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Reimagining Everyday Life in the GDR

Post-Ostalgia in Contemporary German Films and Museums

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Reimagining Everyday Life in the GDR:

Post-Ostalgia in Contemporary German Films and Museums

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Abstract

In the last decade, everyday life in the GDR has undergone a mnemonic reappraisal following the *Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption des Bundes* in 2008. No longer a source of unreflective nostalgia for reactionaries, it is now being represented as a more nuanced entity that reflects the complexities of socialist society. The black and white narratives that shaped cultural memory of the GDR during the first fifteen years after the *Wende* have largely been replaced by more complicated tones of grey. Films and museums depicting the quotidian in East Germany have advanced this transformation of the everyday, as they instigate vital public discourses on how to remember the GDR.

By focussing on objects and narratives as transmitters of memory, this thesis brings together museums and films in order to investigate the process of cultural memory formation. This comparative approach, which brings together seven museum and eight film case studies from the last decade, thus demonstrates wider trends in the German memory landscape pertaining to the GDR. Although both nostalgic and hegemonic accounts persist, this thesis finds that memory of East Germany is undergoing a process of democratisation, pluralisation and 'normalisation', which I call *post-ostalgia*. This is particularly illustrated by a rise in biographical and regionalised remembering in films and museums, in which counter-mnemonic readings of East Germany come to the fore. More pluralistic and balanced representations of the quotidian in the GDR are also emerging through a renegotiation of memory icons and narratives. By contesting the idea of a distinct East German identity and challenging Cold War-rooted stereotypes about former GDR citizens, visual culture is dismantling the notion of the GDR as the 'other' Germany. Instead, as this thesis demonstrates, East Germany is in the process of being normalised in cultural memory by approximation to Western societal norms.

I hereby declare that this thesis is the results of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. All other sources are acknowledged by bibliographic references. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree unless, as agreed by the University, for approved dual awards.

Yr wyf drwy hyn yn datgan mai canlyniad fy ymchwil fy hun yw'r thesis hwn, ac eithrio lle nodir yn wahanol. Caiff ffynonellau eraill eu cydnabod gan droednodiadau yn rhoi cyfeiriadau eglur. Nid yw sylwedd y gwaith hwn wedi cael ei dderbyn o'r blaen ar gyfer unrhyw radd, ac nid yw'n cael ei gyflwyno ar yr un pryd mewn ymgeisiaeth am unrhyw radd oni bai ei fod, fel y cytunwyd gan y Brifysgol, am gymwysterau deuol cymeradwy.

1 Introduction

Remembering the GDR has been a highly contested topic in unified Germany. In the first fifteen years after the *Wende*, the shorthand pairs of binary oppositions of 'black and white', 'terror and everyday' or '*Ostalgie* and *Unrechtsstaat*' have summarised the cultural, political and societal clash between top-down, i.e. state sanctioned from above, and bottom-up memory of the GDR, i.e. of 'ordinary citizens' from below. Due to the temporal proximity of the socialist state and the vast number of eyewitnesses still alive today, many contrasting and sometimes opposing memories from above and below have been competing for a prominent place in the cultural remembrance of the former East. In this highly political power struggle for mnemonic recognition, east Germans sought to salvage the legacy of their personal biographies within the GDR by focussing exclusively on their de-politicised everyday lives and material culture of the GDR, while west Germans defended the hard-earned democratic values of the Federal Republic by exposing the oppressive nature of the East German state.

Visual culture, in particular films and museums, has played a pivotal role in shaping our understanding of East Germany, and the way in which we remember the socialist state. As a result of the power struggle of the 1990s, mediated memory in recent filmic and museal representations has recognised more varied forms of experience of the East, highlighting a process of democratisation, pluralisation and 'normalisation' of remembering the GDR in the contemporary German public arena. Current examples include the exhibition project *Erfahrung DDR! Mitmachen & Ausstellen* in Görlitz in 2016/7 and the 2017 cinema release *Vorwärts immer*. The exhibition initiative in Görlitz has offered former East Germans a public platform to display their private memories and material remnants of life under socialism in the border town of Görlitz. Organised by and held at the state-funded *Kulturhistorisches Museum Görlitz*, this temporary exhibition illustrates that the former dichotomy between top-down and bottom-up memory is vanishing. The motto of the project 'Alles, nur keine Ostalgie' allowed local participants to share their memories of various aspects of life in East Germany, ranging from 'Kindheit, Jugend' to 'Ordnung, Sicherheit, Staatssicherheit' as provided by the museum.[1] Additional explanatory texts gave historical contexts and background information on the various realms of life in the dictatorship to avoid purely nostalgic reminiscence and instead critically engage with socialism without devaluing the individual experience of East Germans

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[1] Görlitzer Sammlungen für Geschichte und Kultur, *Das Projekt* (Görlitz: Görlitzer Sammlungen für Geschichte und Kultur, 2016) < http://erfahrung-ddr.de/#projekt> [accessed 12 November 2017]

in a collaborative and inclusive mnemonic space. The 2017 film *Vorwärts immer* joins the ranks of humoristic engagements with the GDR and its authorities in film by telling the story of a Honecker double trying to retract the shoot-to-kill order against protesters in Leipzig in 1989. As one of the main cast members Josefine Preuß put it: 'Wenn man gelernt hat, über Hitler zu lachen, dann muss auch das [laughing about Honecker] möglich sein.'[2]

These two recent cultural productions are symptomatic for contemporary cultural memory of the GDR and offer a point of departure for several broader questions, which this thesis seeks to answer. To what extent, how and why has cultural memory of East Germany democratised, pluralised and normalised since the 1990s? Is the increasing temporal distance from the GDR beginning to enable a decreasingly emotionally charged memory culture around the GDR in unified Germany that enables a more balanced form of remembrance as opposed to the 1990s? How do museums and films shape our understanding of the GDR past and drive forward shifts in the cultural memory of East Germany? Which role has politics played in this process, in particular, the *Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption des Bundes* from 2008? Seven museum and eight film case studies from contemporary Germany form the basis of analysis in this thesis. By closely reading and comparing the object compositions in filmic mise-en-scènes and museal exhibitions in conjunction with the narratives produced, this research identifies and places shifts in remembering everyday life in the GDR in dialogue, arguing that memory of the GDR has entered an age of post-ostalgia. Before addressing the central questions of the thesis, this introductory chapter will establish the background for the following discussion by exploring the role of the GDR in German cultural memory and the depiction of East Germany in visual media since the *Wende*. This will help illustrating the gradual shift in the remembrance of the GDR that has led to post-ostalgic memory.

1.1 The GDR within German Cultural Memory

Understanding the dichotomy between memory from above and below after unification means to consider the political and ideological divide between East and West before the *Wende*. Dominic Boyer sees the roots of the mnemonic clash of the 1990s in the Cold War divide and internalised propaganda against the 'other' Germany in both the GDR and the Federal Republic. He argues that '[g]iven the domination of West Germans and FRG social institutions

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[2] Annika Schönstädt, 'DDR-Film "Vorwärts immer" feiert Premiere', *Berliner Morgenpost*, 12 October 2017, <https://www.morgenpost.de/berlin/leute/article212209307/DDR-Film-Vorwaerts-immer-feiert-Premiere.html> [accessed 12 November 2017]

over all domains of life in eastern Germany, the FRG Cold War social imagination has become the inheritance of unified German public culture'.[3] This can explain trends in German memory politics in the first fifteen years after unification, in particular the understanding of the East as the 'other' in official remembrance of the GDR. Some scholars draw on post-colonial theory to take Boyer's interpretation a step further. Referring to the cultural colonisation of the former East after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Oana Godeanu-Kenworthy writes that 'Easterners had to adapt to new realities and to new rules of social interaction, and saw their original culture either ignored, disparaged or relegated to the realm of the margins, of the forgotten, of obsolescence.'[4] Paul Cooke has emphasised the political and economic dimensions of western influence on the east after the *Wende*. He notes that 'history was being rewritten by the victors of the Cold War to expedite a process of cultural colonization, to consolidate the [previous] economic colonization',[5] and that 'the reading of the past put forward [by the *Enquete Kommissionen*] was more about furthering a western political agenda than about exploring the complexities of life in GDR.'[6]

The federal government's *Enquete Kommissionen* – installed in 1992 and 1995 respectively – investigated the aftermath of socialism in united Germany.[7] For many former East Germans, their workings equalled a colonisation of cultural memory of the East, in particular through their legacy of the *Gedenkstättenkonzeption des Bundes* in 1999.[8] This governmental document provided a framework for German memory politics pertaining to state memorials for the Holocaust, Nazi Germany and the GDR, as it defined the term memorial, listed groups of victims to be remembered, and set the narratives that state-sponsored

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[3] Dominic Boyer, '*Ostalgie* and the Politics of the Future in Eastern Germany', *Public Culture,* 18.2 (2006), 361–81 (p. 372).

[4] Oana Godeanu-Kenworthy, 'Deconstructing Ostalgia: The national past between commodity and simulacrum in Wolfgang Becker's Good Bye Lenin! (2003)', *Journal of European Studies,* 41.2 (2011), 161–77 (pp.162–64).

[5] Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia* (Oxford and New York, Berg, 2005), p. 41.

[6] Ibid., p. 43.

[7] This concerns the two governmental commissions 'Aufarbeitung von Geschichte und Folgen der SED-Diktatur in Deutschland' (1992 – 1994) and 'Überwindung der Folgen der SED-Diktatur im Prozeß der deutschen Einheit' (1995 – 1998). Deutscher Bundestag, *Bericht der Enquete Kommission "Aufarbeitung von Geschichte und Folgen der SED-Diktatur in Deutschland"* (Berlin: Bundesanzeiger Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 1994); Deutscher Bundestag, *Schlußbericht der Enquete Kommission "Überwindung der Folgen der SED-Diktatur im Prozeß der deutschen Einheit"* (Berlin: Bundesanzeiger Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 1998).

[8] The Gedenkstättenkonzeption is a legal document pertaining to state memorials for the Holocaust, Nazi Germany, and the GDR. It defines the term memorial, lists groups of victims to be remembered, and sets the narratives that these memorials are supposed to tell. Deutscher Bundestag, *Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung: Konzeption der künftigen Gedenkstättenförderung des Bundes* (Berlin: Bundesanzeiger Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 1999), p. 3. It shall henceforth be referred to as *Gedenkstättenkonzeption*.

memorials ought to tell. Although the *Gedenkstättenkonzeption* referred to memorials and museums only, it arguably offered a general guideline for the state's overall vision of German cultural memory. In particular, its second dictatorship doctrine, which placed the GDR alongside the Third Reich, was highly contested among former East Germans. This entirely negative reading of East Germany fuelled the already existing East German *Trotzidentität*,[9] which materialised in a variety of counter-mnemonic 'ostalgic' practices.

   Ostalgie as a mnemonic defiance from below triggered a political response in the form of the *Sabrow Kommission* in 2005 – another government appointed inquest committee into the legacy of the GDR – which led to a revision of the *Gedenkstättenkonzeption* in 2008. The revised paper, the so-called *Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption*,[10] is of particular relevance to this thesis. Although this legal text perpetuates some of the hegemonic views of East Germany from the 1990s, it marked a clear shift in paradigm regarding memory of the GDR in two main areas. Firstly, it recognised the theme of everyday life for the first time as an essential part of the experience of socialist Germany and therefore worthy of being remembered in state-run institutions.[11] In particular, any state-funded remembering of the GDR should aim to distinguish between the authoritarian state and its citizens. Thematic emphasis should be put on the pressure exerted on citizens to adapt to socialist norms and the exposure to extensive control mechanisms in their everyday lives.[12] Secondly, the report considered coming to terms with the socialist past to be an all-German task:

> Die historische Aufarbeitung der kommunistischen Diktatur ist eine gesamtgesellschaftliche Herausforderung, die sich nicht auf die neuen Länder beschränken darf. Die Geschichte der SBZ und der DDR ist Teil der gesamtdeutschen Geschichte und muss als solche erkennbar sein. Auch die westdeutschen Länder sind deshalb aufgefordert, ihren Teil zur Bewältigung dieser gesamtdeutschen Aufgabe zu leisten.[13]

Both of these new approaches to remembering East Germany officially could be seen as steps towards a future 'normalisation' of the GDR in German cultural memory. Until this point, the concept of 'normalisation' in the German context had largely served as a framework for discourses around how the FRG and later united Germany engaged with the Nazi past.[14] Jeffrey

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[9] Hans-Joachim Maaz, 'Distanz, Enttäuschung, Haß', *Der Spiegel*, 17 August 1992, p. 36.

[10] Deutscher Bundestag, *Unterrichtung: Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption des Bundes* (Berlin: Bundesanzeiger Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2008). Henceforth, this will be referred to as *Fortschreibung*.

[11] Deutscher Bundestag, *Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption des Bundes* (Berlin: Deutscher Bundestag, 2008), p.7.

[12] Ibid., p. 9.

[13] Ibid., p. 3.

[14] Jeffrey Olick distinguishes two phases: in its early stages in the 1970s and 1980s, 'normalisation' was mostly understood as relativisation. Then, the *Wende* forced a re-evaluation of memory politics that led to a reading of 'normalisation' as ritualisation. Jeffrey Olick, 'What Does it Mean to Normalize the Past? Official Memory in

Olick has argued that ritualisation of collective memory of the Nazi regime and the Holocaust during the 1980s led to a normalising effect.[15] Former Bundespräsident Joachim Gauck demonstrated the practical workings of Olick's conclusion when he claimed in 2015 during a commemorative act at the Bundestag marking the anniversary of liberation of the concentration camp that there is no German identity without Auschwitz.[16] Normalising the past, in this context, means achieving a political consensus and a common and largely uncontested language regarding the remembrance of the past.

Mary Fulbrook has applied the term 'normalisation' to the GDR, yet not in the context of remembering East Germany. She uses the concept of 'normalisation' to describe the process of 'relative stabilisation of domestic political structures' in East Germany during the 1960s and 1970s.[17] From Fulbrook's discussion of the concept, three different interpretations or stages of 'normalisation' emerge that are useful to explore contemporary cultural memory of the GDR. Firstly, 'normalisation' may pertain to an 'ideal type' in the Weberian sense, which then serves as a point of reference to measure the grade of what is 'normal'.[18] According to the cultural colonisation theory of the former East after the *Wende*, this 'ideal type' is West Germany, to which the East has been compared. Secondly, a more radical interpretation of 'normalisation' not only means the act of comparing to the ideal but to approximate it and comply with what the ideal type considers to be normal. Applying this scenario to cultural memory of East Germany, the GDR no longer represents the 'other' Germany that is a deviation from the norm of the democratic West. Instead, East Germany is understood as belonging to the German nation that was unnaturally divided into two states. Here, 'normalisation' is a 'westernisation' of the East, in which previously imagined differences between East and West are denied, a theme that is prominent across the case studies, as the upcoming analysis demonstrates. The third stage of 'normalisation' instigates a 'return to normality'.[19] In the German context, 'normality' means the undivided nation state before 1949, albeit not necessarily within the same borders and the same political framework. In this view, the (re-)united Federal Republic is considered a return to this status quo ante. Mary Fulbrook aptly deconstructs this third stage

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German Politics since 1989', *Social Science History,* 22.4 (1998), 547–71 (p. 568).

[15] Olick, 'What Does it Mean to Normalize the Past?', p. 568.

[16] Der Bundespräsident, *Tag des Gedenkens an die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus im Deutschen Bundestag* (Berlin: Bundespräsidialamt, 2015) < http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/JoachimGauck/ Reden/2015/01/150127-Bundestag-Gedenken.html> [accessed 4 September 2017]

[17] Mary Fulbrook, 'The Concept of ''normalisation'' and the GDR in Comparative Perspective', in *Power and Society in the GDR 1961-1979: The ''normalisation' of Rule'?*, ed. by Mary Fulbrook (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), pp. 1–30 (p. 13).

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., p. 14.

of 'normalisation' as follows:

> They [the various applications of 'normalisation'] pick up on the usage of contemporaries to point to the ways in which key collective actors sought to define a particular set of changes as being a 'return' to the 'way things were', understood not necessarily as how they 'actually' were, but certainly conforming to some conception of how they 'ought to be': a curious mixture of reference both to a construction of the past, and to aspirations for the future.[20]

Rooting our idea of 'normality' in a retrospectively constructed ideal of the past is thus exposed as an ideological tool to rectify contemporary political interests and processes rather than a reappraisal of the past.

The German scholar Kerstin Langwagen claims that collective memory of East Germany is en route to 'returning to normality', as East Germans cease to occupy their *Trotzidentität*. She writes that 'die Formung des kollektiven Gedächtnisses der Ostdeutschen [scheint] nach einem Vierteljahrhundert abgeschlossen zu sein und die vormalig eingenommene Dauerverteidigungshaltung [weicht] nun einer Öffnung nach außen und [bietet] Anschlussmöglichkeit für die zukünftige Verschmelzung des ost- mit dem westdeutschen Gedächtnis.'[21] Langwagen points here to a future of German cultural memory of the GDR that both east and west Germans can identify with. Her position is problematic, as it posits that collective memory of East Germany has reached a state of completion, and that it is the responsibility of former East Germans to make concessions to form a shared German collective memory. This underestimates the links between memory and identity, given that collective memory informs and legitimises collective identity.[22] In contrast to Langwagen's approach, this thesis investigates the ongoing renegotiation of collective memory of the GDR. It argues, drawing on Fulbrook's reflections on 'normalisation', that contemporary visual culture attempts to challenge Cold-War rooted stereotypes about the East by emphasising similarities with the West, in what appears to be a 'westernisation' of the past, which equals the second stage of 'normalisation' in Fulbrook's terms.

1.2 The Present State of the GDR in Visual Culture

Contrary to premature assumptions about the future insignificance of East German history and

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[20] Fulbrook, 'The Concept of ''normalisation'' and the GDR', p. 14.

[21] Kerstin Langwagen, *Die DDR im Vitrinenformat: Zur musealen Annäherung an ein kollektives Gedächtnis* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2016), p. 293.

