. The remand prisoner was entirely helpless. Nothing to read, no visitors, no lawyer, sleep deprivation and strict isolation. The only person with whom he ever spoke was his interrogator. Prisoners often felt the need to get everything off their chest. In fact, this was part of the strategy which the Stasi men learned at the Stasi University in Potsdam.[40]

Rather than retell facts or figures about Stasi involvement in the GDR, the wall text instead attempts to create a mood and atmosphere for visitors through storytelling. Indeed, the text begins with a dialogic hook and a descriptive setting that touches senses of hearing, sight and feeling. The "monotonous tapping" from the typewriter and the feelings of helplessness, deprivation and isolation work to establish expectations before entering the room itself. Additionally, characters are introduced but remain unnamed: the interrogator and the prisoner, who both remain unnamed

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[39] Sören Möritz, et. al., *DDR Museum Guide,* 4.

[40] "Verhör/Interrogation," wall text, DDR Museum, Berlin, Germany.

but the latter is described as a man deprived of human contact. This abstraction in the DDR Museum's displays is noted by Silke Arnold-de Simine, who remarks that the focal point of the museum's narrative is not so much on GDR citizens themselves, but on the individual visitors and how they relate to such a past.[41] Additionally, the museum is noted for not incorporating "oral interviews or personal memories into its exhibition," and all that can be presented are the "contextualizations historians can supply."[42] With this in mind, while some aspects of imprisonment and the Stasi described in the text may be true, the narrative itself that is provided can only be assumed to be fictitious to some degree as no person was interviewed to describe such a scenario. It should be mentioned that this is the sole text accompanying the Stasi interrogation room in the exhibition. However, the accompanying museum guide sold in the museum's gift shop expands upon this storytelling; while first noting that "all those […] underwent a different experience and yet all tell an identical story," the guide proceeds down a generalized story of the prisoner's interrogation, featuring additional dialogue while refraining from personal accounts from actual Stasi prisoners.[43]

The interrogation room (Image 1) thus presents itself as bleak and monotonous as described in the wall text. All that is present in the room is a wooden desk and chair, a table lamp positioned to point directly at the prisoner, and a silhouette of the Stasi interrogator. The silhouette depiction serves to both detract attention away from the GDR citizens and put attention on to the visitor, as well as continue to diminish the importance of the identities of the Stasi officers themselves. Stasi interrogators, the DDR Museum Guide describes, all were educated at the same university, knew the best methods of interrogation and were great students in their craft who knew how to produce results.[44]

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[41] Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, 181.
[42] Ibid.
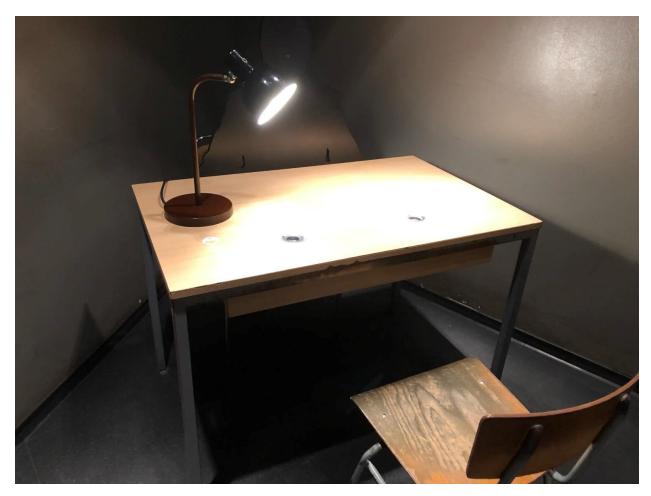[43] Sören Möritz, et. al., *DDR Museum Guide,* 115.
[44] Ibid.

Image 1: The Stasi Interrogation room in the DDR Museum, photo by Levi Bochantin.

Visitors are welcome to sit down at the interrogation desk, and it is not uncommon to see visitors having pictures taken with them in the role of the person being interrogated. This reaction by visitors to have themselves included in pictures in the context of a traumatic past of Stasi surveillance and interrogation is found acceptable due to the environment the museum has established. With the museum promoting interactivity with most of its displays, the atmosphere within the museum is naturally loud, busy and at times chaotic. Additionally, the nature of the interrogation room and its focus on the individual visitor's own experience serve to undermine the experiences lived through by GDR citizens; with little context aside from the wall text, as well as no personal accounts included of people who were interrogated by the Stasi, visitors are only left with their own experience and imagination to reflect upon.

Another case is shown in the section "Life in a Tower Block," in a room outfitted as a GDR children's bedroom. Upon opening one of the cabinets, a row of puppets are lined behind a glass

representing characters from East German children shows and films. On one of the cabinet doors is a short text in English that again sets the scene for the reader:

Magic Moments

The curtains were drawn, a white bedsheet draped across the wall and the show could begin. Everything was set for the projectionist (usually Dad) to operate the 'Pouva Magica' film projector. The children devoured the old favourites – 'Little Muck', 'The Cold Heart' or 'The Ringing Tree'. Old stills from the Brothers Grimm were also shown, Dad read out the texts. The stories were familiar, but the children were still afraid of the Big Bad Wolf.[45]

Once again, a storytelling narrative is created; a picture of a typical scene of life in the GDR is painted, but without exact names, sources or firsthand accounts. The narrative attempts to personalize itself not with any one individual, but with the visitor itself, positioning the visitor as someone who *could* have grown up watching picture films and "old favorites," which it further emphasizes by providing names but little to no descriptions of the films themselves. The scene itself, one that is particularly ordinary (all of the "old favorites" themselves are German fairytales), provides a relatable story for many visitors.

At first glance, such an abstract interpretation appears to allow for personal reflection of the visitor as to their childhood and how they might have fit in as a child of the GDR. However, little room for questioning is presented in the wall text, and what children in the GDR watched and played is assumed to be accurate by the story provided. Additionally, the first line indicates that the act of playing with puppets and listening to German fairytales was enough to require secrecy from the outside world. In these instances, the DDR Museum presents itself as an authoritative voice on the GDR past; the stories told represent the overall realities of East Germans before reunification. No opportunities are given to visitors to question or verify the stories being told, and trust in their accuracy must be provided by visitors to the institution. However, trust is often innately put into museums by visitors; as Susan Crane notes, people "rely on museums as well as on historians to get the past 'right' for us," with the idea that museums could lie to the audience "seems a breach of faith."[46] Museums, according to Black, are places that "define what is or is not history," as well as where visitors can be expected to "add new content to their existing knowledge

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[45] "*Magic Moments*," wall text, DDR Museum, Berlin, Germany.
[46] Susan Crane, "Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum," *History and Theory* 36, no. 4 (1997): 51.

[…] and construct their own meanings."[47] This is undoubtedly the case for the DDR Museum, whose narrative presents the GDR as both a familiar and nostalgic relic of the past that both Germans and international visitors alike can relate to, while simultaneously as a past that is not wholly remarkable or impressive.

In addition to using traditional objects and displays to tell the story of the GDR, the DDR Museum uses an extensive amount of media and technology. The media used ranges from videos, photos and audio, to much newer touchscreens, electronic games and even a mirror that utilizes augmented reality technology. This assortment of media contributes to the level of interactivity within the exhibition, as well as the museum's belief that their "visitors see, handle and hear; they do not just read."[48]

Noteworthy of the media used, however, are the games. In particular, the section "Party and State" features several variations of interactive games that coincide with the objects and displays next to them. One game accompanied a section detailing the economic struggles the state faced with its planned economy. Titled "Planspiel," the game required visitors to "work as a manager at a car manufacturer…and direct GDR automobile production." It then explains before starting: "After playing the game, it soon becomes clear why the planned economy was predestined to failure and what the factories had to do to be able to demonstrate success." When the game starts, a "planned target" number is displayed on the screen of 163200, while a ticker counting up from 0 slowly reaches towards the lofty goal. Every once in a while, the number stops counting up and a scenario is presented to the player, and the player must make a decision that determines how much higher the ticker will count up. An example of this is the firm running short on personnel due to many on sick leave, moving to small private forms or being drafted into the army. Three choices are given: to organize extra shifts, recruit new personnel or ride out the problems. Meanwhile, a short description of why this was a problem in the GDR is given in the bottom right corner. In this case, the game states that labor shortages were common the GDR due to the illegality of attracting workers from other companies, with companies legally required to draw from the "non-employed population" despite there officially being full employment. When the game ends,

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[47] Graham Black, "Museums, Memory and History," *Cultural and Social History* 8, no. 3 (2011): 415.
[48] "DDR Museum." *DDR Museum*. Accessed 3 July 2019. https://www.ddr-museum.de/de.

it is displayed whether or not the player reached the planned target. In the event that the player does reach the target, the game displays that the player "fulfilled the plan despite all difficulties."[49]

Additional touchscreen games included taking a quiz guess which particular GDR institutions changed their name to "establish an independent national identity"; a game playing the GDR national anthem before the anthem's text were removed asking the visitor to press a red button when they thought that "a particular word represents a reason [the anthem was no longer sung]"; and a 15-step game asking the visitor to create "the new socialist human," picking hair, clothes and accessories that were then later calculated into points to determine how well the visitor could create a proper socialist.

One rather advanced and newer form of technology used by the museum is augmented reality in the form of a "mirror." This is featured in the recreated bedroom of the "Life in a Tower Block" section, and works as another touchscreen with a camera, although in the shape and appearance of a mirror. Next to the mirror is a wardrobe of tops and jackets that represent articles of clothing one might find on the streets in the GDR. A blue section is labeled on the clothing rack, and the visitor is asked to slide one of the clothing hangers onto the blue section. The article of clothing is then recognized by the touchscreen and camera, and a digitalized version of the piece of clothing appears on the person in the camera through face recognition. Visitors are then able to take a snapshot of them in the digitalized clothing, have the picture sent to their email or printed out. Often noted, the face recognition software did not always accommodate every size of person, and in some cases shorter visitors appeared almost engulfed by the digital clothes that they chose.

Another hallmark technology featured in the museum and one prominently advertised on the museum's website is the Trabi drive (Image 2). Shortly after entering the museum, visitors are greeted with an East German Trabant, the standard automobile seen throughout the former GDR and the East Bloc. The vehicle is fully open and accessible. On the inside windshield, a projection of a street in East Berlin is displayed, and visitors are invited to virtually drive the Trabant in the game to simulate an everyday drive on East German streets. However, there are no particular rules within the game to enforce proper driving, and as was often the case the Trabi drive was consistently swarmed with children and teenagers who enjoyed recklessly driving through the streets. Joshua Atkinson similarly noticed this habit of visitors, while also noting that the city being empty and void of color was significant as later exhibits "helped visitors to make sense of that grey

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[49] "Planspiel/Management Game," multimedia game, DDR Museum, Berlin, Germany.

place and give it form."[50] The empty and simplified world projected through the game arguably sets the tone for the rest of the exhibition's presentation of the GDR past: the outside life, moreover the political realities of the GDR, fail to be as relevant for the museum as the experience of the individual visitor. The Trabant ride becomes less about creating an authentic experience for visitors of driving through the GDR and more so about allowing visitors to simply create their own experience.

Image 2: A side view of the Trabant at the DDR Museum, photo by Levi Bochantin.

The wall text for the Trabant, outfitted as one of the car's back windows, does little to make a case for the car's popularity. It notes that the families receiving a Trabant, after years of waiting, would have family gatherings welcoming the car to the family, and that it "proved an instant hit."

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[50] Joshua Atkinson, "Hiding Hedonism in Plain Sight," 245.

However, what is instead at the forefront if what was wrong with the car itself; its brakes "were so weak that they needed a special permit," the replacement of a consumption indicator instead of a fuel gauge was so small that only a "diminutive rodent" could see it, and finding spare parts to repair the vehicle became the "real adventure" of ownership.[51] Despite the described shortcomings of the vehicle, East Germans are described of being "proud owners" protective of their "prized possessions," regarding the Trabant as a "special friend" that they gave a nickname and welcomed as part of their family.[52] In addition to assigning the Trabant itself as a part of GDR heritage, the language used in the display is rather pejorative in nature, trivializing the value East Germans held for Trabants. Daphne Berdahl recalls the Trabant as a possession that became "antagonistically ridiculed in West German jokes" as relations between the former East and West soured following reunification, becoming a source of perceived backwardness that "ignored the social and historical contexts that may have produced it."[53]

Regarding the museum's interactivity, the previously mentioned "Life in the Tower Block" section invites the visitors to touch and interact with their surroundings the most in the exhibition. The section, a recreated flat from the GDR, comprises roughly a third of the museum itself. It is, therefore, a substantially large flat, a fact that the museum advertises on its brochure as "the biggest DDR flat of all time."[54] Indeed, the size and appearance of the flat at times is at odds with the reality of GDR flats told by the museum. The flat is "a fully furnished period apartment," complete with a spacious living room, kitchen, bathroom, main bedroom and children's room, with a garage featured in the exit.[55] However, before entering the flat, visitors are told of the "ramshackle condition" many East Germans lived with, who nonetheless lived with the situation because "many people liked life in the old quarters with their pubs, shops and backyards" and "did all they could to maintain them in a habitable condition."[56] Rather than show visitors such a flat, the DDR Museum instead opts to reconstruct a new flat, which is described as a "full comfort flat" only given to GDR citizens who are "lucky enough."[57] The new flats are described almost as the end goal for East Germans, in which "years of waiting, arguing with the housing office and even

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[51] "Trabant: Cardboard on Wheels," wall text, DDR Museum, Berlin, Germany.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Berdahl, "'(N)Ostalgie' for the present," 195-6.
[54] DDR Museum, *DDR Museum*, Brochure, Spring 2019.
[55] Ibid.
[56] "Wohnen/Life at Home," wall text, DDR Museum, Berlin, Germany.
[57] "Neubauwohnung/New Flats," wall text, DDR Museum, Berlin, Germany.

petitioning" were required to shed the daily burdens of "lugging sacks of coal, sharing a toilet […] and washing in the kitchen."[58] Despite the new flats being the apex of luxury, they are later described again as boring and monotonous, so much so that jokes are made about men waking up next to a wife with a different hairstyle and their toothpaste tasting different.[59]

Here, the museum attributes the legacy of flats in *Plattenbau* buildings as a part of East German heritage. While doing so, the museum also pokes fun at the extent that East Germans valued the opportunity to live in such flats. Joshua Atkinson notes similar instances of this in the "Everyday Life" section of the exhibition, in which he observes the museum addressing former GDR citizens "as dupes who were juvenile and acted out of hedonism."[60] Moreover, it also showcases heritage dissonance between those former GDR citizens who saw the flats as luxurious and the DDR Museum's stance towards *Plattenbau* flats today. As the museum is able to dictate how this past is presented, it could be said that it is, as Laurajane Smith describes, both "regulating and legitimizing" while "contesting and challenging a range of cultural and social identities, sense of place, collective memories, values and meanings."[61] In this case, the higher past value of living in a *Plattenbau* flat is being contested in the present, with the museum legitimizing ridicule towards it.