[22] Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (Müchen: C.H. Beck, 1999), p. 138.

the irrelevance of the East German memory discourse,[23] the GDR occupies an important place in the contemporary German memory landscape. In an accelerated process since the turn of the century, literary, cinematographic, and museal productions have explored various views of life in former East Germany. The milestone anniversaries of 25 years of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 2014 and 25 years of unification in 2015, in particular, have contributed to a steady flow of new film releases, in cinema and on TV, as well as the opening of new temporary and permanent exhibitions pertaining to the GDR. These cultural productions illustrate the unabated public interest in finding fresh perspectives on and narratives of life in the socialist state. Memory of the East has become, to some extent, a *perpetuum mobile*, which thrives on the literary, cinematographic, and museal output on the GDR.

The shifts in the top-down evaluation of East Germany and the reconsideration of memory politics regarding the GDR discussed above are prominent in visual culture productions of the past decade. Films and museum exhibitions, in particular, are an indicator of the shift in paradigm instigated by the *Fortschreibung* from 2008. A prominent example, and a result of the political reconsideration of how to commemorate the GDR, is the newest branch of the *Haus der Geschichte* named *Alltag in der DDR*.[24] This exhibition, which opened in November 2013 at the *Kulturbrauerei*, a prominent cultural spot in Berlin, focusses particularly on everyday life in former East Germany. The *Haus der Geschichte* in Bonn, its branch *Zeitgeschichtliches Forum* in Leipzig and the *Deutsches Historisches Museum* in Berlin depict the GDR as little more than an antithesis to the democratic achievements of the Federal Republic. In contrast, everyday life in the socialist state takes centre stage in the exhibition *Alltag in der DDR* without juxtaposing it with the FRG.[25] In this sense, this new exhibition project appears to be a step towards incorporating everyday life in the GDR into the German memory canon under the premise of accompanying narratives of terror and oppression. This representation of the GDR is a direct consequence of the *Fortschreibung*, which reads: 'das

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[23] The original remark about East Germany as a footnote in history by Stefan Heym stems from a TV interview in 1990. The German historian Hans-Ulrich Wehler cites Heym's evaluation of the significance of the GDR to German history in the fifth and final volume of his encyclopaedia *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte* in 2008.

[24] The *Haus der Geschichte* is political project of then German chancellor Helmut Kohl, which serves as the de-facto national museum of contemporary German history. It originated in 1984 with the aim of building a collection of German history since 1945 that is dedicated to the history of the West German state and the divided nation. Opened in 1994, the permanent exhibition presented the GDR as a mere antithesis to FRG; this was in line with the sentiment of early post-unification years. Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, *Entstehung des Hauses der Geschichte* (Bonn: Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 2016) <https://www.hdg.de/stiftung/geschichte-und-organisation/entstehung/> [accessed 11 August 2016]

[25] The *Haus der Geschichte* serves as the main branch of a number of museums and exhibitions dedicated to 20th century German history. Both the exhibitions at *Zeitgeschichtliches Forum* in Leipzig and *Kulturbrauerei* in Berlin are branches thereof.

alltägliche Leben [ist] notwendigerweise im Kontext der Diktatur darzustellen'.[26] Thus, rather than considering the themes of everyday life and state oppression as binary opposites, the exhibition presents the quotidian within and despite the dictatorship.

While state-run exhibitions have started to introduce new perspectives on the GDR that transcend the idea of a mere *Stasiland*,[27] some scholars have pointed out that most privately-run museums, primarily situated in the former east, appear to perpetuate 'ostalgic' views of quotidian life. Kerstin Langwagen, for instance, claims that these museums are largely interchangeable as they employ the 'Prinzip Wiederholung'.[28] Superficial engagement with these museums may indeed find them to be homogenous with their plethora of everyday objects squeezed into unprofitable properties that would otherwise fall prey to the demolition ball. However, a more critical appraisal of these institutions reveals that the label of 'ostalgia' covers neither the variety of narratives produced in these museums nor the intentions of the actors behind them. Consequently, the initial perception of these museums as manifestations of reactionary counter-memory from below is currently being re-evaluated, as Jonathan Bach concludes in his analysis of such museums. He argues that privately-run museums of everyday life in East Germany have started to include the quotidian in the process of coming to terms with the socialist past by offering a public space in which issues of consumerism and civil society are discussed.[29] Such scholarly acknowledgement of the mnemonic value of these bottom-up private collections and exhibitions is rare but represents more evidence of a shift in perspective. Bach, however, overlooks differences between the museums, homogenising his case studies by positing their common effort to depict alternative Eastern lifestyles.[30] By contrast, this thesis aims to transcend the constrained idea of categorising museums in terms of yet another binary opposition of privately or state-owned, and instead emphasise their heterogeneous nature.

Through the realm of film and television likewise, everyday life in the GDR has claimed a more prominent place in German cultural memory. Numerous cinema and TV productions have been released, particularly after the acclaimed but also disputed successes of *Sonnenallee* in 1999 and *Good Bye, Lenin!* in 2003.[31] The 2006 international blockbuster *Das Leben der*

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[26] Deutscher Bundestag, *Fortschreibung*, p. 9.
[27] Anna Funder, *Stasiland: Stories from behind the Berlin Wall* (London: Granta, 2003).
[28] Langwagen, *Die DDR im Vitrinenformat*, p. 111.
[29] Jonathan Bach, 'Collecting Communism: Private Museums of Everyday Life under Social in Former East Germany', *German Politics and Society,* 114, 33.1/2 (2015), 135–45 (pp. 142-43).
[30] Ibid, p.142.
[31] *Sonnenallee*, dir. by Leander Haußmann (Boje Buck Produktion, 1999); *Good Bye, Lenin!*, dir. by Wolfgang Becker (X-Filme Creative Pool, 2003).

Anderen is a striking example of visual culture as a space where the boundaries of cultural memory can be tested and broadened, as it explores the shades of grey in between the black and white binary narratives of perpetrator and victim.[32] As one of the first more nuanced depictions of Stasi perpetration, however naive or idealistic it may seem to its critics,[33] it triggered a public and academic debate about whether Stasi collaboration necessarily equalled 'pure evil'. Since then, many productions have broken down previously established patterns of narrating the GDR, for instance with portrayals of ambivalent characters, new genres, settings and narratives. The political drama series *Weissensee*,[34] for instance, challenges the status of the GDR as the other Germany. Acclaimed as the German *House of Cards*,[35] the programme follows the intrigues within a politically privileged family clan in East Berlin during the 1980s. Holding top positions in the Stasi headquarters in Berlin, father Hans Kupfer and eldest son Falk abuse the secret service as a tool for their personal merit. While the father aims to protect his family from persecution, the son utilises the Stasi apparatus against his opponents, including father and brother, in order to further his career. This depiction not only illustrates individual motivations for working for the Stasi but also the issue of different generations in the GDR and their relationship to socialism. As a member of the founding generation of the GDR, Hans is convinced of the socialist principles, which he tries to defend, while second-generation offspring Falk values power and success over socialist ideals. Although exploring questions specific to life in the GDR, this series is equally an investigation into the concepts of power and abuse thereof, as well as political intrigue and loyalty in general, thus indicating of a new trend in remembering the GDR, which his thesis calls post-ostalgia.

The anniversary year 2015 saw two new and innovative TV formats, namely the comedy series *Sedwitz* broadcast on ARD, as well as the internationally successful spy drama *Deutschland 83* on RTL. *Sedwitz* offers a compelling counter-narrative to the perception of the border as 'Todesstreifen' that dominated the discourse of the 1990s, as it depicts the inner

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[32] *Das Leben der Anderen*, dir. by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck (Wiedemann und Berg Filmproduktion, 2007).

[33] See Rüdiger Suchsland, 'Mundgerecht konsumierbare Vergangenheit', *Teleopolis,* 23 March 2006. Günter Jeschonnek, 'Die Sehnsucht nach dem unpolitischen Märchen. Ein kritischer Kommentar zum Stasi-Film »Das Leben der Anderen«', *Deutschland Archiv,* 39.3 (2006), 501–04 (p. 502).

[34] Running since 2010, the programme has recently been approved for a fourth series. Das Erste, *Vierte Staffel: "Weissensee" wird mit neuen Folgen fortgesetzt* (Munich: Bayrischer Rundfunk, 2016) <http://www.daserste.de/unterhaltung/serie/weissensee/weissensee-vierte-staffel-fortsetzung-serie-100.html> [accessed 7 August 2016]

[35] Andrea Hanna Hünniger, 'So sieht das deutsche "House of Cards" aus', *Welt*, 8 September 2015, <https://www.welt.de/kultur/medien/article146134164/So-sieht-das-deutsche-House-of-Cards-aus.html> [accessed 9 December 2017]

German border as permeable for some and tolerating illegal transits without punishment.[36] The series focusses on the quotidian experience of border guards at the inner German border between Thuringia and Bavaria in the late 1980s, including their boredom with everyday tasks, and their attempts to cope with the disjuncture between socialist propaganda about their fight for freedom and their reality. Rather than focussing on ideas of escape, the series only screens one border guard crossing the border to Bavaria; he does this to acquire a Rubik's cube for his son, a plotline that emphasises narratives of economic scarcity and consumer desires. In this sense, the series provides a well-established and thus comforting narrative of Western economic superiority. At the same time, it normalises family life in the GDR by approximation to the West, for instance through the topics of school, the children's material desires, issues at work, and the romantic life of the parents, without dwelling on an idyllic view of everyday life in the GDR that could be read as 'ostalgia'. The viewer is able to identify with these topics, and thus able to connect with the memory of everyday life in the GDR on a more personal level. Consequently, the concept of the GDR as the 'other' is contested here as the everyday becomes normal and very similar to the experience of many families in the FRG. Both TV programmes offer fresh perspectives on everyday life in former East Germany, in particular the workings of the Stasi and different social milieus. They thus question the GDR as the other and ultimately the inferior Germany. It is precisely this shift in paradigm that enables East Germany to become acknowledged as part of Germany's history, and consequently of the canon of German cultural memory.

1.3 Project Overview, Rational and Outline

The vast changes in the way we have been remembering the GDR in visual culture since the mid-2000s call for a conceptual background to illustrate the seismic shifts in cultural memory of East Germany. This thesis seeks to identify and link general trends across museums and films in their depiction of everyday life in the GDR to establish a conceptual framework. Objects, and the ways in which they are presented, contextualised and narrativised, stand at the very centre of this analysis and act as the link between both types of visual media, as they are material remnants of the GDR. Recently, more obscure items have been added to, or have in part replaced, some of the iconic objects that represented East German everyday life in the post-*Wende* years. Alongside new artefacts, museums and films have introduced fresh and

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[36] *Sedwitz*, ARD, 3 September 2015.

more importantly non-binary narratives of the quotidian in the GDR. In order to conceptualise, illustrate and relate these shifts, I have introduced the term *post-ostalgia*. This concept is developed in the thesis by looking at major trends around narratives and objects within seven regionalised museum exhibitions and eight non-blockbuster films of the past decade; these are juxtaposed with the prevailing themes of cultural memory of the GDR during the 1990s and early 2000s. This comparison of museums and films will illustrate the fundamentally different ways in which these two types of visual media shape cultural memory, and shed light on recent overarching developments in the remembrance of everyday life in the GDR in contemporary Germany.

By adopting a comparative approach to museums and films, this thesis breaks new ground in visual culture studies as it combines two types of visual media that have rarely been considered alongside each other. Previous research predominantly dealt with films and museums separately, such as the edited volume *The Lives of Others and Contemporary German Cinema* by Paul Cooke from 2013,[37] and Nick Hodgin's *Screening the East* from 2011.[38] In German scholarship, the edited volume *Die Musealisierung der DDR* by Katrin Hammerstein and Jan Scheunemann,[39] as well as Kerstin Langwagen's 2016 volume *Die DDR im Vitrinenformat* have provided comparative studies of exhibitions and museums about the GDR.[40] Therefore, this thesis offers a significant contribution to the memory discourse on East Germany, as it looks at seven museums and eight films at once. Amid the recent GDR memory boom, with the emergence of privately run museums and both TV and cinema feature-length productions, such a comparative approach with both a temporal and geographical spread of case studies is essential in order to better understand the diversifying memory landscape around the former East in the sense of post-ostalgia.

The empirical basis for the analysis in this thesis includes a wide range of sources that reflects the scale of this research project. The focus lies on the narratives of objects, and for this reason the analysis engages with the author's observations and interpretations, applying discourse analysis to the interaction between texts and objects in museums, and the symbiosis of images and dialogues in film. Emphasis is being put on the visual and the textual, since they

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[37] Paul Cooke, *The Lives of Others and contemporary German Film* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2013).
[38] Nick Hodgin, *Screening the East:* Heimat, *Memory and Nostalgia in German Film since 1989* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011).
[39] Katrin Hammerstein and Jan Scheunemann, *Die Musealisierung der DDR: Wege, Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Darstellung von Zeitgeschichte in stadt- und regionalgeschichtlichen Museen* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2012).
[40] Langwagen, *Die DDR im Vitrinenformat.*

offer the greatest scope for comparison of museums and films. Other sensory experiences, such as sound or smell fail to work for both types of case studies, considering that the chosen museal case studies are largely silent spaces.[41] The primary sources comprise the museum exhibitions and films, informal conversations with museum directors, bonus material on DVD editions of films, such as interviews with directors and actors, museum leaflets, journalistic reports and reviews of films and museums, as well as web presences of films and museums. In order to examine and contextualise the narratives about everyday life in the GDR portrayed in films and museums, I will, at times, refer to statistical data from East Germany. Comparing these statistics with mediated depictions of the Eastern quotidian will highlight any retrospective reimaginings and contemporary influences on the understanding of life in the GDR. By selecting regionalised representations of GDR memory over centralised tourist magnets, as well as choosing smaller cinema or TV productions over blockbuster movies, this thesis investigates GDR memory at its fringes. It is here that dominant memory narratives are contested, counter-memories emerge, and the memory landscape becomes pluralistic. For this reason, the fringes of GDR memory are most likely to offer a space for fresh perspectives and narratives on life in former East Germany that, as this thesis argues, instigate a shift in the way we remember the socialist state.

The selection of museal case studies was made based on geographical and temporal considerations. In order to guarantee that each eastern federal state would be represented, one museum for each state was selected as well as the only museum pertaining to the GDR on the territory of former West Germany. Although these sites are situated close to tourist regions, they are mostly away from urban cultural centres. The only exception here is the exhibition *Alltag in der DDR* at the *Kulturbrauerei* in Berlin. This exhibition is the only state-run institution dedicated entirely to everyday life in the GDR and belongs to a group of branches of the *Haus der Geschichte* in Bonn. It offers free entry and is entirely statefunded. Its mission statement is to portray the intersection between private, public and work life in the 1970s and 1980s, illustrate how the SED regime affected everyday life and how East Germans responded to state socialism.[42] The exhibition itself and its portrayal of the GDR are a direct result of the

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[41] The exhibition *Alltag in der DDR* provides short video clips and headphones with additional audio material. Among the privately-run museums, only the *DDR Museum* in Pirna plays sound in the form of political and popular songs from the GDR. This use of sound has overall not been deemed sufficient to form the basis of an in-depth discussion of sound in the case studies.

[42] Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, *Dauerausstellung Alltag in der DDR* (Bonn: Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 2018) < https://www.hdg.de/museum-in-der-kulturbrauerei/ausstellungen/alltag-in-der-ddr/> [accessed 5 November 2018].

Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption and its aim to incorporate the realm of everyday life into state-sanctioned remembrance of East Germany. The *Lernort Demokratie* in Pforzheim (Baden-Württemberg) is the only museum entirely dedicated to the GDR in the western federal states. Its portrayal of everyday life in the GDR is particularly interesting because it is the result of a collaboration between former East Germans who fled or were expelled from the GDR and avid West Germans. The museum was renovated in late 2015 and its depiction of the GDR was completely overhauled after the passing of its founder Klaus Knabe, who fled East Germany in 1961. Since 2012, the museum is run by the association 'Gegen das Vergessen e.V.' and the foundation 'Lernort Demokratie – Das DDR Museum Pforzheim', which also owns the material collection of the museum. Both groups have separate mission statements; yet they echo the idea of preserving memory of the GDR as a state of systematic injustice and breech of human rights.[43] This presentation of East Germany makes the museum eligible to public funding from the town of Pforzheim, the federal state of Baden-Württemberg and GDR-specific funding bodies, such as the *Stiftung Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur*. With its location, mission statement and funding structure, this museum stands out from the group of case studies, as the other museums are situated in the former East and largely lack public funding due to their portrayal of the former East. The *DDR Geschichtsmuseum 'Gegen das Vergessen'* in Perleberg, Brandenburg, was founded by Hans-Peter Freimark, a former evangelical pastor, and his wife Gisela and is based on their private collection of East German material culture, which they started in the 1980s as an act of defiance against Stasi observation. Similar to the museum in Pforzheim, the mission statement of the *DDR Geschichtsmuseum* in Perleberg states a critical reading of East German history aiming to juxtapose the two German dictatorships, i.e. the Third Reich and the GDR, in order to prevent history from repeating itself in united Germany.[44] This mission statement and regular public discussions about the legacy of East Germany held at the museum in collaboration with the BStU has helped the institution to secure financial support from public bodies. The only other museum receiving some public funding and collaborating with the BStU is the *DDR Museum im Kino* in Malchow, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. It is owned by the town of Malchow, from which it receives some funding. Despite missing a clearly stated written mission statement,

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[43] DDR Museum Pforzheim, *Verein* (Pforzheim: DDR Museum Pforzheim, 2015) < http://www.pforzheim-ddr-museum.de/verein/> [accessed 5 November 2018]; DDR Museum Pforzheim, *Satzung* (Pforzheim: DDR Museum Pforzheim, 2015) < http://www. pforzheim-ddr-museum.de/stiftung/satzung-stiftung/> [accessed 5 November 2018].