The style of the recreated flat is not very remarkable in itself, and recalls wallpaper, carpentry and furniture of the 1970s and 1980s. Guests are invited to touch, use and rummage through everything. At the center of the living room is a sofa with an antiquated pattern facing a wooden storage unit, which is described as being "the centre-piece of every living room."[62] Here, the museum again relies upon new technology and incorporates a touch screen into the wooden coffee table in front of the sofa, allowing visitors to select television programs from both East and West German television. Television shows are listed in the form of a daily broadcasting schedule in which time slots of particular shows are shown. East German broadcasting times and shows are shown on the left side of the screen, while West German stations ARD and ZDF are shown on the right with their respective programs during coinciding time slots. Upon selecting a particular program, the show will play on the television while the screen provides a short description of the

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[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Atkinson, "Hiding Hedonism in Plain Sight," 245.
[61] Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 82.
[62] Sören Möritz, et. al., *DDR Museum Guide,* 139.

program itself. On the back wall of the living room, the museum again employs technology to simulate the time period by having a door to a balcony and a screen showing a digitalized vista of an East Berlin suburb. In it, the sun is barely shining through the clouds, the sky is grey and rainy, and tall unimpressive buildings cast a shadow over everything.

In addition to the living area, visitors are also invited to walk into a recreated bathroom. Again, the bathroom is shown as an unimpressive room in the flat, sporting little more than what is necessary. This is acknowledged by the wall text in the bathroom, which says that GDR bathrooms were "nothing short of a functional miracle" that had to "be squeezed into the smallest possible space," with utilities made of plastic that "were either sometimes leaky or often blocked: sometimes both at the same time."[63] The simplicity of the bathroom is further exacerbated by the lack of any interactive technology in the room. However, the bathtub is open for visitors, and it is not uncommon to spot visitors standing inside the bathtub for a photo opportunity, as well as sitting on the toilet and twisting the water facets to see if they are functional.

Meanwhile, the kitchen presents itself as one of the most open and inviting portions of the exhibition. Every cabinet and drawer can be pulled open, many of which have various texts and objects within them that one might expect to find in a kitchen. Thus, visitors are encouraged and rewarded for exploration and discovery, with those opting to rummage through every shelf receiving additional stories and facts than those who choose not to. The museum also presents unique technology in the form of a digitalized fridge. Visitors who open the fridge are greeted with a transparent touch screen that asks them to touch the screen over one of the items behind the glass. When this is done, the screen lights up over the selected item with a short description about it, often pertaining to its availability in the GDR. For example, when selecting the carton of eggs, the screen tells visitors about the "eggless" beginnings of Socialism in the country, but towards the country's end East German breakfasts "satisfied even the most insatiable egg lover."[64] Next to the description, a chart displaying per-capita egg consumption is also included, which coincides with the statistics included in the text. Another cabinet, when opened, presents another touchscreen complete with recipes of dishes popular in the GDR. Several recipes are available, and visitors are even encouraged to print out any of them to try at home.

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[63] "Bad/The Bathroom," wall text, DDR Museum, Berlin, Germany.
[64] "An Egg A Day!," digital text, DDR Museum, Berlin, Germany.

Thus, the museum takes several steps to bring a version of everyday life in the GDR to visitors that is equally fun, enjoyable and informative. The museum's open layout, interactive and noisy games and videos, and opportunities for pictures create an environment where visitors are not only welcomed but encouraged to interact with others. With this in mind, the DDR Museum utilizes the GDR past to create first and foremost an experience for its visitors that focuses primarily on the everyday, with the emphasis lying on visitors and their own personal experiences they have within the museum. They are free to do as they wish in the spaces provided for them; they can rummage through the kitchen and act as if they are cooking, sit as a family in the living room and watch television, pretend to be interrogated by Stasi or answer calls as part of the Politburo, among others. The use of storytelling in display texts allows for visitors to more closely relate to the past, however it is often at the expense of actual facts and information.

However, the DDR Museum also adopts questionable tones at times towards former East German citizens and what they valued. Notably, the museum ridicules East Germans' value on material goods and possessions that, as is often described, do not function properly or are unspectacular despite their previous value. These prized possessions, such as owning a private *Plattenbau* flat that looks identical to others or a vehicle that is imagined as barely functionable, gives little consideration to the broader historical and political contexts of the time period, as well as the importance of the possessions to East German identity. Moreover, living spaces and homes in themselves are unique pending on the family that occupies them, yet the DDR Museum removes the experience of a given family and instead provides an experience with the flat for visitors. Additionally, ample opportunities are provided for visitors play along with trivializing East Germans' past life by haphazardly driving the Trabant, taking pictures in the recreated bathroom or by laughing at the available wardrobe. The games, such as the *Planspiel* and the game to create a "new socialist human," further poked fun at East Germans' complicity in the system; the *Planspiel* noted the material advantage of working such a job in the GDR (in which the visitor playing the game was often required to make illogical decisions), while the latter game gave players a ranking depending on how serious or ridiculous they dressed themselves. Therefore, while the DDR Museum does shed light on the unique everyday life of the GDR, it is done so with heavy pejorative undertones towards former East German citizens and with interactive exhibits that allow for visitors to participate in the process.

Analysis: The Zeitgeschichtliches Forum

The main exhibition at the Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, "Our History: Dictatorship and Democracy after 1945," takes a different approach towards the GDR past than the DDR Museum. Before stepping foot into the exhibition proper, the ZGF provides a host of questions for visitors to consider from beginning to end:

> **Our History: Dictatorship and Democracy after 1945**
>
> "Over four decades, until 1990, there were two German states: in the West, the Federal Republic of Germany, in the East, the German Democratic Republic, the GDR. Today, the country is united and a member of the European Union.
>
> The exhibition shows the history of the GDR and that of reunited Germany up to the present day: Why did the GDR come into being? Who was in power? How did people live, work, celebrate and quarrel? Why did hundreds of thousands leave the country? How did the state treat critics and dissidents? What brought about the downfall of the GDR? How has Germany been growing together again since 1990? Which issues and concerns move people today?"[65]

Firstly, the title of the exhibition itself provides for an interesting insight into ownership of GDR history. As it is titled "Our History," and with the ZGF being a part of the West German *Haus der Geschichte* foundation aiming to share history of the Federal Republic of Germany after 1945, the ZGF presents the GDR past as a form of national heritage. While the East-West German divide was undoubtedly a hallmark of the country's history in the second half of the 20th Century, there is ample room for concern for such an institution claim a legacy like the GDR as belonging to all Germans. As Black argues, museums "seeking to be inclusive of all the communities they serve […] are at risk of using the past purely to meet the needs of the present."[66] Indeed, suggesting complete national ownership of the GDR past could run risk of further affronting East German identity; locals that Daphne Berdahl interviewed, for example, often remarked that what was presented in the ZGF is not how they experienced the GDR.[67]

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[65] "Our History: Dictatorship and Democracy after 1945," wall text, Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.
[66] Black, "Museums, Memory and History," 425.
[67] Berdahl, "Expressions of Experience and Experiences of Expression," 161.

The text also sets the tone and narrative for the exhibition as a whole. Rather than the emphasis being placed on the everyday, it is clear that the ZGF focuses instead on the political aspects of the GDR, while the everyday remains only one section among others that, as will be seen, is primarily political in its presentation.

Within the ZGF is also a high degree of interactive material to engage visitors. This consists namely of videos, photos, audio, interviews, books, files and drawers to pull. Namely, the interactive features of the ZGF are used to provide visitors with additional information on topics should they be interested. Most commonly, oral interviews and testimonies from former East German residence provide firsthand accounts that supplement and support wall texts. Such personal testimonies help give credence to the narrative provided by museum.

With regards to the museum's collection itself, the ZGF has collected a wide array of objects and set pieces from the GDR, including objects used by high ranking SED politicians. One of the first of such objects is seen in the first room of the exhibition and dominates the space – a desk taken from former GDR President Wilhelm Pieck's office (Image 3) and a meeting place for the Politburo of the SED Central Committee.[68] Similar to the Politburo desk in the DDR Museum, this desk also acts as a dominating centerpiece of the room. However, there are no interactive screens to touch, telephones to pick up and drawers to pull like its counterpart in Berlin. The desk and chairs instead sit upon an elevated pedestal, dimly lit with the hammer-and-sickle emblem of the GDR positioned on a red painted wall over the table. Furthermore, a banner promoting the Soviet-GDR friendship hangs on the opposing wall. All of these pieces, it is explained, were authentic pieces that found use in the Politburo and by Wilhelm Pieck. The authenticity is additionally invoked in the desk's presentation. There are no signs explicitly telling visitors not to touch or sit at the desk, but its positioning, elevation, described importance as being Pieck's original desk, and glass displays covering objects on the desk disinvite visitors from interacting directly with it.

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[68] "Machtzentrum/Centre of Power," wall text, Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.

Image 3: The desk of former GDR President Wilhelm Pieck in the Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, photo by Levi Bochantin.

As the exhibition begins, a considerable amount of attention is devoted to the creation of the GDR state, the rise of the SED party and the party's consolidation of power. This political narrative is accompanied by exemplifying themes of suppression that distinguish the GDR regime from the political reality of modern-day Germany. The museum carries this out in the second room of the exhibition labeled "Instruments of Rule" (*Herrschaftinstrumente*), where the SED's methods of holding power is juxtaposed under sections that one would associate as tenets of democracy. These sections are labeled "Our Press is the Party," explaining how the GDR lacked freedom of the press; "We have open elections!," which underscores the absence of free and fair elections; and "Unity of People and Leadership," describing how the country was without political pluralism. Each of these sections emphasize how democratic values were consistently absent in the country. In discussing elections, for example, facts and figures about the National Front are provided, as well

as the act of "folding," in which most citizens voted simply by folding their ballot rather than risk being scrutinized or persecuted by dissenting. This information is supplemented with a black-and-white picture of a voting locale, including people waiting in line to vote and propaganda posters filling the building's wall, and a voting poster for the National Front.

Next to the displays of "Instruments of Rule" is a section titled "Approval Rituals." The centerpiece of this display is a large portrait of Joseph Stalin, said to be carried in an SED parade. To supplement the portrait, the museum provides a picture taken next to the portrait of a parade where the portrait is used in. Flanking the opposite side of the Stalin portrait are various banners, flags and drums that were used and held in parades and festivities in the GDR. Amongst the banners is a projected screen that explains to visitors how political organs of the country operated, such as the *Volkskammer*.

The exhibition then transitions into a portion labeled "Military Force," whose space is dominated by a large piece of artillery. The subsection begins with telling visitors about the prominence of paramilitary organizations operating within factories that swear allegiance to both the party and the state.[69] Accompanying this are standard GDR military uniforms, weaponry and a swear of allegiance that soldiers must recite upon being initiated into the military. However, the section quickly departs from aspects of military life and begins describing the military's use in suppressing citizens and organized resistance. To do so, the new exhibition features a large touchscreen showing a map of the former GDR's sites of resistance and protest during the 17 June 1953 uprising. Visitors are invited to touch one of the countless dots that mark locations of protests, allowing them to read site specific details and anecdotes, view images and watch video clips from that day. Additionally, the exhibition briefly mentions the problem of the country's brain drain and loss of skilled labor, primarily highlighting its influence on fortifying the inner-German Border and subsequently relocating thousands of residents in "Operation Vermin."[70] This focus on the inner-German border remains prevalent throughout the rest of the section, and includes a memorial resembling a tombstone from a man who was forced to relocate from his home in August 1961 under the operation. Rather than have a date of death, the tombstone shows the date the man was

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[69] "Kampfbereitschaft/Combat Readiness," wall text, Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.
[70] "Grenzausbau/Reinforcing the Borders," wall text, Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.

expelled from his home as the SED was "'purging' border areas again" during "Operation Consolidation."[71]

To show the functioning and extent of the inner-German border wall, the exhibition plays a 3D rendered film at the East German border town of Hötensleben. The film, portraying a gray and bleak scenario at the border town, explains every defense mechanism that fleeing Germans would encounter when attempting to cross the border. Upon explaining the setting of the border and surrounding village, the film explains the results of Operation Vermin through the border's use of landmines, turrets, armed guards and vehicles, among others.

Following this first portion of the exhibition, the museum departs from a precise chronological approach to the GDR once the construction of the Berlin Wall is established; the GDR state is consolidated, the Wall "closes off the GDR [and] the lifestyle of the West is now very remote."[72] Life in the GDR during the 1960s is described and shown as an era of high faith from the people for the country's future due to its economic and political stabilization.[73] However, much of what is shown points to this hope for the future as evidently doomed from the start. The idea of prosperity from the economic growth in the 1960s is questioned; although the state promoted manufacturing plastics as the future, "stereos, televisions, cameras and film projectors [were] all luxury goods that [were] difficult to acquire."[74] Additionally, the exhibition laments the fate of the GDR's Wartburg 311, an innovative vehicle that is difficult for citizens of the GDR to buy but is hoped to be "an export success."[75] The centerpiece of this room, an actual green and white Wartburg, sits in the corner backed by 60s-themed GDR street photos and a neon sign. A nearby map shows the number of the cars exported to other countries, yet no number is provided for how many are sold within the GDR.