[44] DDR Geschichtsmuseum im Dokumentationszentrum Perleberg, *Anliegen* (Perleberg: DDR Geschichts-museum im Dokumentationszentrum Perleberg, 2018) < http://www.ddr-museum-perleberg.de/seite/7434/unser-anliegen.html> [accessed 5 November 2018].

director Irina Gräser has explained the purpose of the museum as serving the tourist industry of the region, which explains the town's interest in it, and to collect and preserve the material culture of the GDR. Due to this perceived lack of critical engagement with East Germany *Stiftung Aufarbeitung* has refused financial support for the museum in Malchow. This is also the case for the remaining case study museums. The *DDR Museum* in Thale, Saxony-Anhalt, is funded through entrance fees and private capital by its owner Frank Müller, who also operates a furniture store in the same building as the museum. According to its mission statement, the museum aims to portray the positive and negative memories of seventeen million former GDR citizens. It also acknowledges that the museum's representation of East Germany is based on the personal experience of shortages and paternalism of the centralised system of the GDR.[45] The museum *Olle DDR* in Apolda, Thuringia, is run by director Christine Hoffmann and owned by 'EURATIBOR e.V.', a government supported association to create employment opportunities in the region, and is responsible for its own income generation through entrance fees, as the only financial support from the town of Apolda is the rent-free lease of the buildings housing the museum. Its mission statement appears less critical than the museum in Thale's by stating that it seeks to represent the history of everyday life in the GDR and offer a reason to reminisce and reflect upon the past, 'nothing more and nothing less'.[46] Lastly and similar to the museum in Thale, the *DDR Museum* in Pirna, Saxony, relies entirely on private funding, donations and entrance fees. It is owned and run by local Conny Kaden, who portrays the least critical image of former East Germany in comparison to the other case study institutions. The museum in Pirna has no clear mission statement apart from its aim to showcase interesting and amusing aspects about everyday life in the GDR.[47] Due to this perceived white-washing of East German history, local political figures have refused their support and any cooporation. This overview highlights the complex interlacing between the personal background of the museum directors, their representation of the GDR and state support for the museums. It also introduces the museal case studies as being operated by a diverse group of memory agents and with a wide range of financial structures.

The selection also took into consideration when the museums first opened in order to reflect developments in the museal representation over time, from the first opening in

[45] DDR Museum Thale, *Die Idee* (Thale: DDR Museum Thale, 2018) < https://www.ddr-museum-thale.de/die-idee/index.html> [accessed 5 November 2018].
[46] Olle DDR, *Herzlich Willkommen* (Erfurt: EURATIBOR e.V., 2018) < http://www.olle-ddr.de/index.html> [accessed 5 November].
[47] DDR Museum Pirna, *Ausstellung* (Pirna: DDR Museum Pirna, 2017) <http://www.ddr-museum-pirna.de/ausstellung> [accessed 10 June 2017]

Pforzheim in 1998 to the most recent in Berlin in 2013. Based on their year of opening, the case study museums can be categorised into distinct groups, based on a model of phases of the musealisation of the GDR that Kerstin Langwagen has conceptualised.[48] According to her model, the museum in Pforzheim, *Olle DDR* in Apolda (Thuringia, opened in 1999) and *DDR-Museum im Kino* in Malchow (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, 1999) were founded in a phase of constitution of cultural memory of the GDR (between 1997 and 2004). During this period, the second *Enquete Kommission* published its findings, the *Gedenkstättenkonzeption* was agreed and the *Stiftung Aufarbeitung der SED Diktatur* was founded. The remaining museum case studies *DDR Museum* Pirna (Saxony), *DDR Geschichtsmuseum 'Gegen das Vergessen'* Perleberg (Brandenburg), both 2006, *DDR-Museum* Thale (Saxony-Anhalt, 2011) and *Alltag in der DDR* Berlin (2013) opened during the ongoing phase of the 'changing conception of history'. According to Langwagen, this phase is primarily characterised by the *Sabrow Kommission* and its reappraisal of the legacy of everyday life of the GDR in German cultural memory.[49] Large-scale and highly frequented institutions, such as the *Haus der Geschichte* in Bonn or the *DDR Museum* in Berlin,[50] do not feature as main case studies even though they sometimes offer a point of reference for the discussion.

Films were selected on the basis of three criteria: the year of release, whether a film has a fictional or biographical background and whether it was released in cinema or on TV. 2008 is the temporal starting point because it was the year after the success of *Das Leben der Anderen*, which – albeit not featuring as a case study in this project – marks a turning point in cinematic engagement with the GDR due to its innovative, and, more importantly, broadly discussed depiction of individual dilemmas of Stasi officers. According to Paul Cooke, *Das Leben der Anderen* gains the retrospective status of a caesura in German cinema not so much due to its domestic and international success at the box office, or because it revealed the workings of the Stasi. Its importance is rather due to its instigation of a vast scholarly debate about how to represent the troubled German past in an ethical way.[51] Therefore, this thesis includes at least one film release per year from 2008 to 2013. Additionally, the film case studies represent cinema and TV releases in equal numbers in order to investigate how they portray

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[48] Langwagen, *Die DDR im Vitrinenformat*, pp. 122-26.
[49] Ibid., pp. 145-46.
[50] Opened in 2006, this museum in the centre of Berlin is a magnet for both domestic and foreign tourists as it attracts more than 500,000 visitors per year. DDR Museum Berlin GmbH, *Historie des Museums* (Berlin, DDR Museum Berlin GmbH, 2016) <http://www.ddr-museum.de/de/museum/institution/geschichte.html> [accessed 11 August 2016]
[51] Paul Cooke, 'Introduction', in *The Lives of Others and contemporary German Film,* ed. by Paul Cooke (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2013), pp. 1–16 (pp. 9–11).

everyday life in former East Germany. Four fictional and four biographical stories feature in order to emphasise the increasing importance of personal experiences of life in the GDR in German cultural memory. The TV films were produced by *UFA* or its subsidiary *teamWorx*, a production company that specialises in historical dramas, which I will introduce in chapter 2. The earliest TV film is *Das Wunder von Berlin* (2008) by Roland Suso Richter is based on the biographical story of an NVA soldier. It was broadcast on ZDF and is the only film case study that has not received public grants. The story of *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie* (2009) also draws from biographical experience, namely the story of a mother fleeing the GDR with her two daughters. This film by Miguel Alexandre was first shown on ARD and received funding from *Mitteldeutsche Filmförderung*, which has contributed funds to all but one filmic case studies. *Go West – Freiheit um jeden Preis* by Andreas Linke was broadcast on the private channel Pro7 in 2010. This fictional story about three teenagers escaping East Geramny obtained grants from a number of bodies, including *Medienboard Berlin Brandenburg* and *FilmFernsehFonds Bayern*. The literary adaption of *Der Turm*, based on the eponymous novel, was directed by Christian Schwochow and first shown by ARD in 2012. It received funding from *Medienboard Berlin Brandenburg*. As opposed to the TV productions, the cinema releases rely more heavily on public funding, as there is no financial support by a broadcasting channel. The four cinematic case studies in this thesis have secured grants from *Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung*, *Filmförderungsanstalt* and *Deutscher Filmförderfonds* as well as regional funding bodies. The 2010 release *Liebe Mauer* received additional funding from *Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein*. It is a finctional romantic comedy directed by Peter Timm and produced by *Relevant Film*. The story of *Westwind* (2011), produced by *Credo Film* is based on the biographical experiences of twin sisters and the escape from the Eastern Bloc of one of them. Robert Thalheim is the director of this film, which obtained financial support from *Medienboard Berlin Brandenburg* and *Festival des deutschen Films*. The 2012 fictional drama *Barbara* is the only film among the case studies that received funding from the federal government, namely *BKM Kulturelle Förderung des Bundes*. It was directed by Christian Petzold and produced by *Piffl Medien*. Lastly, the film *Sushi in Suhl* (2013) by Christian Fiebeler is based on the biographical story of a restaurant chef in Thuringia. Its producer was *Starcrest Media* and it obtained additional funds from *Hesseninvestfilm* and *Hessische Filmförderung*. This selection of case studies explores a wide spectrum of museum and film directors as memory actors in order to contribute to a greater understanding of the workings of memory politics in the context of visual culture and the GDR. Therefore, this thesis provides useful insights for those working in education who use museum exhibitions and films to

transport the history of the GDR to non-experiential generations. Awareness of memory politics consequently also offers an opportunity for these later-born generations who rely on second-hand accounts of the past to engage more critically with the agents of memory production and memory itself.

This project offers a significant contribution to a range of fields, including visual and material culture studies, museum and film studies, as well as memory studies. In combining theories and concepts from these academic disciplines, this thesis seeks to enhance our understanding of how objects encapsulate memory and how visual media use material objects not only to produce meaning through narratives but also to form identity. This research aims to explore further how everyday life serves as a vehicle in which identity is played out, and, in the context of the GDR, how depictions of the quotidian help to retrospectively (de-)construct a distinct East German identity. Tim Edensor's seminal volume *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (2002) postulates that everyday performances constitute a much stronger sense of national identity than the symbolism of historical dates, flags, and anthems.[52] Although Edensor's research offers a crucial alternative reading to the top-down models of national identity formation by Ernest Gellner,[53] Benedict Anderson,[54] and Eric Hobsbawm,[55] it focusses on the Anglophone world and engages with the realm of the quotidian more generally. In order to evaluate the mechanisms of identity formation through depictions of everyday life in museums and films within the specific context of former East Germany, this project concentrates on three concrete realms of everyday life, namely food and eating, fashion and transportation. These areas were chosen according to their spatial relation to the body, moving from inside the body (food) to covering the body (clothing) to the external (transportation). All three realms are useful to explore the relationship between the state and the individual, and thus the ways in which the dictatorship affected everyday life. Michel Foucault's writings on (state) power and its impact on society and the individual will be a key theoretical framework through which the case studies are read. This focus will help to identify the impact of the *Fortschreibung* on the way visual culture reimagines everyday life in the socialist dictatorship of the GDR.

The main analysis consists of three thematic chapters that follow the three focal points

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[52] Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2002).
[53] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 1983).
[54] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006).
[55] Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

of food, fashion and transportation. Each of these chapters comprises a comparative discussion of the fifteen primary case studies that build the centre of the examination supplemented by examples drawn from secondary case studies, including blockbuster films and tourist-magnet museums as well as more recent exhibitions, TV series or films on the GDR. These secondary case studies are useful as points of reference for comparison; they also help to illustrate most recent developments. Prior to the analysis of the case studies, chapter two provides a discussion of key concepts and theories that will feed into the analysis. These include theories of memory formation and their complex application to the field of museums and films. The concept of nostalgia in general, and *Ostalgie* as its derivative in the East German context in particular form an integral part of this discussion. Drawing on these theories, the idea of post-ostalgia is developed as a framework to describe the way in which visual culture reimagines the quotidian in the GDR. This forms part of an alternative reading of the past that transcends previously established dichotomous narratives of everyday life in East Germany.

Chapters three, four and five offer in-depth discussions of the case studies. Chapter three closely examines representations of food and eating. Due to its perishability, food is a complex memory icon and it poses specific issues for museum curators. Food also provides a multi-sensory experience. This chapter builds on Marcel Proust's writing to explore multi-sensory memories around food. Exploring the links between food and national identity, I examine how portrayals of food and eating either challenge or foster a distinct East German national identity. The analysis illustrates how narratives of scarcity and privilege around food can offer insights on the power relations between the East German state and individuals. The chapter draws on the concept of commensality to then outline how food drives social relationships within families and between genders. This thematic approach is useful to contextualise cultural memory of the realm of food in the GDR within broader discourses of identity, power and society. Depictions of food and eating are presented as triggers of collective and personal memory that have identity-forming qualities. As this chapter highlights, representations of food and eating emerge as performances of social interactions on a micro-scale that encapsulate the relationships between larger social groups within the macrocosm of the GDR.

Chapter four addresses clothing and fashion as visual signifiers of both personal and group identity. The discussion revolves around clothing as representative of both imagined Eastern and Western identities, departing from Alexei Yurchak's concept of the *Imaginary West*. This leads directly to the theme of East German consumer desires and politics, which

highlights the relationship between the state and the citizen. The chapter argues that portrayals of clothing and clothes production serve to construct gender in the GDR as similar to gender in the FRG, thus promoting a normalised image of the GDR. The chapter also explores the function of fashion as a way of visualising adaptation to and deviation from the social norms in former East Germany with particular focus on youth. Films and museums are brought together through the concept of the mannequin and the *missing person effect* by Mark Sandberg to ascertain differences and similarities concerning their use of clothing in the East German context. The analysis reveals that, for the last decade, visual culture has presented East Germany as primarily defining itself through the image it had of West Germany, as a means of 'normalisation' through approximation.

Chapter five engages with the realm of mobility in the GDR by looking at cars but also other modes transport. Rather than considering them just as commodity items, this chapter engages with cars as social spaces. It finds that the enclosed car cabin enables feelings of privacy and intimacy – thus acting as a sanctuary from state authorities – or providing a claustrophobic space for Stasi interrogation. Following on from this, the chapter looks at audio-visual aspects of depicting transport. Here, westernisation of our image of the GDR is prominent, as depictions of cars draw heavily on American action cinema. Michel Foucault's writing on the Panopticon offers a theoretical framework through which the relationship between state power and cars is explored. The examination reveals that societal aspects are illustrated through depictions of the relationship between East Germans and their vehicles. A pluralised representation of car makes offers a point of departure for memory of social class distinction in the former East. Equally, the discussion shows that gender politics in the GDR are illustrated through preference for and use of various means of transport. The observations in this chapter demonstrate how the GDR, most strikingly in the area of mobility, is reimagined through the lens of contemporary Germany and the living conditions there.

On the basis of this analysis, this thesis shows the ways in which post-ostalgia fosters a democratised, pluralised and normalised remembrance of the GDR. As films and museums increasingly draw on biographical memories, the analysis of the case studies finds that the boundaries between communicative and cultural memory of East Germany are beginning to blur. This rise in biographic as well as regionalised accounts also demonstrates more democratic remembering of the GDR. In this context, the analysis shows that visual culture at the fringes, namely privately-run 'Alltagsmuseen' and non-blockbuster films, offers a vital space for counter-memory to emerge. This thesis also illustrates the ongoing reappraisal of

everyday life in the GDR as a framework through which wider social relationships and societal frictions are being depicted. This allows for new memory icons and narratives to emerge, as well as for established ones to be renegotiated or replaced. Overall, this thesis concludes that recent memory of East Germany is largely shaped by the contemporary desire to normalise the GDR by portraying it as similar to West German norms.

2 German Memory Landscapes: Nostalgia, *Ostalgie* and Post-Ostalgia

[N]ostalgia […] is not always for the *ancien régime*, stable superpower, or fallen empire, but also for the unrealized dreams of the past and visions of the future that have become obsolete.[1]

Svetlana Boym's quote challenges the often-held misconception that nostalgia is rooted primarily in a sense of disconnection with the past, a period which is belatedly bestowed with idealised qualities and considered a source of pride in the present. Instead, as Boym emphasises, nostalgia often emerges from a sense of unfulfilled potentials in the past and the lost hopes for a better future. This latter reading of nostalgia aptly encapsulates the sentiments of former citizens of the Soviet Union, who Boym's research is based on, and of the inhabitants of the former Eastern Bloc in general. State socialism across the Bloc had promised a utopia of equality, prosperity and peace, which it was unable to deliver in the socialist present and thus continued to vow for the future. With the end of socialist rule in central and eastern Europe in 1989 and the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, the visions of a future offering socialist ideals were irrevocably lost for people of the Soviet Union and its satellite states, including the GDR.

Contemporary nostalgia for the contested past of East Germany has proved controversial and has met with strong public criticism since its emergence shortly after the *Wende*. More recently, however, and as this thesis argues, nostalgia for the former East has become incorporated into the memory canon of the GDR in unified Germany as one of many ways to remember East Germany in an overall more pluralistic memory landscape concerning the former East as opposed to the mnemonic dichotomies of the 1990s. Notably, this recent development is particularly visible in films and museum exhibitions as spaces in which cultural memory is being negotiated. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a discussion of relevant theories in order to set the parameters for the analysis of filmic and museal case studies in the following chapters. By critically examining scholarly discourses, mainly pertaining to the concepts of nostalgia, its derivative of *Ostalgie* and the idea of 'normalisation', it aims to build a bridge between these concepts of memory theory, on the one hand, and material and visual culture, on the other.

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[1] Svetlana Boym, 'Nostalgia and Its Discontents', *The Hedgehog Review,* 9.2 (2007), 7–18 (p. 10).

Laying the groundwork for this chapter and the following analysis, the first section briefly introduces the concept of nostalgia in general. Departing from Svetlana Boym's alternative reading of nostalgia, it defines *Ostalgie* as a problematic nostalgia for the GDR and presents a variety of academic voices on the subject. The chapter, then, moves on to dissecting the genesis and development of nostalgic remembrance of the GDR in museums and films throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. Having established the state of research on *Ostalgie* will feed into the definition of 'post-ostalgia' as the original concept emerging from this study, which I will outline in the third section of this chapter. This includes a juxtaposition of post-ostalgia with the notion of 'normalisation' and its various readings by scholars such as Mary Fulbrook and Jeffrey Olick in order to highlight the originality of the concept of post-ostalgia within the field of German memory studies. Lastly, the chapter casts post-ostalgia as a form of cultural memory and offers a brief overview of relevant theories of cultural memory and scholarly engagement with it. The pivotal role of visual media in constructing, performing and contesting cultural memory has been the subject of a large body of academic work and some of the most relevant of which feature in the last section.

2.1 Nostalgia, Memory Boom and *Ostalgie*

Ostalgie is the central theme of this thesis, which seeks to draw out the recent revaluation of this form of problematic nostalgia for former East Germany through the concept of post-ostalgia. Before looking at *Ostalgie* specifically, this section briefly outlines its roots in the concept of nostalgia and the societal particularities of the early 1990s, in particular the memory boom, in order to outline the parameters that enabled the accelerated emergence of nostalgia for the GDR.