Thereafter, everyday life comes to the forefront of the exhibition. This section seeks to look at the reality of daily life in the GDR which "usually looks different" than the mantras that "promise a better life under socialism."[76] However, the title of this section, "Agony and Erosion: Everyday in the GDR (the 1970s/80s)," should also be mentioned again as it provides clues as to how this portion on GDR *Alltag* might be displayed. Additionally, despite the second half of the

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[71] "Mahnmal/Memorial," wall text, Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.
[72] "Zukunftshoffnung/Hopes for the Future," wall text, Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.
[73] Ibid.
[74] "Wohlstand?/Prosperity?," wall text, Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.
[75] "Luxus/Luxury," wall text, Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.
[76] "Anspruch und Wirklichkeit/Ambition and Reality," wall text, Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.

title emphasizing the *Alltag*, the section also ends by touching upon surveillance and, once again, political opposition against the regime, this time in the form of famous political dissidents.

The section begins with a large picture nearby showing a group of East German factory workers smiling at the camera, and another picture sitting behind a glass window and showing a worker stoking a flame next to machinery, as if one is peering through the factory's window. During this part of the exhibition, the museum begins to expand upon the interactive displays that were showcased earlier by providing objects and furniture that visitors are welcome to touch. A closet with a few articles of clothing allows visitors to try on GDR apparel and see how they look in a mirror with GDR slogans surrounding it. Later, the education portion features a semi-recreated classroom with several chairs and desks facing a projected screen at the front, playing a looping video of a teacher's lecture on how the BRD attempts to sabotage the socialist regime. The section additionally holds a room that explains living in the GDR through a partially recreated living room with a sofa, table with magazines, television and décor. Visitors are allowed to sit and rest on the sofa, explore drawers and cabinets, and read from magazines on the table.

Moreover, countless everyday objects are held behind glass. Seemingly innocent items are placed with a purpose and their context for being within the exhibition is often justified through wall texts. In the recreated living room, a glass display holds a pair of red wellington boots that are described as being necessary due to the constant construction of new apartment blocks, with two photographs above showing citizens wearing the boots in such environments. Another display of GDR clothing and fashion is accompanied by propagandic slogans, signs and pictures, including flags celebrating the 1st of May and a large slogan saying "Trade makes the political weather!" (German: *Der Handel macht das politische Wetter!*). A few wall texts note the failures of the GDR's fashion industry. The "planned economy cannot keep the pace with changes in fashion. Quality, appeal and adequate supply all suffer"[77]; GDR jean brands fail because "consumers crticise the fabric, the colour and the lack of decorative detail" leading to Erich Honecker allowing Western jean imports in 1978[78]; and the state fashion institute, in an attempt "to create lines clearly distinct from Western trends," fails to meet consumer needs as the planned economy serves as "a hindrance to the fast-paced world of fashion."[79] Lastly, a large display under a sign for the GDR

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[77] "Am Trend vorbei/Trend? What Trend?," wall text, Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.

[78] "Zugeständnis/Concession," wall text, Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.

[79] "Maßstab/Touchstone," wall text, Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.

grocery store *Konsum* contains a wide array of products that were commonplace on East German store shelves (Image 4). Shopping is described as an undertaking requiring "time, instinct and steady nerves" as "consumers must queue up" and "often […] don't get what they came for or the quality leaves much to be desired."[80] Next to the display is a store sign saying "No products today" (German: *Heute keine Ware*) that was used when stores failed to receive fresh deliveries, a sight that "increasingly irritated" citizens.[81] Outrage over products is also mentioned with regards other products, such as *Kaffee Mix*, a brand introduced that contained "51 per cent roasted coffee imported by the GDR upon payment of hard currency, and 49 per cent replacement ingredients."[82] The product is said to have caused such opposition that "consumers [petitioned] the SED and other state authorities – with success."[83] Moreover, special attention is devoted to stores such as *Delikat* and Intershops; *Delikat* stores are described as sites offering "premium foodstuffs" that cause discontent as products slowly move to them[84], while Intershops are described as "spaces of longing" and "mini-West" stores "initially reserved for foreigners and West Germans" until 1974.[85]

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[80] "Geduldsprobe/A Test of Patience," wall text, Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.
[81] "Hinweise/Signs," wall text, Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.
[82] "Mogelpackung/Ersatz," wall text, Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.
[83] Ibid.
[84] "Köstlichkeiten/Delicacies," wall text, Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.
[85] "Sehnsuchtsort/Spaces of Longing," wall text, Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.

Image 4: A display of everyday store items in the Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, photo by Levi Bochantin.

Once the section on everyday life is complete, the exhibition shifts back to themes of repression and resistance. A corridor between the two sections provides a large display of two famous critics of the GDR whose citizenship was revoked: singer Wolf Biermann and writer Robert Havemann. One wall is made up of names of several GDR dissidents and the years they either fled, had their citizenship revoked or were expelled from the country. In the center is a screen playing loops of West German news stations reporting on various expellees from the GDR, including a large segment on Biermann himself. Opposite from the wall is a large display featuring several books in multiple languages of famous dissident writers of the GDR, many of which are by Havemann. This corridor leads to a larger room focused entirely on surveillance and Stasi operations within the state. Located here is a large van outfitted for surveillance and arresting individuals, as well as a wall of televisions showing footage from surveillance cameras. As Berdahl mentions, the

relatively small portion devoted to the GDR *Alltag* is "sandwiched between depictions of successful escapes and an exhibit devoted to the Stasi."[86]

However, it must be mentioned that the everyday life section is much larger in size than the portion concerning resistance and surveillance. In returning to the title of this third section, "Agony and Erosion," consideration must be given to what was particularly described as agonizing. The section on everyday life namely focuses around consumption; what products were available and scarcities that took place play a major role in retelling this past. Moreover, much time is devoted to yearning for West German products and packages sent from the West, whether it be styles of jeans, luxury goods or food. There does not, however, seem to be much describing East German life as one of agony, were it not for such descriptions provided for the section:

Consumption and Shortages

Crumbling facades, bleak new housing estates, shop windows with little on display and smog in the air: everyday lives in the GDR continue to be a struggle, despite all the promises of SED propaganda.

[…]

The flaws of 'real socialism' are revealed above all by a comparison with the West. Many yearn for a life beyond the norm. With creativity and stubbornness, some manage to make use of the few opportunities.[87]

Before even setting foot in the section, a picture is painted of the GDR as a state struggling to survive. Indeed, the description entirely lacks any positive attributes concerning East German life, something that is followed upon by the individual display texts exemplified previously. Additionally, the text further sets the tone for exploring aspects of repression and resistance even in everyday life, which has been shown through displays of yearning for particular clothing, product shortages and desires for Western products. It is also helpful to be reminded of historical and political contexts during this time as presented in Chapter 2; the 1970s provided a time of relative liberalization for the GDR, allowing for importing more products from the West and easing up on art and literature censorship, and a time in which the country's economic growth briefly overtook the West's. Moreover, the context of the GDR's state consolidation, *détente*, Willy

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[86] Berdahl, "Expressions of Experience and Experiences of Expression," 159.
[87] "Konsum und Mangel/Consumption and Shortages," wall text, Zeitgeschictliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.

Brandt's visits to the East and the GDR's international recognition are absent in the exhibition. Instead, the exhibition suspends its chronological approach from retelling the political history from the 1960s until exactly 1976, in which it returns briefly to the expulsion of GDR musician Wolf Biermann. Thereafter, the exhibition grapples the aforementioned topic of surveillance and Stasi, until it suddenly arrives at the late-1980s with Glasnost, Perestroika and the Peaceful Revolution.