In its early definition dating back to the 1680s, nostalgia was described as a pathological bodily longing for a geographically removed home,[2] a condition that is more often labelled 'home-sickness' in contemporary terms. In the course of the nineteenth century, nostalgia evolved to refer predominately to a bygone era or point in time instead,[3] mainly through processes of delocalisation and demedicalisation, as Fred Davis noted,[4] and thus shifting its

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[2] David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 10.
[3] Marcos Piason Natali, 'History and the Politics of Nostalgia', *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies*, 5.1 (2004), 10–25 (p. 11).
[4] Fred Davis, 'Nostalgia, Identity and the Current Nostalgia Wave', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 11.2 (1977), 414–424 (p. 415).

object of desire from the spatially to the temporally distant. As nostalgia was now understood as a reappraisal of the past, it provoked scholarly criticism by thinkers such as Karl Marx, who considered history a succession of progress teleologically leading to freer and most just societies. Admiring a past that was by default socially unjust was thus equalled with the 'preservation of privilege'.[5] Hence, as Marcos Piason Natali argues, already in the second half of the nineteenth century, nostalgia had adopted subversive qualities, by stating that nostalgia

> was transformed from a disease of memory […] into a problem of the imperfect assimilation of the categories and practices of history, that is, the condition of those who did not have what in modernity gradually became the dominant relationship to the past. Nostalgia thus became a label used to define those who fell outside of the modern framework.[6]

Here, Natali points to nostalgia's meaning as a counter-memory embraced by those who had not (yet) adapted to modernity. While the above quote merely hints at nostalgia as a phenomenon experienced by groups, Fred Davis provides a more explicit argument by highlighting the meaning of nostalgia in processes of identity formation. He writes that 'nostalgia is one of the means – or, better yet, a readily accessible psychological lens – at our disposal for the never ending work of constructing, maintaining and reconstructing our identities.'[7] With its ability to facilitate a past-oriented anchor of identity-construction, nostalgia belongs to the realm of collective memory, a theoretical concept which section 2.4 will examine.

In recent years, the temporal gap between the present and what is nostalgically remembered has been decreasing. As Bevis Hillier put it, since the 1980s 'history was being recycled as nostalgia almost as soon as it happened'.[8] This accelerated process of the 'nostalgisation' of the past is part of a more general trend over the past four decades. Both in academic circles and public political debates in the Western world, the concept of memory has gained significance to such an extent that scholars speak of a 'memory boom'.[9] Prior to this reappraisal, memory was usually regarded as the binary opposite of history,[10] the latter of which being considered the more objective way of conceptualising the past. Postmodern

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[5] Natali, 'History and the Politics of Nostalgia', p. 13.
[6] Natali, 'History and the Politics of Nostalgia', p. 11.
[7] Davis, 'Nostalgia, Identity and the Current Nostalgia Wave', p. 419. While Davis's discussion of nostalgia and identity are useful and relevant, the latter part of his article is undermined by a distinct racist, misogynist and homophob reading of the social changes of the 1960s in the USA.
[8] Bevis Hillier, *The Style of the Century* (London: Herbert, 1983), p. 216.
[9] Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, p. 14.
[10] See for instance Pierre Nora's article 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations*, 26 (1989), 7–24.

historians in the 1980s questioned the inferiority of memory to history as a result of their realisation that history could not provide us with impartial and reliable knowledge of the past. Instead, they turned their attention to memory, which allows for alternative histories to be told and acknowledges the changeable relationship between people and the past.[11] Aleida Assmann has identified a number of long-term developments and global events that triggered the 'memory boom' in the late 1980s. According to Assmann, the end of a period of silence concerning the Holocaust and the two World Wars, the demise of the eyewitnesses of these atrocities and the emergence of digital communication technologies enabled the growing interest in the past. A major trigger for the 'memory boom' and renegotiation of how to remember the past was the end of the Cold War and its ideological narratives and frameworks that explained the past and offered directions for the future.[12]

The fall of the Berlin Wall and unification further fuelled the 'memory boom' both globally and nationally. In the German context, it followed a period of West German renegotiation of its Nazi past, which accelerated the process of dealing with the GDR past in newly united Germany. For the majority of West Germany's forty year history, National Socialism had been what Gavriel Rosenfeld calls an 'unmastered past', i.e. a difficult legacy of atrocities with an 'unsettled status in the collective memory' in society.[13] The FRG only began to address this past at the highest political levels and in a self-critical manner in the 1980s.[14] As Jeffrey Olick points out, the Federal Republic adopted a somewhat hybrid stance between *Aufarbeitung* (working through the past) and *Bewältigung* (mastering the past), two terms introduced by Theodor W. Adorno in 1959. Adorno had arrived at the conclusion that *Aufarbeitung* was generally favourable since it included the notion of confronting the past in a self-conscious manner, while *Bewältigung* implied the wish to move on and ultimately forget the past.[15] Instigated by the perpetrators, he continued, *Bewältigung* served to forgive them and wipe public memory of their wrongdoings.[16] Only when these forces were 'no longer active', both physically and spiritually, was it possible to arrive at a state of having come to terms with

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[11] Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, pp. 16–17.

[12] Aleida Assmann, 'Memory, Individual and Collective', in *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual and Political Analysis*, ed. by Robert E. Goodin and Charles Tilly (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 210–24 (pp. 210–11).

[13] Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, 'A Looming Crash or a Soft Landing? Forecasting the Future of the Memory "Industry"', *The Journal of Modern History,* 81, 2009, 122–58 (pp. 126–27).

[14] Bill Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 3–4.

[15] Theodor W. Adorno, 'What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?', in *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective,* ed. by Geoffrey H. Hartman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 114–29 (pp. 115, 128).

[16] Ibid.,p. 115.

the past.[17] Initially, the West German Kohl administration leaned towards *Bewältigung*, as it sought to normalise Germany's Nazi past by relativising it in comparison to other countries and their difficult histories. The Peaceful Revolution and unification of Germany, however, caused the conservative government to revisit this strategy and instead commemorate the past in a highly ritualised manner that normalised not the past itself but the remembrance thereof.[18]

This political climate of reshaping the public image of Germany and in particular coming to terms with the Nazi past drew attention to the memory of the GDR more quickly. Thus, the first wave of the memory boom for GDR-related memory arose from the federal government's agenda to punish political leaders of the GDR and their Stasi henchmen in a process of juridical working through the GDR past.[19] This early engagement with East German history likened the GDR to the Nazi regime, for it was frequently referred to as the second German dictatorship.[20] In order to avoid the accusation of history being instrumentalised for party policies, in 1992 the parliament assigned an *Enquete Kommission*, 'a constitutionally legitimate body […] to investigate particularly complex issues in order to help parliamentary decisions' without 'any active decision-making powers', to issue an informed recommendation on how to treat the legacy of the GDR in united Germany.[21] Within four years after unification and under the premise of the GDR as the second dictatorship, the home affairs select committee recommended that the legacy of socialism be incorporated within a legal framework into its efforts to work through the German totalitarian past of the twentieth century as a whole.[22] By 1997, the parliament had voted in favour of the *Gesamtkonzeption zur Beteiligung des Bundes an Gedenkstätten in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* as a new legal document to centralise the funding and overall narrative of its memorials. As Bill Niven explains, this approach also resulted from the acknowledgment that German division was a direct consequence of the atrocities of the Third Reich, as well as the Western Cold War notion that East Germany was, to a certain extent, a socialist version of the Nazi regime that shared the latter's totalitarian characteristics.[23]

Unification not only meant bringing together two vastly different bodies of economic, legal, and political systems but also two sets of collective memories of the experiences of

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[17] Ibid.,p. 129.
[18] For the whole discussion, see Olick, 'What Does It Mean to Normalize the Past?', p.568.
[19] Cooke, *Representing East Germany*, pp. 30–31.
[20] Ibid., p. 28.
[21] Cooke, *Representing East Germany*, p. 35.
[22] Deutscher Bundestag, *Beschlußempfehlung und Bericht des Innenausschusses (4. Ausschuß)* (Berlin: Bundesanzeiger Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 1994), p. 3.
[23] Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, pp. 3–4.

everyday life in the FRG and the GDR respectively. When western and eastern German collective memories collided as they competed for public recognition, a polarised debate about how to remember East Germany was rapidly triggered. After the efforts of the Kohl administration during the 1980s to enable public celebrations of German cultural memory,[24] such as the *Hambacher Fest*,[25] the collective memories of east Germans posed a threat. As Jeffrey Olick put it: 'Without unifying collective aspirations, identity politics proliferated.'[26] Unification, in contrast to what the Basic Law envisaged in article 23, was in fact the incorporation of the east into the political, economic and juridical system of the West, and thus arguably felt like a victory of the capitalist West over the socialist East. This process never involved two equal sides due to the hegemonic and institutionalised nature of western narratives of divided Germany. With the premise of juxtaposing the GDR and the Third Reich,[27] the Federal Republic arguably contributed to making East Germany a 'difficult past' in the sense of Rosenfeld in the early 1990s, as this view alienated the majority of former East Germans. In addition, this highly politicised stance attracted scholarly objection immediately. Wolfgang Dümcke and Fritz Vilmar criticised the transition mechanisms at work in eastern Germany as usurpation, or worse as colonisation of the east by the west.[28] Consequently, the Kohl administration attempted to regulate the emerging memory landscape relating to the former GDR, which was necessary from the perspective of the federal government in order to help reinforce not only an all-German collective memory but also to provide a basis for common identification within the united country. The official representation of East Germany as *Unrechtsstaat* in politics and media – such as the report of the *Enquete Kommission* or the hunt for Stasi informers by western newspapers – excluded large groups of former GDR citizens from the process of shaping united Germany's collective memory of the GDR.

East German memories that transcended the notions of *Unrechtsstaat* or *Stasiland* were deemed subversive and found their only public representation through the PDS, the political successor to the SED, which faced heavy criticism from other parties precisely for this reason.[29] Consequently, many former East Germans only shared memories of everyday life in the GDR

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[24] Olick, 'What Does it Mean to Normalize the Past?', p. 554.

[25] The Hambacher Fest was a political festival in 1832 promoting the idea of the German nation and thus a vital step towards the foundation of the German Empire in 1871.

[26] Jeffrey K. Olick, 'Turning Points and Myths of German Memory', *Zeithistorische Forschungen,* 5 (2008), 372–86 (p. 372).

[27] Ibid., p. 37.

[28] Wolfgang Dümcke and Fritz Vilmar, 'Was heißt hier Kolonialisierung? Eine theoretische Vorklärung', in *Kolonialisierung der DDR: Kritische Analysen und Alternativen des Einigungsprozesses,* ed. by Wolfgang Dümcke and Fritz Vilmar (Münster: agenda Verlag, 1995), pp. 12–21 (p. 13).

[29] Cooke, *Representing East Germany*, p.16.

within the private sphere of family and friends.[30] By the mid-1990s, this private remembering of everyday life in the GDR began a process of gradual public recognition, encapsulated in the concept of *Ostalgie*, a neologism of the terms *Osten* and *Nostalgie*, which, according to Thomas Ahbe, was coined by the Saxon cabaret artist Uwe Steimle.[31] 'Ostalgia' has been described in popular culture as a longing of east Germans for the GDR past. Scholars, however, agree that this term encompasses more complex phenomena concerning GDR remembrance. Since *Ostalgie* is a specific form of nostalgia, both concepts share a number of features. The Russian-born American scholar Svetlana Boym worked extensively on post-communist nostalgia for the Soviet Union and thus her research helps to build a bridge between nostalgia and *Ostalgie*. In order to highlight various motivations behind such remembrance, Boym distinguished between restorative and reflective nostalgia, which, applied to memory of the GDR, allow to understand the complexity and ambiguity of nostalgic remembrance of former East Germany.

The main difference between the two forms conceptualised by Boym is that restorative nostalgia seeks to restore a lost *Heimat,* while reflective nostalgia accepts that the home is irrevocably lost. Restorative nostalgia evolves precisely from this sense of loss of both emotional and spatial belonging.[32] On a material level, it engages with complete recreations of landmarks representing the lost home, and, on an abstract level, it provides generalised narratives in which the personal memories of those who remember link in easily, thus offering feelings of identification and belonging.[33] 'Ostalgia' is closely interlinked with the question of a distinct east German identity. Although supporters and agents of 'ostalgia' do not have the resources or desire to re-erect monuments of the former home, painstakingly detailed reconstructions of GDR living spaces in films and museums can arguably be regarded as attempts to reimagine the past, since the material culture of the GDR becomes a monument itself in the sense of Boym's theory. In the specific case of GDR memory, the term 'restoration' may be misleading in the sense that re-establishing former East Germany is neither feasible nor desirable. Nostalgia for East Germany, while not aiming for restoration, has at times served the purpose of establishing a distinct eastern identity. As Roberta Bartoletti argues, 'ostalgia' in the early and mid-1990s has emphasised former East German products and brands as material

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[30] This response to a lack of public platforms for certain memories is a rather typical one considering the publicly suppressed memory of German expellees after the Second World War.

[31] Ahbe, Thomas, *Ostalgie: Zum Umgang mit der DDR-Vergangenheit in den 1990er Jahren* (Erfurt: Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2005), p. 7.

[32] Linda Shortt argues that heimat for Germans means primarily 'emotional attachment to place'. Linda Shortt, *German Narratives of Belonging: Writing Generation and Place in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Legenda, 2015), p.5.

[33] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), pp. 41–42.

icons of the GDR. Former GDR citizens have charged these products with idealised qualities, such as 'simplicity', 'authenticity', 'unaffectedness', 'naturalness' and 'solidity'. In doing so, the characteristics of the products were projected onto east German people and vice versa.[34] Jonathan Bach has made a similar observation in linking post-*Wende* eastern products with a sentiment of authenticity.[35] By projecting these characteristics onto the products, former GDR citizens bestowed an identity-establishing role onto them, as they came to represent East-Germanness per se. East German people, in turn, identified with these particular features of an imagined post-*Wende* East German identity. Most explicitly, Patricia Hogwood likens *Ostalgie* with East German identity in the 1990s, and notes that both are a result of the societal and economic position of east Germans in the united Federal Republic.[36] As these commentators argue, nostalgia for East Germany aims at establishing a distinct east German identity rather than attempting to restore the GDR as a state. Therefore, I suggest adapting Boym's concept of restorative nostalgia in the case of the GDR under the name of identity-establishing 'ostalgia' instead.

Reflective nostalgia, in contrast, includes acceptance of the fact that the former home is lost and cannot be restored as it was. This realisation triggers the need to narrate individual memories in a discourse about how the past relates to the present and future. *Ostalgie*, much like nostalgia, is as much a response to present circumstances and concerns about the future as it is about the past. As Fred Davis wrote,

> the ability to feel nostalgia for events in our past has less (although clearly something) to do with how recent or distant these events were than with the way they contrast – or more accurately, the way we *make* them contrast – with the events, moods and dispositions of our present circumstances.[37]

This reading of the root causes for nostalgic remembrance is also present in academic works on *Ostalgie*. For Daphne Berdahl, it is rather a form of counter-memory that engages with contemporary issues, thus attempting to construct a different present instead of a past.[38] More specifically, as Silke Arnold-de Simine argues, 'ostalgia' expresses a desire for agency and

[34] Bartoletti, Roberta, ''Memory Tourism' and Commodification of Nostalgia', in *Tourism and Visual Culture*, ed. by Peter Burns, Cathy Palmer and Jo-Anne Lester, 2 vols (Wallingford and Cambridge (MA): CAB International, 2010), I *Theories and Concepts*, pp. 23–42 (p. 38).

[35] Jonathan Bach, '"The Taste remains": Consumption, (N)ostalgia, and the Production of East Germany', *Public Culture*, 14.3 (2002), 545–56 (p. 552).

[36] Patricia Hogwood, 'Identity in the Former GDR: Expressions of 'Ostalgie' and 'Ossi' Pride in United Germany', in *Globalization and National Identities*, ed. by Paul Kennedy and Catherine J. Danks (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 64–79 (pp. 76–8).

[37] Davis, 'Nostalgia, Identity and the Current Nostalgia Wave', p. 417.

[38] Daphne Berdahl, ''(N)Ostalgie' for the present: Memory, longing, and East German things', *Ethnos*, 64.2 (1999), 192–211 (p. 202).

collectivity in shaping memory of GDR history in the present.[39] Other scholars have interpreted 'ostalgia' as a longing for a better future, an idea that has also been linked to the concept of nostalgia. David Lowenthal noted, for instance, that '[m]istrust of the future also fuels today's nostalgia. We may not love the past as excessively as many did in the nineteenth century, but our misgivings about what may come are more grave [sic]'.[40] According to Peter Thompson, the obliteration of a better socialist future, which had been promised to GDR citizens, was a decisive factor in the emergence of 'ostalgia'.[41] This future-oriented reading of *Ostalgie* echoes Svetlana Boym's definition of nostalgia as a yearning for the 'obsolete hopes for the future'.[42] According to Boym, a common means to express this reflective engagement with the past is irony as a subversive form of self-reflection.[43] Comedic *Wendefilme* highlight this idea that comedy is an effective method to engage critically with the past. Helen Cafferty, for instance, argues that the comic elements in the film *Sonnenalle* add a new dimension to GDR remembrance, as they criticise the East German state and those who represent it in a satirical way.[44] Paul Cooke notes that satiric exaggeration in Thomas Brussig's *Helden wie wir* highlights state oppression in the GDR. He writes:

> The satirical appropriation of a hybrid position adopted in the text to question the perceived instrumentalization of the GDR, consequently, therefore, also *confirms* the oppressive nature of the life under the SED. In so doing, the text attacks what its author sees as equally worrying mis-readings [sic] of the past by east Germans.[45]

Critics have labelled both stories as 'ostalgic' and lacking respect for victims of SED state terror due to their comedic reimagining of life in the GDR. Cafferty and Cooke, however, demonstrate how irony and satire are effective means to self-reflect on the past, thus demonstrating the significance of Svetlana Boym's research for memory of the GDR. Her findings are a helpful entry point for an analysis of whether a diversification of contemporary memory narratives of the GDR has taken place in recent years. Rather than labelling products of visual culture vaguely as 'ostalgic', this distinction between identity-establishing and reflective 'ostalgia' allows for conclusions to be drawn concerning the motivations and agency

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[39] Arnold-de Simine, Silke, '"The Spirit of an Epoch Is Not Just Reflected in Pictures and Books, but Also in Pots and Frying Pans": GDR Museums and Memories of Everyday Life', in *The GDR remembered: representations of the East German state since 1989*, ed. by Nick Hodgin and Caroline Pearce (Rochester: Camden House, 2011), pp. 95–111 (p. 108).