The focus of the exhibition in the ZGF, as made clear by the exhibition's title, is the characteristics of the GDR as a dictatorship and its path to transforming into a democracy. In taking this political stance towards the GDR, the exhibition emphasizes themes of oppression and resistance consistently throughout. This is despite the fact that resistance was not regarded as a major characteristic of GDR society; indeed, as described in Chapter 2, East Germany did not showcase the level of protests and resistance that other East Bloc countries did, with many believing that more emphasis was needed to reform the communist system rather than abandon it.[88] Through these themes, the ZGF turns the East German past into a story of continuous struggle against an oppressive regime, even to the extent that everyday life is described as agony. The look into the everyday life also coincides with the exhibition's focus, as even Berdahl remarks that GDR consumer culture following the *Wende* "contributed to a dominant narrative of 'democratization' and national legitimacy," with the possibility to access certain goods and choices being "defined as fundamental rights and democratic expressions of individualism."[89] The choice of displaying *Kaffee-Mix* as a cause for mounting opposition against the state for better coffee, or prioritizing *Delikat* stores and Intershops as sites of struggle or triumph for consumer rights, serves to looking at even everyday life through a political lens.

Nonetheless, the ZGF excels at presenting major political developments in the GDR and following reunification in a thorough manner that is still engaging. Media and interactivity are used to supplement the exhibition, and a particular emphasis is placed on oral testimony and biographical narrative. Films used, such as that demonstrating the defensive measures of the inner German border, were informative, yet simultaneously casted division and dictatorship as defining characteristics of the GDR. At its essence, the ZGF appears to comply with much of the language and requirements of both the Federal Memorial Concept and the Sabrow Report; there is little to

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[88] Maier, *Dissolution*, 37.

[89] Daphne Berdahl, "The Spirit of Capitalism and the Boundaries of Citizenship in Post-Wall Germany," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 47, no. 2 (2005): 235.

no "reflection of the positive memories of social and economic security," and its function as a museum is a pedagogical institution that promotes public history as a "part of political education."[90] Moreover, Jones notes the stance by the Haus der Geschichte foundation to oppose "the 'trivialization' of the dictatorship" through displaying objects from the everyday and overemphasizing everyday life.[91] Thus, the ZGF's narrative of a failing dictatorship, state oppression and popular resistance presents itself as both a product of state memorialization policy as well as institutional decisions on what should be remembered of the GDR and what should be forgotten.

Conclusion

Between the two institutions, there are clear lines of divergence as well as convergence in how they approach topics of the GDR. As has been made clear this chapter, each institution approaches the country's GDR legacy in a particular way, through a particular lens and with various methods. The DDR Museum undoubtedly chooses aspects of GDR everyday life to display in the museum, with broader political and social contexts mentioned when necessary, often through interactive methods. However, perhaps more important for the DDR Museum are the individual experiences had by visitors; arguably, this aspect of the museum takes precedence over the actual matter of GDR everyday life, as the exhibition's interactivity and opportunities for unique experiences are featured more prominently in its online and physical advertising. Meanwhile, the ZGF ensures that what is shown and discussed within its exhibition is placed within a political context. The political context provided, however, is heavily centered around oppression and characteristics of the GDR dictatorship as well as a narrative of resistance by GDR citizens that eventually led to German reunification. In some cases, the exhibition either omits or does not focus on particular historical and social contexts in the GDR during the respective time periods, namely time periods where, as some historians note, the GDR economy grew or there were thaws in oppression.

With this in mind, two vastly different processes of heritagization emerge from both the DDR Museum and the ZGF. Along with the DDR Museum's focus on the GDR everyday comes the proliferation of heritage revolving around objects and what former GDR citizens valued. Primarily, what is described as valuable comes in the form of material objects that are described

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[90] Jones, "(Extra)ordinary Life."
[91] Ibid.

as unremarkable or barely functioning. In this case, the museum chooses to attribute such objects as defining characteristics of East German heritage. In effect, this East German heritage becomes a source of laughs and ridicule by the museum, which is further targeted by visitors' ability to act and interact with objects and the spaces as they please. The depiction of the outside world in the GDR being grey and monotonous creates a sense that East Germans' private sphere, along with these material objects they possessed, were their only source of value and enjoyment.

Meanwhile, through the ZGF's focus on retelling the political history of the GDR, the institution attributes the SED dictatorship and a struggle against oppression as not only East German heritage, but national heritage as well. As has been shown, even sections such as on everyday life are in some way put into a context of oppression from a dictatorship and open resistance, even to the point where the section is called "Agony and Erosion." Indeed, everyday life is described as a "struggle,"[92] education became a "struggle for peace,"[93] and East Germans yearn for Western products.[94] As opposed to the DDR Museum, there is no room for nostalgia in the exhibition; aspects such as retreating to a dacha are acts of defying "state control over how free time is organised,"[95] and even the opening of new gardens becomes a struggle that East Germans had to overcome.[96]

Additionally, the institutions differ greatly in how they transmit cultural memory of the GDR past and who provides these memories. The DDR Museum does not make use of oral interviews. Instead, when tasked with retelling the past, the museum takes a storytelling approach that paints a picture for visitors and aids them in interacting with displays. If no oral testimonies are consulted and only input from historians are given, then much of these stories exist in the hypothetical and are not grounded entirely in a citizen's experience. Meanwhile, the ZGF brings the biographical approach to the forefront of its museum layout. Nearly every section contains recorded interviews of former GDR citizens describing their past lives, or audio recordings that can be listened to. Moreover, oral testimonies, images and videos are used in a supplementary fashion that provide credence to objects and texts on display, rather than being a main focal point of the exhibition as in the DDR Museum.

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[92] "Konsum und Mangel/Consumption and Shortages," wall text.

[93] "Bildung und Erziehung/Education and Training," wall text, Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.

[94] "Sehnsuchtsort/Spaces of Longing," wall text.

[95] "Rückzugsort/Place of Refuge," wall text, Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.

[96] "Umdenken/A Change of Heart," wall text, Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.

Moreover, there is also a difference in perceived authenticity in the exhibitions. While the DDR Museum does contain a number of objects from the GDR both behind glass and to touch, there is an emphasis on recreated space, particularly in the "Life in the Tower Block" section. The ZGF, on the other hand, establishes authenticity by the actual objects themselves. The most notable example are the Politburo desks, as both institutions contain them in some form. In the DDR Museum's case, the desk is presented in the middle of the "Party and State" section, and it is refitted with interactable touch screens, ringing phones with people speaking on the other end, and drawers that visitors can pull and explore. The ZGF also presents a similar desk, but is described as being the official desk of Wilhelm Pieck, a former President of the GDR. Its prescription of being the desk of a former official establishes the authenticity the institution needs, and under a political context. The Politburo desk in the DDR Museum, on the other hand, establishes its authenticity through recreation and affecting senses of touch and sound.

Thus, both museums are left with their own take on the GDR and with varied goals. As a private institution, the DDR Museum's inclusion of interactivity and entertainment as a way of engaging visitors provides not only a way of retelling the past but tapping into Berlin's museum scene and plentiful international tourism. By locating itself close to some of the city's most visited museums, the DDR Museum has been able to establish itself as one of the most successful museums in the country. The DDR Museum also established itself during a time where the city's GDR museum landscape consisted only of Stasi prisons and memorials to a once divided city. Meanwhile, the ZGF, having been built well before the DDR Museum, has been publicly funded under the *Haus der Geschichte* foundation. The foundation, being based in Bonn and commissioned in 1982 under Helmet Kohl "with a conservative and hence controversial agenda,"[97] originally established the ZGF in Leipzig due to its role in history with the 1989 Monday Demonstrations. Being located at the site of the greatest show of resistance in the former GDR, as well as being part of a publicly funded foundation focused on collecting post-1945 German history, likely both contribute to its narrative of resistance against dictatorship and its focus on establishing the GDR as shared national heritage.

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[97] Berdahl, "Expressions of Experience and Experiences of Expression," 158.

Discussion and Conclusion

Representations of the GDR past in German museums can vary greatly in their approach and narratives. The way in which museums present the past matters greatly, as they can be considered key players in deciding what belongs to national heritage, who it belongs to or what should be a part of national heritage at all. The continued debate on how to present the GDR past while giving heed to both the everyday lived experience of GDR citizens and the political contexts of the time can be regarded as a culmination of several factors. Sharp and immediate economic integration through privatizing properties and national assets, leading to the shutdown of thousands of employers in the east and many East Germans without jobs threatened East German identity. Expectations in both the east and west of a smooth and swift catchup were not met. And for many years following reunification, most of the attention devoted to remembering the GDR in museums revolved around state surveillance and division. This in part pertains to the comparison of dictatorships that followed much of the post-reunification *Aufarbeitung,* or the reworking of the GDR past.[1] With the establishment of a commission on *Aufarbeitung*, much focus was given to the SED leadership which "was used to much more inclusively to mean the 'GDR as dictatorship.'"[2] In the context of the exhibitions looked at, this is undoubtedly evident in the title of the ZGF's exhibition "Democracy and Dictatorship" and its emphasis on state involvement in everyday life. Thus, the context prior to the opening of either the ZGF or the DDR Museum hinted that presenting the GDR in a museum would receive criticism regardless of the angle the museum took. Such contention over a relatively recent past could be more of a motivator for remembrance, however, as "social energy driving [remembrance] is arguably generated as much by dissensus as by consensus […] with the desire to assert something in face of its possible denial."[3]

Heritage itself is a continuous process of picking and choosing which pasts should be re-presented and passed on to the public. Moreover, it is defined by who holds ownership over it; it is something "defined by selection and ownership."[4] Additionally, as Laurajane Smith notes, heritage is inherently dissonant, always both "regulating and legitimizing" and "contesting and

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[1] Anselma Gallinat, *Narratives in the Making: Writing the East German Past in the Democratic Present* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 41.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ann Rigney, "Remembrance as remaking: memories of the nation revisited," *Nations and Nationalism* 24, no. 2 (2018): 244.

[4] Kristin Kuutma, "Concepts and Contingencies in Heritage Politics," 4.

challenging a range of cultural and social identities, senses of place, collective memories, values and meanings."[5] Also important for heritage is the accompanying discourse, whether it be by private or public institutions, leading figures or media outlets. Public debates held over how to remember the GDR, such as through *Aufarbeitung* or commissions like those producing the Sabrow Report, have an influence on how people relate to the past as heritage.

Meanwhile, cultural memory is a past that is remembered, reaching "back […] only so far as it can be reclaimed as 'ours.'"[6] It does not, according to Jan Assmann, "change with the passing of time," instead having fixed points in time that it recollects upon.[7] Furthermore, cultural memory in particular is mediated through various, manmade creations, such as texts, symbols, signs, films and photos.[8] Therefore, it has particular importance in the realm of museology, as museums can help define "a community's memories of its collective past."[9]

Of course, institutions themselves do not have memories, but "'make' one for themselves with the aid of memorial signs such as symbols, texts, images, rites, ceremonies, places, and monuments" that "'construct' an identity."[10] Regarding the two institutions examined, there are evident uses of GDR remembrance in constructing a narrative that drive the exhibitions. The DDR Museum's use of recreated space and atmosphere, as well as its *Geschichte zum Anfassen* help to provide a feeling of being a part of history by allowing visitors to interact with memories the museum shares while simultaneously creating their own memories. Moreover, the museum employs textual narratives that are rather abstract and not grounded in a particular lived experience; they are often fictious, sometimes humorous scenarios written by the museum itself. Not only does this form of storytelling coincide with the entertaining nature of the exhibition, but it also coincides with the museum's aim in allowing visitors to create their own unique experiences throughout. Meanwhile, the ZGF's underlying narrative of resistance and repression guide the rest of the exhibition to follow suit. In many cases, objects chosen to be put on display coincide with this narrative both in the nature of the object itself and the accompanying text. Most evidently, this was the case in the section on GDR everyday life, where many objects that were not inherently political were attributed some political characteristic through their presentation and text that fit with the

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[5] Laurajane Smith, "Uses of Heritage," 82.
[6] Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," 38.
[7] Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 126.
[8] Erll and Rigney, "Introduction: Cultural Memory and its Dynamics," 1.
[9] Black, "Museums, Memory and History," 419.
[10] Aleida Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory," 55.

museum's narrative, such as a particular item not being in supply due to economic failures or products being introduced due to popular resistance.

Heritage of the GDR is thus being created in the DDR Museum through the selection of items on display, how they are made interactive and what accompanying pretext to each display is given, often, as highlighted, provided through storytelling. While the museum chooses to focus on the everyday and subsequently displays objects from everyday GDR life, this does not necessarily mean that the museum trivializes the political GDR past; indeed, as Arnold-de Simine notes in 2013, "the GDR remembrance landscape is slowly but increasingly diversifying."[11] This diversity in presentation in the DDR Museum is likewise evident, albeit secondary to everyday life. However, the ways in which the museum allows visitors to interact with displays, as well as the included storytelling narratives that accompany displays at times work against creating GDR heritage that is respectful to those who lived through the experience. For example, while including the Trabant as a part of the museum and GDR heritage makes sense due to its widespread use, the interactive simulation, allowing visitors to drive recklessly through an East Berlin "empty and without any real features,"[12] and its wall text describing it as "cardboard on wheels" with a fuel gauge big enough only to be seen by a "diminutive rodent," transform the Trabant into comedic heritage for entertainment purposes. Such heritage risks ridiculing the value systems of former East German citizens and creating a museum space where, as Berdahl says, "visitors from the East cannot find themselves here."[13]

In a similar fashion, the ZGF creates heritage through the objects chosen on displays, the written contexts and, although much less the case than the DDR Museum, interactivity and multimedia. In using an automobile example once again, the ZGF, rather than choosing to display the much more commonplace Trabant as part of its exhibition, instead chooses to include the Wartburg, a much more luxurious car for the time period that was capable of finding "buyers in the West" and one that the SED hoped to be "an export success."[14] In addition, a map showing the vehicle's exports abroad and a drawing of a GDR man yearning for a Wartburg he sees in an Arab country are featured next to the car, continuing to emphasize the car's importance. This entire display coincides with the narrative of repression from a rather Western perspective; no numbers

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[11] Simine, "Mediating Memory in the Museum," 165.
[12] Atkinson, "Hiding Hedonism in Plain Sight," 245.
[13] Berdahl, Expressions of Experience and Experiences of Expression," 161.
[14] "Luxus/Luxury." Wall text, Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig, Germany.

of Wartburg ownership within the GDR are told. In this way, technological innovations in the GDR are turned into a heritage of having little benefit for actual GDR citizens while their main purpose becomes creating a crumbling economy afloat. With regards to multimedia, the animated film on the defenses of the inner-German border wall similarly fall in line with a narrative of repression and resistance, while also invoking rather traumatic imagery; several layers of barricades, landmine placements and detonations, rendering attack dogs in 3D and armed guardsmen waiting to shoot at border towers all emphasize repressive tactics used by the GDR and the need for resistance.