[40] Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, p. 11.

[41] Peter Thompson, '"Worin noch niemand war": The GDR as Retrospectively Imagined Community', in *The GDR remembered: representations of the East German state since 1989*, ed. by Nick Hodgin and Caroline Pearce (Rochester: Camden House, 2011), pp. 250–65 (p. 561).

[42] Boym, 'Nostalgia and Its Discontents', p. 10.

[43] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, pp. 49–50.

[44] Cafferty, '*Sonnenallee*', p. 258.

[45] Cooke, *Representing East Germany*, p. 75. Emphasis in original.

behind such representations of the GDR.

2.2 *Ostalgie* in Visual Culture

The above comments by Cafferty and Cooke point to the important role that films and visual media in general have played in the rise of and discussions around *Ostalgie*. This section looks at key film productions and museum exhibitions that enabled the public recognition of *Ostalgie* as a mnemonic phenomenon and shaped its development since the mid-1990s. The transition from private remembering to *Ostalgie* in film and exhibitions was, however, not frictionless. As Dominic Boyer writes, East German everyday memories shifted from the private into the public sphere partly with the help of witty businesspeople from western Germany who sensed a market value in the memory of East Germany.[46] A prominent example of such marketable memory were the so-called '*Ostalgie*-Partys' that gained popularity by providing a carnivalesque reimagining of life in the GDR in a confined space and time. These parties, first held at private settings and later as organised events, featured typical GDR clothes (even uniforms), agitation material such as flags and posters, portraits of politicians and East German pop and rock music as well as political songs.[47] Daphne Berdahl suggested that GDR board and card game were another such trend. Although games like *Kost the Ost* and *Ferner Osten* demanded trivial knowledge of everyday life in the GDR, including brand names, product prices and lyrics of East German pop songs,[48] the nature of these games, and indeed the parties, was essentially shallow and materialistic. Emphasis was placed on a limited number of props and facts that were deemed representative of everyday life in the GDR. Both of these examples of remembering demonstrate that 'ostalgia' in the mid to late 1990s was a niche trend acted out in a private or semi-private atmosphere by a small group of east Germans. Still, they represented the evolving nature of 'ostalgia' as part of the wider trend of the memory industry. While 'ostalgia' of the early 1990s comprised buying east German food brands, the trend of 'ostalgic' parties and board games during the mid- and late 1990s shows that some customers were willing to pay for GDR memory entertainment rather than just essential consumables that reminded them of East Germany. As Thomas Ahbe points out, however, this was merely an interim stage on 'ostalgia's' way to vast commercial success that peaked at the turn of the

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[46] Boyer, '*Ostalgie* an the Politics of the Future in Eastern Germany', pp. 374–75.
[47] Ahbe, *Ostalgie*, pp. 43–44.
[48] Berdahl, ''(N)Ostalgie' for the present', pp. 197–98.

millennium.[49]

This trend did not remain unnoticed by historians, who discussed whether and how to incorporate the quotidian into remembering the GDR in general, and into museum exhibitions in particular. Notably, the 1995 conference 'DDR-Alltagskultur. Musealisierung – soziales Gedächtnis – Objektkultur' offered an early platform for discourse on the subject.[50] As a key speaker there, Bernd Faulenbach argued against any kind of permanent exhibition on everyday life in the GDR for two reasons: firstly, there had not yet been sufficient research on the topic, and secondly, scholars were still in dispute over the interpretation of GDR history as a whole.[51] Faulenbach's stance against representing everyday life in East Germany is arguably rooted in his scepticism about 'ostalgia', a phenomenon that to him was little more than 'selective amnesia' of defiant East Germans.[52] By the time of the conference, however, the first museum project to preserve the material culture of the GDR had already taken off. As early as 1993, the city of Eisenhüttenstadt in eastern Brandenburg vowed to establish a 'Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR'.[53] In response to the quickly disappearing remnants of the GDR following the *Wende*, the museum's purpose was to preserve the material culture of the everyday in East Germany in conjunction with personal accounts of eyewitnesses' experiences of using these objects.[54] In order to avoid criticism of the project, museum director Andreas Ludwig saw the museum as part of an on-going epistemological process of working through the GDR.[55] Despite these early efforts to showcase the quotidian of the GDR, the first permanent exhibition in Eisenhüttenstadt only opened in 1999. By then, however, a number of private initiatives, including the museum case studies *Olle DDR* in Apolda and the *DDR Museum im Kino* in Malchow, which feature in this study, had begun to collect and display East German artefacts in what many have criticised as an amateurish manner.[56]

Ostalgia eventually broke through into popular culture with the cinema release of the

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[49] Ahbe, Ostalgie, p. 44.

[50] Irmgard Zündorf, 'Vitrine oder Wühltisch: DDR Alltagsgeschichte im Museum', in *Die Musealisierung der DDR: Wege, Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Darstellung von Zeitgeschichte in stadt- und regionalgeschichtlichen Museen*, ed. by Katrin Hammerstein and Jan Scheunemann (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2012), pp. 96–109 (p. 96).

[51] Bernd Faulenbach, 'Probleme der Musealisierung der DDR und ihrer Alltagsgeschichte', in *Alltag und soziales Gedächtnis: Die DDR-Objektkultur und ihre Musealisierung*, ed. by Gerd Kuhn and Andreas Ludwig (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag GmbH, 1996), pp. 26–41 (p. 39).

[52] Cooke, *Representing East Germany*, p. 8.

[53] Andreas Ludwig, 'Eisenhüttenstadt', in *Erinnerungsorte der DDR*, ed. by Martin Sabrow (Munich: Verlag C.H.Beck, 2009), pp. 128–38 (p. 137).

[54] Andreas Ludwig, 'Musealisierung der Zeitgeschichte: Die DDR im Kontext', *Deutschland Archiv*, 44.4 (2011), 604–13 (pp. 607–08).

[55] Andreas Ludwig, 'Deutsche Geschichte im Museum', *Bauwelt*, 85.21 (1994), 1151–55 (p. 1154).

[56] Bach, 'Collecting Communism', p. 136.

film *Sonnenallee* in 1999. Amidst a heated public debate about the legacy of the GDR as an *Unrechtsstaat*,[57] the film became a surprise hit at German box offices with its story about coming-of-age in former East Berlin in the 1970s.[58] Most film critics dismissed the film's focus on the apolitical everyday lives of teenagers in East Berlin as a problematic white-washing of the GDR itself.[59] Helen Cafferty, however, suggests that the film 'deconstructs the Ossi as deformed Other for a western audience',[60] and therefore strives to normalise lived experience of the GDR within the pan-German debate of the lost socialist state. Taking Cafferty's critical analysis of the film one step further, Paul Cooke reads *Sonnenallee* as a film that

> explores the tensions between, on the one hand, what is seen by East Germans as the historical elision of their pre-unification experience, and, on the other, the view by many in the West that Easterners are simply wallowing in their collective past. […] [T]hrough this self-conscious examination of 'Ostalgie', the film explores the highly ambiguous nature of the phenomenon, but ultimately seems to recuperate it, by suggesting that nostalgia is always, inevitably, an essential element in the construction of individual cultural identity.[61]

Sonnenallee arguably ushered in a new era of visual representation of East Germany. The film strongly emphasised the material culture of East Germany and the ways in which it affected the quotidian life of Easterners who went to great lengths in their quest to acquire desired goods. While previous films belonging to the phenomenon of the *Wendefilm* largely engaged with the newly unified Germany and the obstacles caused by division, such as in Peter Timm's *Go Trabi Go* (1991)[62] or Lienhard Wawrzyn's *Der Blaue* (1994),[63] *Sonnenallee* depicted everyday life in the GDR away from political oppression and the euphoria of the fall of the Berlin Wall. At the same time, German cinema gradually turned away from what Eric Rentschler called the 'cinema of consensus' that dominated post-Wall Germany until then.[64]

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[57] This debate, which emerged in the early 1990s, continues to flare up in political discussions, for instance around anniversaries of unification or the fall of the Berlin Wall. See for instance Horst Sendler, 'Unrechtsstaat und Amnestie', *Neue Justiz*, 5 (1995), 225–26; Eike von Hippel, 'War die DDR kein Unrechtsstaat?', *Recht und Politik*, 3 (1997), 150–54.

[58] Helen Cafferty, '*Sonnenallee*: Taking Comedy Seriously in Unified Germany', in *Textual Responses to German Unification,* ed. by Carol Anne Costabile-Heming, Rachel Halverson and Kristie Foell (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2001), pp. 253–71 (p. 254).

[59] Stefan Wolle, 'Schatten in der Sonnenallee', *Welt*, 11 February 2000, <https://www.welt.de/printwelt/article501576/Schatten-in-der-Sonnenallee.html> [accessed 12 September 2017]

[60] Cafferty, '*Sonnenallee*', p. 258.

[61] Paul Cooke, 'Performing 'Ostalgie': Leander Haussmann's *Sonnenallee*', *German Life and Letters,* 56.2 (2003), 156–67 (p. 158).

[62] *Go Trabi Go*, dir. by Peter Timm (Bavaria Film, 1991).

[63] *Der Blaue*, dir. by Lienhard Wawrzyn (Journal Filmproduktion, 1994).

[64] According to Rentschler the Cinema of Consensus depicts young Germans who are more concerned about their careers and lifestyles than Germany's troubled past as the protagonists of the New German Cinema did. Eric Rentschler, 'From New German Cinema to the Post-Wall Cinema of Consensus', in *Cinema and Nation,* ed. by Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 260–77 (p. 272).

Instead, the films of directors of the Berlin School seemed to offer a return to the ideas of the New German Cinema of the 1970s and 1980s. Narratives thus revolved around microcosms in society and personal lives, themes that are very much grounded in day-to-day reality.[65] A prominent representative of the Berlin School is Christian Petzold whose *Barbara* features as a case study in this thesis, and is a key example of post-ostalgia.

While *Sonnenallee* depicted the Eastern fetish for goods and lifestyles of Western origin, the even more successful *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003) by director Wolfgang Becker explored the frictions caused by the sudden vanishing of East German domestic material culture after 1989.[66] Here, the German concept of *Heimat* manifests itself within material culture, and the loss of the former becomes tangible and is felt through the loss of the latter. Peter Thompson has argued that in the futile attempt to save material remnants of the GDR, the protagonists seek to 'find the future within the past'.[67] For Paul Cooke, however, the final sequence of the film offers a vision for united Germany as the Kerner family 'attempts, along with the rest of the [united] nation, to learn how to live together and negotiate its future'.[68] This particular reading did not resonate with most critics who pigeonholed *Good Bye, Lenin!* alongside *Sonnenallee* as uncritically 'ostalgic'.[69]

The vast commercial success of both films led to the rapid emergence of *Ostalgie Shows* on German TV, including on both public broadcasters ARD and ZDF, as well as private ones, such as RTL and Sat1.[70] These entertainment shows sought to explain the GDR through its material culture to a unified German audience, in particular western viewers. In doing so, they helped to make certain objects of Eastern origin, such as the Trabant, pioneer clothing or *Tempo Linsen*, memory icons of the late socialist state. Overly staged performances of commemoration, such as the former figure skater Katharina Witt posing in a pioneer uniform, or former boxer Henry Maske displaying the workings of a Trabant,[71] culminated in shallow and superficial chats with these former East German celebrities about their personal memories,

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[65] Maria Vinogradova, 'The Berliner Schule as a Recent New Wave in German Cinema', *Film and Media Studies*, 3 (2010), 157–68 (pp. 165–66).

[66] *Good Bye, Lenin!*, dir. by Wolfgang Becker (X-Filme Creative Pool, 2003).

[67] Thompson, '"Worin noch niemand war"', p. 259.

[68] Paul Cooke, 'Abnormal Consensus? The New Internationalism of German Cinema', in *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization*, ed. by Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (Rochester and Woodbridge: Camden House, 2006), pp. 223–36 (p. 230).

[69] Cooke, *Representing East Germany*, p. 128.

[70] Ahbe, Thomas, 'Competing Master Narratives: *Geschichtspolitik* and Identity Discourse in Three German Societies', in *The GDR remembered: representations of the East German state since 1989*, ed. by Nick Hodgin and Caroline Pearce (Rochester: Camden House, 2011), pp. 221–49 (p. 235).

[71] 'Episode 1', *Die DDR Show*, RTL, 3 September 2003.

and thus guaranteed a short-lived public interest in the format. And yet, this depoliticised depiction of the GDR may have provoked and contributed, to a certain extent, to the shift in German visual culture pertaining to the GDR that emerged a few years later, notably with the film *Das Leben der Anderen.*

While 'ostalgia' conquered popular culture in Germany to such an extent that even state broadcasters felt it was appropriate to profit from it as a source of both entertainment and information, the federal government coalition of the SPD (social democrats) and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (green party) considered revisiting the *Gedenkstättenkonzeption* from 1998, as it did not envisage remembering the quotidian in the East. Leaving the remembrance of, and thus the selection of narratives around, everyday life in the GDR mainly to former East Germans and the German entertainment industry proved difficult. German politicians recognised that 'ostalgia' – as a form of memory that had emerged from below – undermined the state's interests in shaping collective memory of the dictatorship in unified Germany. Based on existing memory policies, the question over which German historians and politicians argued was whether everyday culture of the GDR should be included at all in official sites of memory, such as museums, as it was feared that this could undermine memory of the repressive nature of the East German regime. In 2005, in an attempt to institutionalise memory of the GDR, the then German secretary for culture Bernd Neumann assigned a group of experts on GDR history, the so-called 'Sabrow commission' chaired by the renowned historian Martin Sabrow, with the task of drawing up a concept for the reappraisal of the GDR dictatorship. In 2006, after almost two years of investigation, the Sabrow commission argued in favour of including the topic of everyday life in East Germany into the *Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption des Bundes*. A direct result of this shift in memory politics was the first state-run exhibition of everyday life in the GDR, *Alltag in der DDR*, in Berlin, which I will discuss later on.

This public debate about how to remember the oppressive nature of the GDR without alienating former East German citizens heralded the end of the brief period of comedic *Wendefilms* in the mid-2000s.[72] Instead, dramatic adaptations of stories of deviance and flight from the GDR became fashionable. The prime example of this shift in visual representation was *Das Leben der Anderen*. It broke new ground in remembering the GDR, in particular with the character of Stasi officer Wiesler. After secretly protecting the target of his operation,

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[72] Jennifer Marston William, 'Beyond *Sonnenallee:* Leander Haussmann's *Wendefilm* comedies *Herr Lehmann* (2003) and *NVA* (2005)', in *Strategies of Humor in Post-Unification German Literature, Film, and Other Media*, ed. by Jill Twark (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011) pp. 224–40 (p. 225).

Wiesler himself faces the oppressive methods of the political system he helped to maintain. The film sparked a debate about the Stasi, and the extent to which the story of a humane secret police officer was realistic or simply a fantasy offered up to neutralise one-sided interpretations of life in the GDR. Critical voices on the film include Rüdiger Suchsland,[73] who calls Wiesler 'a Saul who becomes a Paul',[74] and Günter Jenschonnek who suggests that Wiesler is turned into 'a State Security Schindler'.[75] Through their analogies, both scholars reject the idea that Wiesler provides a counter-narrative to the Stasi perpetrator and rather consider his persona to perpetuate the myth of the 'Good German'.[76]

The years between the two milestone anniversaries of the fall of the Berlin Wall and unification in 2009/2010 and 2014/15 proved particularly fruitful for cinematographic engagement with the GDR. As outlined in the introduction, the GDR became, for the first time, the subject of a TV series in the long-running drama *Weissensee*. Most recently in 2015, the series *Sedwitz* on ZDF offered a return to a comedic reflection of state authoritarianism in the GDR and received much less criticism for this depiction than comedic *Wendefilms* around the turn of the millennium. In the same year, the private channel RTL landed an internationally acclaimed hit, despite being a domestic flop, with the drama series *Deutschland 83*.[77] Although all three examples still focus on political elements of the GDR, such as the Cold War, border guards and the Stasi, they employ these themes within a wider range of narratives. Thus, the representation of everyday life in the GDR has shifted considerably in recent years finding a significant place in the German memory canon and thus in German visual culture. This development is part of the wider trend of remembering East Germany in a more nuanced way that I call post-ostalgia and will explain in more detail in the following section.

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[73] Paul Cooke, 'Introduction', in *'The Lives of Others' and Contemporary German Film: A Companion*, ed. by Paul Cooke (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2013), pp. 1–18 (p. 8).

[74] Suchsland, 'Mundgerecht konsumierbare Vergangenheit'.

[75] Jeschonnek, 'Die Sehnsucht nach dem unpolitischen Märchen', p. 502.

[76] The concept of the 'Good German', often in the context of the Nazi past, has largely been interpreted as a metaphor for redemption and to hint towards historical closure on the atrocities of National Socialism which met with criticism from a number of commentators. For an in-depth discussion on the idea of the 'Good German;' see: Pól Ó Dochartaigh and Christiane Schönfeld, 'Introduction', in *Representing the "Good German" in Literature and Culture after 1945: Altruism and Moral Ambiguity*, ed. by Pól Ó Dochartaigh and Christiane Schönfeld (Rochester and Woodbridge: Camden House, 2013), pp. 1–15 (p. 7).

[77] Philip Oltermann, 'Deutschland 83 has wowed the world – pity the Germans don't like it', *Guardian*, 17 February 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/feb/17/deutschland-83-wowed-world-germans-dont-like-it> [accessed 14 December 2016]

2.3 *Post-Ostalgia* in Contemporary German Visual Culture

In 2001, Patricia Hogwood posited that the future would show 'whether the new eastern identity will prove to be merely transitional, or whether 'the 'Ostalgic' impetus might […] form the basis of a lasting cultural myth'.[78] Notably, Hogwood's definition of 'ostalgia' corresponds with Svetlana Boym's concept of restorative nostalgia, which, in the context of GDR remembrance, has an identity-establishing rather than a restorative function, as argued in section 2.1. At the time of Hogwood's article, it seemed more than possible that identity-establishing 'ostalgia' would manifest itself as the dominant modus for east German remembrance of the GDR. Recent portrayals of East Germany in films and museums largely confirm Patricia Hogwood's claim that identity-establishing 'ostalgia' was indeed little more than a temporary construct to ease the transition from state socialism to the capitalist democracy of unified Germany during the 1990s. With increasing temporal distance from the past, a changed political attitude towards remembering everyday life in the GDR, the passing of the first generations of people born in the GDR and the coming-of-age of children born in the eastern federal states after unification,[79] identity-establishing 'ostalgia' has become increasingly less relevant to German society as a whole. Instead, a more critical engagement with the past in the sense of reflective 'ostalgia' has emerged and become a part of a more diverse German memory landscape pertaining to the GDR.

This general trend across visual media, and museums and films in particular, can be subsumed under the term post-ostalgia that I will explain here. Post-ostalgia can be understood as a framework to describe the representation of the GDR in visual culture since the mid-2000s. Since then, memory of former East Germany has seen a precoess of democratisation, pluralisation and 'normalisation'. With this brief definition in mind, it is worth looking at the term 'post-ostalgia' itself and to explain the reasoning behind its name. Although post-ostalgia encompasses recent developments in remembering the GDR that differ from the dichotomies of the 1990s, I am using the term 'ostalgia', as it has been central to memory debates about the GDR for more than two decades. 'Ostalgia' has been readily applied to describe a vast number of memory performances in films, museums and literature, and has often been defined, yet misunderstood, in the broadest sense as a longing for a retrospectively de-politicised GDR. It encapsulates the positions of both the critics of materialistic and quotidian centred

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[78] Hogwood, 'Identity in the Former GDR', p. 76/78.
[79] For a discussion of East German generations, see: René Lehmann, 'Generation and Transition: East German Memory Cultures', in *Remembering the German Democratic Republic: Divided Memory in a United Germany,* ed. by David Clarke and Ute Wölfel (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 102–15.

remembrance of the East, who used the term 'ostalgia' in a derogative way, and the advocates of non-politicised memory of the GDR, who embraced the phrase, thus bestowing a certain validity onto the concept, and contributing to its perpetuation. For these reasons, placing recent trends within the framework of 'ostalgia' helps to illustrate the shift from the mnemonic dichotomies of the 1990s and early 2000s to a more nuanced remembrance of East Germany today.

The second part of the term 'post-ostalgia' also requires clarification, as the prefix 'post' can adopt a variety of meanings. In her article on postmemory,[80] Marianne Hirsch offers a useful discussion of the connotations of 'post'. Her own concept uses this prefix to demonstrate a 'looking backwards rather than ahead and defining the present in relation to a troubled past rather than initiating new paradigms'.[81] Other concepts use 'post' with different meanings, as Hirsch argues: while 'postfeminism' refers to the aftermath of feminism, 'postcolonialism' highlights the unsettling persistence of colonialist thought and action.[82] The 'post' in post-ostalgia is as multi-layered as in Hirsch's own concept. On the one hand, 'post' marks the slow but steady demise of identity-establishing 'ostalgia'. At the same time, reflective 'ostalgia' proliferates in GDR remembrance as a more critical reappraisal of the past. On the other hand, post-ostalgia refers to a broader German memory landscape pertaining to the GDR that incorporates nostalgic views as one of many valid cultural optics through which the GDR is being remembered. This broader scope of GDR remembrance has enabled a progressive decline of binary black and white depictions in the sense of the *Unrechtsstaat* versus the *Alltag* and instead allowed for more nuanced and balanced memory narratives. As the GDR becomes incorporated into united German memory culture, however, memory of East Germany is being influenced by and sometimes aligned to the dominant West German memory canon in a process that this thesis calls 'westernisation' as a form of 'normalisation'. Rather than claiming a linear development, post-ostalgia highlights simultaneous yet diverging directions of GDR remembrance, and thus captures the tensions of memory of East Germany between diversification and 'normalisation'.

How does post-ostalgia, then, manifest itself specifically in recent films and museum exhibitions and what values does it represent? The three main features of post-ostalgic

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[80] Postmemory is a form of trans-generational remembering of the trauma of the Holocaust coined by Marianne Hirsch. For a full discussion, see: Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2012); Marianne Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', *Poetics Today*, 29.1 (2008), 103–28.
[81] Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', p.106.
[82] Ibid.

remembrance comprise a democratisation, pluralisation and 'normalisation' of memory of the GDR. An increase of biographical remembrance, both in museal and filmic depictions, marks more democratic and inclusive remembering and therefore a shift away from the idea of homogeneity of East German biographies. Concentrating on the margins of cultural memory production, post-ostalgia fosters a regionalisation, as film settings move away from the East Berlin-centric stories around the turn of the century and as privately-run museums recognise the potential of telling the story of their region within exhibitions rather than a spaceless Berlin-centric history of the GDR. Non-blockbuster films and privately-run museums are currently being reappraised as vital for the formation of cultural memory of East Germany. In this context, the categorisation of museums as 'Alltagsmuseen' is perhaps too simplistic. These museums represent a diversification of our understanding of what the East German 'Alltag' entailed, as they offer different themes and specialist collections, such as toys, furniture or political memorabilia.

Post-ostalgic pluralisation of remembrance concerns both narratives and objects. The central characters in recent films about the GDR are much more diverse than those of comedic *Wendefilme* – such as *Helden wie wir*,[83] *Sonnenallee*, *Good Bye, Lenin!* and *NVA* – which depicted male adolescents on the verge of adulthood and their struggles to find love and deal with the GDR-specific obstacles of coming-of-age. Instead, post-ostalgic films portray a wider range of protagonists, including women and middle-aged men. Diversification not only takes place in terms of gender and age but also in the realm of social class, thus deconstructing the myth of the GDR as a single class society. Markedly, the middle class, namely the political, economic and academic elite, gains attention from many film directors. The GDR previously condensed to the 1980s is being widened to include everyday life in the GDR prior to its last decade. Cinematic representations progressively cease to rely on the fall of the Berlin Wall to provide a happy-ending and instead place their plots within an eternal GDR, thus questioning the teleological trajectory of unification and legitimising the status of the GDR and East German biographies. Another aspect of the diversification of visual depictions of the GDR is the genre through which they portray the GDR. Although romantic comedies persist in film, other genres such as drama, action and even the family saga become suitable plot structures for narrating life in the GDR. In addition to new narratives, post-ostalgia challenges established ones. Stereotypical depictions of East German economic and aesthetic inferiority are revisited and juxtaposed with more nuanced readings of everyday life in the GDR. While cultural

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[83] *Helden wie wir*, dir. by Sebastian Peterson (Senator Film, 1999).

memory of East Germany during the 1990s reduced its material culture to a few iconic items, including the Trabant, pioneer shirts and food items such as *Tempo Linsen*, recent films and museum exhibitions have increased the visibility of less prominent objects, thus raising their significance. This development highlights the workings of remembering and forgetting and the importance of visibility in this process. The Soviet-produced Lada Zhiguli and the *Dederon* smock are prime examples of these newly established memory icons. Their emergence is closely interlinked with revised memory narratives and social themes, which these objects embody.

Lastly, post-ostalgic remembrance marks a 'normalisation' of memory of the GDR in various ways. Christian Petzold, the director of the film *Barbara*, which this thesis argues is a prime example of post-ostalgic remembering, notes that his focus has turned away from material aspects of the GDR to its society and the relations between its citizens. This has only become feasible with the temporal distance and emotional detachment from East Germany of very recent years.[84] This statement summarises some of the main features of 'normalisation' of the GDR. What Petzold calls an 'emotional detachment from East Germany' is a slightly more complex issue. While former East Germans are increasingly less emotionally attached to the GDR itself, many continue to have a sentimental relationship to their personal experience in East Germany and aim to validate their Eastern biographies in contemporary Germany. Emotional responses to representations of the GDR are more likely to express discontent with present circumstances and their place in society rather than nostalgia for the East. Secondly, a focus on social and societal aspects of everyday life in East Germany instead of merely economic and material issues. In visual culture, the GDR becomes a setting for the exploration of wider socio-political concepts, such as gender and its construction, power and hierarchy and diverse subcultures. The case studies under analysis here explore relationships between individuals as well as those between individuals and the state. In particular, they challenge the dichotomy between victim and perpetrator, and examine biographies between these opposite ends of the spectrum of culpability. Films, in particular, depict Stasi membership resulting from complex dependencies and considerations, rather than pure evil and misanthropy. In the context of the relationship between individual and state, a number of narratives have evolved in both museums and films. Notably, stories dealing with escape from the GDR, opposition to the authorities and withdrawal into the private sphere characterise the responses of East Germans

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[84] Debbie Pinfold 'The End of the Fairy Tale? Christian Petzold's *Barbara* and the Difficulties of Interpretation', *German Life and Letter,* 67.2 (2014), 279–300 (pp. 280–82).

to the state and its authorities. These responses are not always politically motivated but may be connected to emotions like love and betrayal, thus depoliticising these highly defiant behaviours. At times, however, 'normalisation' of the GDR in visual culture manifests itself as an approximation to the social standards of West Germany, a phenomenon that I have called 'westernisation' in section 1.1. In these depictions of everyday life in East Germany, the social norms of West Germany, such as gender roles or family dynamics, become a cultural template for East German society. In film, 'westernisation' also means that elements of American cinema, such as car chases or surveillance vans, are used to narrate stories set in the GDR. Although 'westernisation' suggests a specific cultural optic through which the GDR is being remembered, it contributes to a pluralisation and wider variety of narratives in recent representations of the GDR in comparison to the 1990s. 'Normalised' portrayals of East German society transcend the idea of the GDR as the 'other' Germany and help to incorporate the GDR into united German memory canon.

This brief overview of the main features of post-ostalgia has introduced the general developments in the German memory landscape pertaining to the GDR. It has highlighted the tensions and seemingly diverging trends in remembrance of East Germany. Yet, it is only a point of departure for the following discussion, which looks at the way post-ostalgia works in visual culture. The close reading of fifteen film and museum case studies based on key theories of memory and visual media studies as outlined in this chapter will illustrate the characteristics of post-ostalgia in more detail. The three major areas of food, clothing and transport are representative of the vast realm of everyday life and serve as concrete anchors for the elusive concept of the quotidian.

2.4 *Post-Ostalgia* as a form of Cultural Memory

The previously introduced concepts of post-ostalgia, *Ostalgie* and nostalgia belong to the realm of collective memory. This section aims to provide a theoretical background on collective memory in general, cultural memory as a more specific form thereof and films and museums as memory media before moving on to the analysis of post-ostalgic remembrance in the filmic and museal case studies.

Emerging in the early twentieth century, the concept of collective memory encapsulates the idea that remembering the past is not solely an individual venture but also done by groups. For the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, who coined the term in the 1920s, collective

memories were those memories that narrow and stable social groups, such as families, have a common interest in and are able to recall together.[85] While his concept arguably seems plausible on a micro-scale, its flaws become clearer when applied to macrocosms, such as ethnic groups or nations, in particular when considering the issue of communication and whether memories can be consciously shared and negotiated across large-scale social groups. Prominent critics of the concept include the German historian Reinhart Koselleck and the late American photographer Susan Sontag. Both argue that collective memories have been used historically and in the present for ideological ends.[86] According to Koselleck, events of the past pass through a process of 'homogenisation, collectivisation, simplification and mediatisation' in order to serve a constituting purpose for political, social or religious groups.[87] Using the example of iconic photographs that came to represent historic events, processes or movements, Susan Sontag emphasised the hegemonic purpose that the concept of collective memory had had since its revival in the 1980s.[88] The 'political reductionism and functionalism' of collective memory by scholars such as Sontag and Koselleck has invited criticism by Alon Confino.[89] He considers attempts to equate collective memory with ideology to be problematic, as they 'ignore the category of the social'.[90] Instead, Confino advocates placing memory within the social, the political and the cultural context, thus considering it a result of the interplay between social experience and representation.[91] Jeffrey Olick takes this a step further by suggesting that 'all remembering is in some sense social' and that, therefore, 'social memory' is a better term to encompass 'a wide variety of mnemonic processes, practices, and outcomes' than collective memory.[92] He argues that renaming the concept would also offer a solution to the problematic definition of what 'collective' refers to.[93] Therefore, the term 'social memory' provides a wider theoretical basis for mnemonic phenomena that arise from the dynamic relationships between individuals both on a micro and macro scale. Maurice Halbwachs himself emphasised the significance and impact of social groups on personal memories of individuals. Thus, Olick's suggestion offers a viable alternative to a highly contested name and concept.

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[85] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 52.
[86] Reinhart Koselleck, 'Gibt es ein kollektives Gedächtnis?', *Divinatio*, 19 (2004), 23-28 (p. 25); Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003).
[87] Ibid., p. 27.
[88] Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, p. 66.
[89] Alon Confino,'Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 102.5 (1997), 1386–403 (p. 1395).
[90] Ibid., p. 1393.
[91] Ibid., p. 1402.
[92] Jeffrey Olick, 'Collective Memory: The Two Cultures', *Sociological Theory*, 17.3 (1999), 333–48 (p. 346).
[93] Ibid., p. 346.

A groundbreaking contribution to the debate about what collective memory was and whether it was useful is Jan Assmann's distinction between communicative and cultural memory, both of which are forms of collective memory. According to Assmann, a group does not possess memories but the social construct of the group itself affects the personal memories of its members. In particular, through social interactions, such as conversations or institutionalised celebrations, individual members internalise memory of the group.[94] Assmann calls this form of collective memory 'communicative memory' mainly because of the following three features: it exists within small groups, such as families, concerns primarily memories of the everyday, and depends on oral interaction as a way to remember. These memories are embodied within the narrator as they only come into existence through his or her oral interaction. By listening to these narrations, individual group members can morph from mere receivers to actual carriers of memories and (re-)tell them to other group members. As opposed to Sontag and Koselleck, for whom memories inevitably die with the person who has experienced them,[95] Assmann posits that memories can live on as long as they are narrated within the group, and that forgetting only starts with the end of the communication of such memories.[96]

Assmann also rejects the understanding that communicative memory stored within individuals is the only valid form of memory, as he juxtaposes it with a second form of collective memory that he coins 'cultural memory'. Cultural memory concerns selected points in the past that a group has charged with symbolic meaning and often remembers in an institutionalised way. The main purpose of cultural memory is, for Assmann, not so much to remember per se but to reassure members of a group of their common identity. The nature of such cultural memory is often festive and grandiose, with organised public ceremonies, such as military parades, fireworks displays or wreath-laying ceremonies in front of TV cameras. In contrast, communicative memory emerges from below and engages with the profanities of the quotidian. Cultural memory generally arises from the cultural and academic elite of a group rather than the general public.[97] Assmann defines his two forms of collective memory as binaries in the field of remembering. While cultural memory represents the institutionalised remembering of symbolic place-holders that serve to create and maintain imagined

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[94] Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, 6th edn (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2007), p. 36.
[95] Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, p. 66; Koselleck, 'Gibt es ein kollektives Gedächtnis?', p. 25.
[96] Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis,* p. 37.
[97] Ibid.*,* pp. 52–54.

communities,[98] communicative memory denotes the more democratic process of the oral distribution of biographic or generational memories within small groups by individual members who are the only physical carriers of a particular memory. This distinction between communicative memory and cultural memory is of greatest relevance to this study, as it helps to conceptualise the evolution of memory of everyday life in the GDR since the *Wende*.

A specific form of social memory is generational memory, which is based on the idea of the 'non-synchronicity of the synchronous',[99] according to Aleida Assmann. The concept of generational memory encapsulates the notion that contemporaries, despite living at the same time, are at different stages of their life – such as infancy, early, middle or late adulthood – and thus form various groups of social generations. These generations are distinct and marked by common convictions, ethics and attitudes.[100] The shared experiences of such a generation result in 'shared generational memory' that informs personal memory of its members. Largely based on the pillars of implicit knowledge, no generation is ever fully accessible by members of other generations. Assmann argues that the full extent of shared values characterising a generation only becomes overt when the following, younger generation assumes leading public roles.[101] This younger generation with its idiosyncratic framework of common beliefs, then, shapes public opinion and remembrance based on their experiences and convictions. Such a generational shift arguably occurred in united German memory politics with the end of the Kohl chancellorship in 1998 after sixteen years in office, and thus paved the way for a reconsideration of state-sanctioned memory of the GDR, which eventually led to the *Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption* in 2008.

In the context, Aleida Assmann highlights the powerful impact of generational memory in literature in two distinct ways. Firstly, '"generational" literature […] narrate[s] collective, grand-scale history through the reduced format of family histories, thus connecting private, internal views with those from without'.[102] Such mediations of the past unravel the tensions and 'cognitive discrepancies' between official commemoration and private family memory,[103]

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[98] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.
[99] This idea was first developed by Wilhelm Pinder. Wilhelm Pinder, *Das Problem der Generationen in der Kunstgeschichte* (Berlin: Frankfurter Verlags-Anstalt, 1926).
[100] Assmann, 'Memory, Individual and Collective', p. 214.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Aleida Assmann, 'Limits of Understanding: Generational Identities in Recent German Memory Literature', in *Victims and Perpetrators: 1933 – 1945: (Re-)Presenting the Past in Post-Unification Culture*, ed. by Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Dagmar Wienroeder-Skinner (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG, 2006), pp. 29–48 (p. 32).
[103] Claus Leggewie and Erik Meyer, *Ein Ort, an den man gerne geht: das Holocaust-Mahnmal und die deutsche Geschichtspolitik nach 1989* (Munich: Hanser, 2005), p. 16.

thus exposing frictions between communicative and cultural memory of the same historical event or process. Secondly, the more specific genre of 'father literature' – a name that reflects the revolt of the children of Nazi collaborators against them in the late 1960s – engages with the ruptures, disputes and confrontations between generations and highlights the younger generation's search for identity, as they reject the legacy of their fathers' involvement in World War II and the Nazi atrocities.[104] Although the term 'father literature' has largely been applied to this specific trans-generational tension, it appears to become increasingly relevant for memory of the first, second and third ('Dritte Generation Ostdeutschland') generations of the GDR, as the case study analysis will demonstrate.