In short, both the DDR Museum and the ZGF have their own approach to retelling GDR history. The DDR Museum, though focusing on the everyday, also includes some historical and political contexts to its exhibition. However, the cultural memory it draws upon at times are presented in the form of storytelling that is recreated without specific personal testimony. However, cultural memory "can only ever indicate memorial processes that pass through social formations."[15] In this case, the DDR Museum chooses to pass this cultural memory on through unique interactive experiences. As memory is created "through the mutual interactions of the past on the present and the present on the past,"[16] it is not only the memory provided by the museum that affects visitors, but visitors' own experiences with the past that can affect and sway cultural memory. Therefore, while the act of presenting the everyday in the GDR is not inherently problematic, the potential creation of a GDR heritage that devalues important aspects of everyday lives of GDR citizens could continue to create dissonance with those who have lived or passed down experience in the former East.

Meanwhile, the ZGF takes a firm stance on retelling the political history of the GDR and its transformation from a dictatorship to reuniting with the West. The exhibition draws heavily on oral testimonies of those who lived in the GDR, taking a biographical approach that the DDR Museum chooses to avoid. However, the ZGF draws primarily from memories of state repressions and open resistance in the GDR, despite the country not experiencing the levels of open resistance that some of its Central European neighbors witnessed. In coinciding with this narrative, the museum establishes GDR heritage with objects, images and wall texts that highlight instances of state repression, cases of GDR resistance as well as reliance upon the West for its economic

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[15] Simine, "Mediating Memory in the Museum," 22.
[16] Ibid 18-19.

stability. This is even the case, as highlighted strongly in Chapter 3, with representations of the GDR *Alltag*, where objects that would otherwise not hold political characteristics are attributed with moments of scarcity, boycott or yearning for Western products. Additionally, historical contexts that reflect positive developments within the GDR are either omitted or quickly downplayed. The GDR heritage that the ZGF produces becomes a rather binary picture of a dictatorship involving 41 years of continuous struggle by everyday East Germans in order to realize a dream of democracy.

Thus, both institutions have demonstrated to produce their own heritage and subsequent potential for dissonance. Indeed, one could argue that each institution has an additional competing focus to their exhibitions on top of the GDR past: the DDR Museum touting its interactivity and unique visitor experiences, and the ZGF displaying the transitions of former East Bloc countries from dictatorships to democracies through the case of former East Germany. While the instances for dissonance that were suggested may be seen as a negative, it also must be noted again of the expanse of GDR museums that has taken place since the opening of the DDR Museum in 2006. The *Haus der Geschichte* foundation itself has opened two new museums since 2010, the *Tränenpalast* and *Alltag in der DDR*, both focusing on particular aspects within the GDR (the latter being the foundation's take on the everyday). *Alltag* museums have sprung up in other cities outside of Berlin, such as Dresden's *Die Welt der DDR* and the *Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR* in Eisenhüttenstadt. Other museums focus on more niche aspects of the GDR, such as the *Berliner DDR Motorrad Museum*, displaying models of motorocycles, mopeds and scooters from the GDR. Regardless, the number of museums pertaining to GDR history in one form or another has certainly expanded in recent years, many of which also lack literature and research in the realm of memory and heritage studies.

Personally, as a museum-goer I found both exhibitions to be thoroughly entertaining and to my liking. Despite the DDR Museum's relatively small size, the amount of content crammed into the space was quite remarkable, and its pacing felt appropriate with plenty of moments to stop and admire the space and exhibition as a whole. However, there were times that, despite the level of interaction providing ample amusement, I genuinely questioned what such games and interactivity were teaching the public. In many instances, such as the game to create an ideal socialist citizen, informing the public felt secondary to providing entertainment. The ZGF, in contrast, was full of information available to visitors depending on how long they wished to spend

in the exhibition. In many cases, I found myself taking breaks from the displays to watch the videos and interviews, or read the supplementary books and catalogues placed throughout. Nonetheless, the strong narrative and political stance taken by the institution was evident throughout, and at times I felt the institution tugging at my emotions to change my own outlook of Germany's history and have it coincide more with the museum's. While this is usually the case with such narrative driven museums, I felt it particularly stronger in the ZGF and certainly with more political undertones.

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This thesis presented two cases of heritagization processes occurring in the German museum landscape on the GDR through a content analysis of the DDR Museum and Zeitgeschichtliches Forum. While the analysis provides several examples of how both museums are creating GDR heritage, it undoubtedly could be expanded upon. Namely, further analyses could be completed through interviews with museum workers and tour guides, as well as interacting with visitors. This was originally planned for this research; however, issues arising with receiving ethics approval from the university prevented any collected information through interviews or human interaction to be used in this thesis.

Despite German reunification closely approaching its 30th anniversary, further research into the country's commemoration of the GDR past remains relevant to this day. The divide between the eastern and western *Bundesländer* persists today; economic growth in the east has stagnated, and the region has continued to fair worse in employment and production. Economics aside, the eastern *Bundesländer* have lately been the site of political victories by the right-wing *Alternative für Deutschland* party, as well as demonstrations and violence by far-right groups, as witnessed in the 2018 protests in Chemnitz. At times, this rather negative representation of the east is reflected in German media, creating further social divide in a country that struggled to socially integrate east and west in the years after reunification.

Therefore, how German museums choose to reflect upon and present the GDR matters greatly, and can have future repercussions in bridging east-west social and cultural divides. This could be overcome by increasing consideration of former East German identity building and values, while simultaneously ensuring that proper political, economic and social contexts of the

times are not excluded. Markers of identity, such as a value on production, the importance of workplace in community building, and a value on GDR products that remained unchanged for years[17] could be given more precedence in exhibitions on the GDR *Alltag*, while grounding them in political developments happening within the GDR and in neighboring countries. Additionally, as was the case with both institutions, the GDR past is often looked through a modern, Western lens. In some cases, as demonstrated in Chapter 3, certain historical contexts that may reflect positively on the GDR are excluded in favor of emphasizing a need for Western imports, or the fragility of products that East Germans once valued are emphasized and ridiculed, as was the case in both institutions. This balancing act between ensuring that both former East German identity and values are respected and that the appropriate historical, political, social and economic contexts are not trivialized will be a difficult yet necessary challenge for German museums to address in the coming years.

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[17] Berdahl, "'(N)Ostalgie' for the Present," 194-5.

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