How do films and museums, then, shape cultural memory in general and that of former East Germany in particular? Artefacts as one of the common denominators of films and museums build the bridge between cultural memory and visual culture. For Jan Assmann, objects are embodiments of collective memory or at least bear the potential in them to be material representatives or actualisations of collective forms of memory, such as cultural memory.[105] Anne Fuchs has conceptualised the idea that objects, as they represent their previous users, adopt the symbolic role of the eyewitness of past events and thus become 'memory icons'. She defines these within the context of written texts, noting that: 'Memory icons are objects such as photographs, diaries or letters which serve to enshrine a particular version of family history. Although enshrined, such memory icons are invested with the affective imprints of a traumatic historical experience.'[106] Fuchs's characterisation of memory icons borrows an idea that is at the heart of museum theory. The object is thought to hold a lifetime story of the events it witnessed. People invest objects with individual meaning because of their personal experience with them,[107] and thus view them as a materialised manifestation of personal memory. Since Fuchs's term 'memory icon' emphasises the mnemonic significance of certain artefacts, this thesis will utilise it in the upcoming analysis, however, for a wide variety of objects that enshrine memory of everyday life in former East Germany.

The mnemonic meaning of memory icons is determined by their visibility, according to Aleida Assmann. In this context, Assmann has introduced the concepts of canon and archive

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[104] Assmann, 'Limits of Understanding', p. 33.
[105] Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 58.
[106] Anne Fuchs, 'From 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' to Generational Memory Contests in Günter Grass, Monika Maron and Uwe Timm', *German Life and Letters,* 59.2 (April 2006), 169–86 (p. 184).
[107] David Morgan, 'The materiality of cultural construction', in *Museum Objects: Experiencing the Properties of Things,* ed. by Sandra H. Dudley (Oxon and New York: Routlegde, 2012), pp. 101–02 (p. 101).

– or functional and storage memory as she calls them elsewhere.[108] These terms have been widely applied in museum studies, in particular as Assmann herself mentions the museum as a prime example for the distinction of these ideas.[109] Objects and the memories they epitomise are either part of the canon, when on display and therefore visible for public engagement, or they belong to the realm of the archive, when they are stored away from the visitors' eyes.[110] For Assmann, the canon represents active cultural memory that 'is built on a small number of normative and formative texts, places, persons, artefacts and myths, which are meant to be actively circulated and communicated in ever-new presentations and performances.'[111] The archive, on the other hand, contains objects of passive cultural memory, i.e. items that are no longer in use and worth preserving but their story is not currently perceived to be relevant to society. Through preservation in the archive, these objects and their stories lie between the canon and being forgotten, and that is why their role as memory icons for cultural memory is, as Assmann suggests, rather passive.[112] Kerstin Langwagen highlights the purpose of the museum collection as an archive of storage memory with the potential to transform into active cultural memory, and from which the exhibition draws to produce functional memory that is part of the canon.[113] Thus, for a museum object to unveil its potential as a trigger of functional memory, visibility – namely being on display in an exhibition – is essential. In many museums, only a fraction of the collection is exhibited, while the majority is kept in an archive. In contrast, privately-run museums of everyday life in the GDR exhibit the vast majority – some of them up to 90% - of their collection.

Displaying almost the entire collection complicates the distinction between functional and storage memory in these institutions. When exhibition and storage are not separate, as is the case for most of the museums in this study, the lines between functional and storage memory begin to blur. Although on display, the visibility of objects is not guaranteed as they may be (partially) obscured by other objects or blur into an overwhelmingly rich reimagining of an East German space of everyday life in the exhibit. These objects adopt the purpose of a prop within a setting instead of a museum object with a distinct meaning, history and value.

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[108] Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 119.
[109] Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1999), pp. 138–41.
[110] Aleida Assmann, 'Canon and Archive', in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies,* ed. by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2010), pp. 97–107 (p. 98).
[111] Assmann, 'Canon and Archive', p. 100.
[112] Ibid., p. 102.
[113] Langwagen, *Die DDR im Vitrinenformat*, p. 80.

The individual object, thus, is not necessarily a carrier of functional memory despite being on display in the exhibition. As Aleida Assmann states '[we] may look at [functional and storage memory] in terms of creating a perspective, separating a visible foreground from an invisible background.'[114] Over-stacked displays and a disproportionally small storage collection arguably limit the scope of museums to reinterpret and recontextualise their collections in order to turn storage memory into functional memory.

The distinction between functional and storage memory cannot readily be transferred to film, since, unlike exhibitions, which are in flux, films are finished and finite products. In film, there is no equivalent to the archive or collection and thus the concept of storage memory fails to apply. A film does not hold a space to physically store objects; it draws from the production company's storage of props, purpose-built recreations of authentic objects or even from museum collections and archives to create a setting.[115] The film itself, however, is an example of functional memory. Objects within the mise-en-scène, i.e. 'the contents of the frame and the way that they are organised',[116] are staged in a similar way to a museum display. The film director arguably becomes not only a curator of material culture but also of cultural memory, with the help of a camera and by contextualising memory icons with other objects, as well as showing actors engaging with them in a particular way. Siegfried Kracauer calls films that depict objects 'merely […] as a background to self-contained dialogue and the closed circuit of human relationships […] essentially uncinematic.'[117] This is because film, in contrast to the theatre, enables objects to take centre-stage through the gaze of the camera that guides the spectator's vision, and thus makes the object 'a carrier of action'.[118] Therefore, the focus of the camera, the positioning of individual objects in the foreground or the background and the lighting determine the visibility of single items on screen and thus their potential as memory icons. Although film directors and cinematographers have the means to guide the viewers' vision, the viewer herself is the agent of her gaze, i.e. whether she pays attention to the background or not. Arguably, watching the film case studies closely several times for this analysis constitutes a different viewing experience from watching films for leisure in an unreflective manner, which equally holds true for the visitor experience of a museum.[119]

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[114] Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*, p. 126.
[115] Director Irina Gräser of the *DDR Museum im Kino* in Malchow explicitly mentioned lending objects to the producers of the film *Novemberkind*.
[116] John Gibbs, *Mise-en-scéne: Film Style and Interpretation* (London: Wallflower, 2002), p. 5.
[117] Kracauer, *Nature of Film*, p. 46.
[118] Ibid., p. 45.
[119] Steffi De Jong, 'Who is History? The Use of Autobiographical Accounts in History Museums, in *Museums and Biographies: Stories, Objects, Identities*, ed. by Kate Hill (Woodbridge and Rochester: The Boydell Press,

Therefore, the mnemonic impact of memory icons on film is difficult to predict. Christoph Vatter has argued that films become media of functional memory mainly through public reception and the discourses they instigate. He sees film, in combination with other types of media, as part of a complex system that influences the selection, storage, recall, updating and reconstruction of cultural memory.[120] Thus, the workings of functional and storage memory in media such as films and museums only become palpable by looking at them as part of the wider and more complex system of memory media. With its comparative approach to two types of visual media, this thesis contributes to our understanding of the memory media system.

How do films and exhibitions, then, establish a connection between memory icons, the past they represent and their audiences? The potential of films to influence their viewers' perception was noted by Siegfried Kracauer in his seminal work *Nature of Film* where he states that film 'may even condition his [the viewer's] sensibilities to such an extent that […] he involuntarily substitutes untampered-with nature for the make-believe world on the screen'.[121] Unlike later research, however, Kracauer questioned the ability of films pertaining to the past to affect their viewer due to their heavy staging.[122] While Kracauer's main concern about films set in the past was that of authenticity, later research looked at the political and ideological repercussions of depicting historical events. Regarding the rise in productions with the label heritage film or period film in 1980s Britain,[123] scholars including Andrew Higson have noted that these productions perform nostalgia for a romanticised image of the national past.[124] Already in 1974, and with reference to French film, Michel Foucault critically explored the relationship between film and political ideology. He warned that film is a particularly effective means of 're-programming popular memory', i.e. a form of bottom-up memory of the working classes. Underscoring the ideological nature of film, he continued that 'people are shown not what they were, but what they must remember having been'.[125] Ultimately, film becomes a mechanism of hegemonic power for Foucault, as he claimed that 'if one controls people's

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2012), pp. 296–308 (p. 302).

[120] Christoph Vatter, *Gedächtnismedium Film: Holocaust und Kollaboration in deutschen und französischen Spielfilmen seit 1945* (Würzburg: Verlag Könighausen und Neumann GmbH, 2009), p. 42.

[121] Siegfried Kracauer, *Nature of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 77.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Andrew Higson coined the term heritage film, while Claire Monk's criticism thereof prompted her to suggest the term *period film* instead. Andrew Higson, *English Heritage, English Cinema: Costume Drama since 1980* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Claire Monk, 'The British heritage-film debate revisited', in *British historical cinema: the history, heritage, and costume film*, ed. by Claire Monk and Amy Sargeant (London and New York: Routlegde, 2002), pp. 176–98.

[124] Higson, *English Heritage, English Cinema*, pp. 37–38.

[125] Michel Foucault, 'Film and Popular Memory: An Interview with Michel Foucault', *Radical Philosophy*, 11 (1975), 24–29 (p. 25).

memory, one controls their dynamism'.[126] Despite raising valid points about the subjective nature of any depiction of the past, Foucault's rather bleak view of films about historical events appears to be little more than a generalisation.

More recent research, albeit pointing out the potential for ideological instrumentalisation,[127] has eschewed a generalised condemnation of mediating the past in films and museum exhibitions. In particular, historical events that audiences have no personal experience of and have thus little relevance to them may gain significance through mediated representations and imaginative audience engagement with them. Alison Landsberg has taken this idea a step further by claiming that cultural memories of these historical events may adhere to people's personal memories in a similar way as a prosthesis to a body, in a process that she calls prosthetic memory.[128] Landsberg explains the workings as follows: 'Prosthetic memories are adopted as a result of a person's experience with a mass cultural technology of memory that dramatizes or recreates a history he or she did not live.'[129] This 'mass cultural technology', according to Landsberg, entails 'mediated representation[s], such as a film or an experiential museum'.[130] For this reason, the concept of prosthetic memory is of great relevance to this study, since it can help to understand how and why films and museums shape cultural and personal memory of everyday life in the GDR within united German society. Considering the temporal proximity of the GDR past, it becomes clear that prosthetic memory not only means creating new memories in non-experiential generations. It also bears the potential for overwriting personal memories of the experiential generations of the GDR through the consumption of mass cultural media and their reading of life in East Germany.

A number of scholars argue that an emotional attachment, in particular empathy, enables museum visitors and film viewers to access the past. The crucial aspect to elicit empathy in viewers and visitors, according to Landsberg, is the dramatisation of the past in mediated representations. An effective means to provoke empathetic responses, which both Alison Landsberg and Silke Arnold-de-Simine touch upon, is to present historic events through the lens of individual accounts.[131] In film, directors and screenwriters narrate history against

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[126] Ibid.

[127] See for instance Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, p. 34.

[128] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 25.

[129] Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory,* p.28.

[130] Alison Landsberg, 'Memory, Empathy, and the Politics of Identification', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society,* 22.2 (2009), 221–29 (p. 222).

[131] Landsberg, *Prosthetic* Memory, p. 131; Silke Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 47.

the backdrop of the fictional or authentic biographies of the main characters, whose actions and emotions are shaped by the times that they live in. Paul Cooke, for instance, notes the impact of films, in which history becomes a cinematographically dramatised event, such as the majority of *teamWorx* productions in the German context. He argues that the viewers of such films establish an emotional and empathetic connection not only to the characters on screen but also to the past depicted.[132] The tools used by film directors to achieve this emotional response include close-up shots of characters to show their inner feelings through their facial expressions and body language. Point of view shots not only provide the spectator with the same view as the character but also help her to re-live their emotional state of mind.[133] Thus, as Paul Cooke has noted on film, if the consumer of media allows herself to become enmeshed in the narrative of a story, she establishes a personal connection to the historical events depicted, and ultimately absorbs them into her personal memory sequence.

Similar to protagonists in film, eyewitness accounts in museums offer a point of departure for visitors' empathetic engagement with the past.[134] Through these personal tales, history becomes a story with a narrative plot. In a similar fashion to film, storytelling at the museum takes place on a visual and textual level.[135] Heike Buschmann has explained how storytelling in the museum can help to establish a connection between events of the past, the objects representing them and the visitor, in order to overcome the temporal and spatial distance between the past and the present.[136] This rather recent trend contrasts with more traditional exhibition strategies of predominantly static displays of carefully arranged objects accompanied by explanatory texts. In this fairly old-fashioned form of display, the museum is a space of admiration for aesthetically pleasing or curiously alien objects, rather than one of empathetic engagement with the past. However, as museums have adopted methods of storytelling that allow the visitor to bond with the past in a more personal manner, they shift the narrative of a display from a uniquely aesthetic value to a historic, personal and emotional value that may be relevant to the visitor.[137] In particular, museums that reunite objects with the story of their use and, more importantly, the story of their user, achieve a more personal

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[132] Paul Cooke, 'Reconfiguring the National Community Transnationally: teamWorx, Television, and the 'Eventization' of German History', *The Modern Language Review*, 108.2 (April 2013), 539–58 (p. 555).

[133] Landsberg, 'Memory, Empathy, and the Politics of Identification', pp. 224–25.

[134] Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*, p. 131; Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, p. 47.

[135] Mieke Bal, 'Telling, Showing, Showing Off', *Critical Inquiry,* 18.3 (1992), 556–94 (pp. 561–62).

[136] Heike Buschmann, 'Geschichten im Raum: Erzähltheorie als Museumsanalyse', in: *Museumsanalyse*, ed. by Joachim Baur (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2010), pp. 149–69 (p. 149).

[137] Ibid.

response from visitors.[138]

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[138] Alison Booth, 'Houses and Things: Literary House Museums as Collective Biography', in *Museums and Biographies: Stories, Objects, Identities*, ed. by Kate Hill (Woodbridge and Rochester: The Boydell Press, 2012), pp. 231–46 (p. 231).

3 *Zu Tisch in …* der DDR: Reimagining Food and Rituals of Eating

[F]ood is never 'just food' and its significance can never be purely nutritional.[1]

Since 2001, the long-running TV series on Arte *Zu Tisch in…* has been offering hybrid entertainment between travel programme, cookery show and anthropological study of geographic or cultural regions in Europe,[2] thus highlighting Pat Caplan's view in his quote above that food has meaning beyond nutrition. The GDR would have been an interesting episode for this particular programme because of its culinary contradictions and somewhat artificial particularities. On the one hand, East German cuisine needed to set itself apart from Western cooking styles; on the other hand, it was heavily influenced by dishes from other Eastern Bloc nations. Both of these characteristics of food in the GDR had ideological reasons. The balancing act between selective internationalisation and differentiation shaped the politically desirable image of East German cooking culture and identity. Contemporary attempts to reimagine and sell East German cuisine in themed restaurants have been numerous, particularly in Berlin. The restaurant 'Domklause' at the *DDR Museum* in Berlin has been a prominent example of outlets offering what they consider 'authentic' East German dishes, that follow the above mentioned principles of selective internationalisation, i.e. Eastern Bloc dishes, and differentiation, i.e. no typically Western dishes. The success of such ventures with visitors is often limited, considering that the 'Domklause' in Berlin had to close its doors for the last time in 2015 due to a lack of revenue.[3]

This example of the commodification of memory draws on mnemonic narratives of the 1990s, in particular the post-*Wende* construction of a distinct East German identity, here through food, and a homogenous East German culinary culture. Post-ostalgic remembrance in the case studies, in contrast, challenges these stereotypes, as the museums and films depict food as a highly socially contested area in the GDR that embodies complex inter and intra-societal relationships. A brief overview of relevant theory introduces the realm of food within anthropological theory, and why it is relevant for exploring memory of East Germany. This will enable a close reading of the museal and filmic case studies and reveal how post-ostalgic

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[1] Pat Caplan, 'Approaches to food, health and identity', in *Food, Health and Identity,* ed. by Pat Caplan (London and New York: Routlegde, 1997), pp. 1–31 (p. 3).
[2] *Zu Tisch in…*,Arte, 2001-2018.
[3] Robert Rückel, *Ein Abschied, der nicht leicht fällt: Das DDR Restaurant Domklause schließt zum 31.3.2015* (Berlin: DDR Museum Berlin GmbH, 2015) <http://www.ddr-museum.de/de/blog/direktorenblog/ein-abschied-der-nicht-leicht-faellt-das-ddr-restaurant-domklause-schliesst-zum-31.3.2015> [accessed 11 February 2017]

remembrance of food and eating fosters a democratised, pluralised and normalised representation of everyday life in the GDR. Drawing on statistic data about food production and consumption from East Germany will help to uncover whether films and museums portray socio-cultural facts about the GDR correctly.

Structuralist scholars of the 1960s and 1970s have looked at food as a system. For Roland Barthes, different units within this system relate to each other in semantic terms. Particular diets, for instance, are equivalent to linguistic styles and food menus build a syntax.[4] Although food gains meaning beyond mere biological aspects in such a semantic juxtaposition, this approach offers little more than a tool for categorisation. Thinking in similar structuralist patterns, Claude Lévi-Strauss applied the structure of the phonetic triangle to the physical condition of food. Depending on the existence or absence of cultural or natural catalysts, he categorised food in the vertexes of raw, cooked or rotted in his culinary triangle.[5] These categories helped post-structuralist scholars to link certain cooking practices to broader societal discourses, such as gender construction through food preparation and eating.[6] In her seminal article *Deciphering a Meal*, Mary Douglas has analysed the micro- and macro-structure of prepared food from a single dish to a whole meal, and from a weekly meal schedule to the seasonal calendar of festive eating.[7] In doing so, Douglas has emphasised how food denotes the everyday in contrast to festive celebrations, and conversely, how occasions influence the way we eat. Despite her rather western-centric view based on American eating habits, this concept is useful to analyse how depictions of food denote the difference between everyday and festive eating in GDR. All three scholars have explored the idea that food structures everyday practices within a society and how cultural practices have structured the way society deals with food. For this reason, their discourses on food provide a fruitful theoretical backdrop against which the meaning of food in depictions of everyday life in the GDR will be analysed.

By contrast, post-structuralist research into food has concentrated on its relationship to wider historical, political, economic, and social developments.[8] As a prominent representative of this, Sidney Mintz has argued that the introduction to and establishment of new food items

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[4] Roland Barthes, 'Towards as Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption', in *Food and Culture: A Reader,* ed. by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, 3rd edn (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 23–30 (pp. 25–26).

[5] Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'The Culinary Triangle', in *Food and Culture: A Reader,* ed. by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, 3rd edn (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 40–47 (pp. 40–41; 46).

[6] David Sutton, 'Cooking Skills, the Senses, and Memory', in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, ed. by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, 3rd edn (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 299–319.

[7] Mary Douglas, 'Deciphering a Meal', *Daedalus*, 10.1 (1972), 61–81 (pp. 67–70).

[8] Caplan, 'Approaches to food, health and identity', p. 3.

within a society can trigger vast social changes.[9] Drawing on these concepts, this chapter explores the links between food and identity and illustrates how recent depictions in visual culture deconstruct the concept of a distinct East German identity in an effort to normalise the GDR. This is followed by a discussion of food and the senses, which examines food items as a complex form of memory icon and draws on Marcel Proust's writings on the subject of multi-sensory memory. The theme of food and power looks at economic scarcity and privilege in the GDR. Post-ostalgic remembrance in this context means to depict how scarcity shaped intra-societal relationships and created economic hierarchies. Here, it is useful to consider Michel Foucault's seminal writings. His insights into the workings of power structures in society in general, and their effect on individuals, in particular, can be applied to the realm of food and how it served as a catalyst for power relations in East German society. Lastly, the chapter considers food and eating as a microcosm, which informs us about broader societal issues. It draws on Mintz's ideas, using these, alongside Pierre Bourdieu's reflections,[10] for examining how depictions of food and eating represent the class system in the GDR. Engaging with such societal issues instead of material aspects of everyday life essentially marks the post-ostalgic shift in portraying food and eating in the GDR.

3.1 There's no Place like Home: Food as a Place of Retrospective Identity Construction in the Memory Discourse of East Germany

When we look at food as a marker of national identity, we follow Tim Edensor's understanding that national identity is constructed mainly through everyday practices, including drinking and cooking habits, rather than political symbols.[11] Deborah Lupton posits that food establishes identity on a variety of macro levels because it 'mark[s] boundaries between social classes, geographic regions, nations, cultures, genders, lifecycle stages, religions and occupations'.[12] Departing from these ideas, this section investigates how post-ostalgic depictions reject the concept of a distinct East German identity based on food. The majority of case studies have turned away from the fetish of East German food brands that was a major characteristic of 'ostalgic' remembrance and an anchor for a defiant retrospective counter-identity around the

[9] Sidney W. Mintz, 'Time, Sugar, and Sweetness', in *Food and Culture: A Reader,* ed. by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, 3rd edn (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 91–103 (p. 101).
[10] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), p. XXIX.
[11] Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, p. 89.
[12] Deborah Lupton, *Food, the Body and the Self* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage, 1996), p. 1.

turn of the millennium.[13] By juxtaposing and highlighting culinary similarities between the GDR and the FRG, many case studies challenge not only the idea of separate food cultures but also of different national identities between East and West. Lastly, some case studies promote regional identity as they depict distinct regional cooking habits instead of a homogenised East German culinary culture.

A popular narrative device to illustrate the differences between Eastern and Western eating habits in film is a romantic relationship between partners from either side of the Iron Curtain. The films *Westwind* and *Liebe Mauer* specifically choose a shared meal between an East and a West German person to explore the idea of ostensible cultural differences. Released in cinemas in 2011, *Westwind* is a romantic comedy about East German twin sisters who fall in love with West German tourists during their rowing camp at Lake Balaton in Hungary.[14] Different attitudes towards food establish the idea of difference between the teenagers. The spark of romantic interest of the first couple Isabel and Nico vanishes after a somewhat disastrous lunch together. Isabel embodies stereotypical traits that the memory debate of the 1990s projected on East Germans, such as naivety, lack of competence, and modesty,[15] when she accepts a steak that is not cooked according to her order. Nico, in contrast, complains angrily and sends the food back to the kitchen, thus displaying perceived Western traits of arrogance and pretentiousness.[16] The romance of the second couple Doreen and Arne, on the other hand, blossoms, as they do not engage with what distinguishes them but in the things that unite them beyond the issue of food. During their first rendezvous, languages differences between the East and West surface. Isabel's use of the term *Trinkröhrchen*, the East German term for straw, instead of the West German *Strohhalm* causes laughter from Nico. Since neither Doreen nor Arne pay too much attention to these minor variations, they show that questions of identity do not stand in the way of their romantic interest in each other. With this juxtaposition of two couples, the film ridicules stereotypes of Eastern and Western identities. Considering that each couple is a metaphor for united Germany, the film conveys a clear message that adherence to distinct mentalities or even identities, such as in the case of Nico and Isabel, poses a threat to the process of unifying Germany. Mutual acceptance, however, as Doreen and Arne demonstrate, are the basis for a successful consolidation.

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[13] Helmut Wiesenthal, 'Post-Unification Dissatisfaction, or Why are so many East Germans unhappy with the new political system?', *German Politics,* 7.2 (1998), 1–30 (p. 17).
[14] *Westwind*, dir. by Robert Thalheim (Goethe – Institut, 2011).
[15] Hans-Joachim Maaz, *Die Entrüstung: Deutschland, Deutschland, Stasi, Schuld und Sündenbock* (Berlin: Argon Verlag GmbH, 1992), p.139.
[16] Ibid.

The encounters between the East German Isabel and the West German Nico in the film *Westwind* draw largely on mutual prejudices and stereotypes. Alexei Yurchak has conceptualised the idea of a rather fixed image of what capitalist everyday life looked like from the perspective of a Soviet citizen. His concept of the *imaginary West* amalgamates both the fascination with and suspicion of life in western countries and in particular their material culture. It is a result of the lack of knowledge and experience of the 'real' West as well as the communist propaganda's portrayal of capitalism that has become ingrained in the imagination of Soviet people.[17] Although Yurchak's concept acknowledges the perspective of those living in the Eastern Bloc, it draws on hegemonic ideas, such as the desire for superior Western goods and the indoctrinating power of communist propaganda. Applying this framework to the perception of what the East looked like to Westerners is useful to highlight that misconceptions in the FRG about the other side of the Cold War divide were equally informed by ideology, namely anti-communist propaganda, and a lack of personal experience of the other. The idea of an *Imaginary East*, therefore, summarises stereotypical expectations pertaining to the East in the West, including economic poverty, technological inferiority and a lack of aesthetic taste. Thus, this concept is not only relevant for the analysis of depictions of food but also for the realms of clothing and transport in the following chapters as it helps us to deconstruct binary narratives of everyday life in East Germany. In the realm of food, the film *Liebe Mauer* and the museum *Lernort Demokratie* demonstrate that amending Yurchak's concept to summarise stereotypical expectations of what the East looked like in the perception of Westerners helps to understand post-ostalgic depictions of everyday life in the GDR.

In *Liebe Mauer*, a 2009 cinema release about a love affair across the Berlin border between the West German student Franzi and the East German border guard Sascha,[18] irony and reversal of Eastern and Western roles become a means to challenge binary narratives about East German consumer culture. Franzi's first encounter with a *Konsum* store in East Berlin leads her to call it an 'Einkaufsparadies', much to the surprise of fellow shoppers. As a student living on a tight budget, she very much appreciates the low prices of staple foods across the border in comparison to West Berlin: 'das kostet ja wirklich alles fast nur die Hälfte'. Here, the film arguably reverses stereotypes of 'Besserwessi' and 'Jammerossi', as an East German shopper replies in a strong Berlin accent 'so sieht dit och allet aus', pointing out the aesthetic shortcomings of cheap food in the GDR. While the East German woman voices the

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[17] Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 168–69.

[18] *Liebe Mauer*, dir. by Peter Timm (Relevant Film, 2009).

stereotypical Western view of East German food as being of inferior quality, a narrative that we find, for instance, at the museum *Alltag in der DDR* in Berlin,[19] the West German Franzi adapts an argument that the SED used to defend its economic policies pertaining to food. In doing so, the film highlights that different views and expectations of consumers do not depend on their origin from the East or the West but instead on their current economic situation and personal preferences. This scene points clearly to the idea of an imaginary East as it plays with the expectations of the West German Franzi upon her first visit to the East. Her pleasant surprise at the grocery shop prices indicates that her previous expectations were negative and informed by a lack of personal experience of the GDR. As the film reverses stereotypes of East and West, it raises the viewer's awareness of them and offers a point of departure for critical reflexion on these negative cultural narratives.

In the museum *Lernort Demokratie*, the only privately-run GDR museum in western Germany, the well-known memory icon of the *Westpaket* is counterbalanced with the exhibit of what the museum calls an *Ostpaket. Westpakete* feature in many museums of everyday life in the GDR, including the case studies *Alltag in der DDR* in Berlin, *DDR Museum im Kino* in Malchow and *DDR Museum* in Pirna. This memory icon epitomises the narratives of East German scarcity and West German superiority and generosity, as it represents a one-way handing down of goods, or simply a donation, from the prosperous West to the relatively deprived East. By showcasing a *Dresdner Christstollen* that was sent by parcel from the GDR to the FRG, the museum in Pforzheim offers a fresh narrative about the quality of Eastern food and economic standards. In contrast to the common trope of inferiority, the *Stollen* demonstrates confidence in the quality of products that matches the standards of Western taste buds. The exhibit shows that there was a surplus in certain goods, which East Germans could share as opposed to the narrative of scarcity. In deconstructing memory narratives about East Germany from the 1990s, the museum exposes the problematic western view of the *imaginary East* as a place in need of provision of goods from the West. Post-ostalgic remembrance here and in the film *Liebe Mauer* means to offer a platform for narratives that were previously not part of cultural memory of the GDR, and to challenge top-down readings of the GDR, to enable a process of 'normalisation'.

In *Liebe Mauer*, East Germanness is depicted simply as a counter-identity to the West when Franzi's and Sascha's eating habits clash. During their first date, the couple go for dinner

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[19] The exhibition's display of a *Konsum* store highlights low food quality with the help of photographs depicting rotten fruit on sale in an Eastern grocery shop. See section 3.2 for an in-depth discussion on visualising food.

to a corner pub in the eastern part of Berlin. When the selection is between 'Schwein oder Schwein' and Franzi points out that she does not eat pork, the waitress embarks on a monologue about East German food identity: 'Hier ist ein Schweineland. Wir haben nur Schwein.'[20] This unilateral declaration of the GDR as a 'pork country' emerges as an impromptu counter-identity, in particular because of its emphasis on 'hier', which describes both the geographical and the cultural place of the GDR. Tatjana Thelen argues that awareness of one's own cultural identity is often raised by exposure to other cultural identities in general, but in particular, when it comes to East-Germanness in the face of West German cultural influence, for instance through eating habits.[21] The act of rejecting food increases the alienation between Franzi and the waitress. In particular, having a choice and executing the right to choose appears to distinguish West Germans from East Germans. Franzi's refusal to eat pork only becomes a matter of national identity because she is from West Germany, and pork only becomes a symbol of East German national identity because a West German rejects it. The film ridicules the notion of East German national identity by calling it a 'Schweineland', which can translate into both pork and pig, the latter being a common insult in German. Since pork as a food product is generally equally popular in western Germany, the film rejects its status as a marker of East German identity. Instead, it shows the similarities between Eastern and Western food culture, and thus renders a distinct East German identity based on food absurd.

Food-based markers of national identity are defined by Paul Rozin and Michael Siegal based on two main features. Firstly, they are widely available within a country, and secondly their popularity is limited to the specific country for which they are iconic.[22] According to this definition, pork itself is not a suitable national dish of the GDR. Better examples would be the East German dishes of *Krusta* or *Ketwurst,* both inventions of the East German food industry to counter Western culinary influences in the form of pizza and hotdogs. The museum *Alltag in der DDR* dedicates two photographs and texts to precisely these East German inventions, yet links their existence to the narrative of economic scarcity and ultimately failure by the East German government rather than national identity. Rozin and Siegal argue that the taste for national foods is often an acquired one that non-nationals do not appreciate due to their lack of

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[20] Data on food consumption in the GDR shows that pork was by far the most popular variety of meat throughout GDR history, accounting for up to two thirds of meat consumption between 1960 and 1989. Patrice G. Poutrus, *Die Erfindung des Goldbroilers: Über den Zusammenhang zwischen Herrschaftssicherung und Konsumentwicklung in der DDR* (Köln, Weimar and Wien: Böhlau Verlag GmbH & Cie, 2002), p. 214.

[21] Tatjana Thelen, 'Lunch in an East German Enterprise: Differences in Eating Habits as Symbols of Collective Identities', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 131.1 (2006), 51–70 (p. 67)

[22] Rozin, Paul and Siegal, Michael, 'Vegemite as a Marker of National Identity', *Gastronomica: The Journal of Critical Food Studies*, 3.4 (2003), 63–67 (p. 63).

early socialisation with the product.[23] The TV series *Weissensee* exemplifies this idea when the West German journalist Lisa Wagner fails to acknowledge the good taste and concept of *Ketwurst,* which is for her merely an inferior copy of a hotdog. The importance of *Ketwurst* and *Krusta* in the cultural memory of GDR food appears to be marginal as none of the other case studies features them. This marginalisation of both food items in the present suggests that their meaning for East German national identity in the past was similarly unimportant. The Lithuanian scholar Neringa Klumbytė argues that food, in her example 'Soviet' sausages in present-day Lithuania, evokes 'continuity with the past and the intimate biographical link of a subject to an object' – in other words nostalgia.[24] When sold in post-communist flourishing economies and thus taken out of context and time, food products from the former socialist regimes in particular, become an icon of an idealised past that never existed.[25] Thus, neither *Krusta* nor *Ketwurst* appear to epitomise what Rozin and Siegal consider a marker of national identity.

The cinema film *Sushi in Suhl* from 2013, based on the biographical account of a Thuringian chef who ran the only Japanese-themed restaurant in the GDR in the small town of Suhl,[26] introduces the dish *Würzfleisch* – an East German take on the French ragout-fin – as one of the most popular dishes in the eastern cuisine. An article in *Der Tagesspiegel* demonstrates its enduring place in the contemporary memory culture around the GDR. In a series about 'Ostdeutsche Spezialitäten', the Berlin-based chef Carmen Krüger not only provides cooking instructions for *Würzfleisch* but also shares her personal memory of when the dish became a popular menu choice in 1968: 'Würzfleisch gab's überall, zu Hause, in Restaurants, in Bars, das war das non plus ultra.'[27] In Krüger's recollections, the eastern ragout becomes a memory icon of a joyful youth in the GDR that she nowadays attempts to reimagine by serving *Würzfleisch* in her own restaurant. The film *Sushi in Suhl* confirms Krüger's memories of the popularity of the dish in the early 1970s, as chef Rolf Anschütz complains about the unimaginative food choice of his customers when they order this dish. For Anschütz, *Würzfleisch* is an unwanted and somewhat imposed national dish that does not embody any specific tradition unlike the regional Thuringian cuisine that he seeks to promote.

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[23] Ibid., p. 66.

[24] Neringa Klumbytė, 'The Soviet Sausage Renaissance', *American Anthropologist*, 112.1 (2010), 22-37 (pp. 29–30).

[25] Ibid., p.31.

[26] *Sushi in Suhl*, dir. by Carsten Fiebeler (Movienet Film GmbH, 2013).

[27] Carmen Krüger, 'Würzfleisch und Sepi', *Tagesspiegel,* 6 January 2008, <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/weltspiegel/essen-trinken/ostdeutsche-spezialitaeten-wuerzfleisch-und-sepi/1133936.html> [accessed 2014]

Sushi in Suhl's engagement with regional specialties is a prominent example of post-ostalgic narratives around food in the case studies, as it portrays the rural margins and promotes recognition of regional identity in the GDR. Food plays a pivotal role in the formation of regional identity in the film. David Sutton has observed how food helps to constitute regional identity.[28] When chef Anschütz selects a Thuringian menu for the *Handelsorganisation* delegation upon their 25th anniversary,[29] he attempts to revive not only regional recipes but also regional culture and identity. Through his research on wine, Robert Pincus has argued that certain food items become emblematic for a region and that, in the end, a region may identify itself through the food products that are specific to it.[30] In the film, the traditional 'Maikäfersuppe' [cockchafer soup] represents a strong regional character, as it is unknown to the HO leadership from Berlin. Anschütz's cooking appears to be an act of defiance. Robert Feagan describes culinary defiance as a result of

> a range of concerns around the loss and diminishment of uniqueness and geographic difference associated with the perceived homogenizing forces of the cultural, social, and economic […]. And, in this environment of concern, territories, regions, places and communities are evinced as spaces of resistance through which agency and local institutional efforts can manage change […] at least under some reworked level of control from below.[31]

What Feagan calls 'homogenizing forces' is, in Anschütz's case, the HO and the socialist monoculture across the GDR and the Eastern Bloc, not least in terms of eating habits, which were imposed on restaurant owners like Anschütz. Thus, the film shows in a comical manner how regional culture was suppressed in the GDR, on the one hand, but also how individuals attempted to maintain regional identity during socialism. This narrative challenges the notion of cultural uniformity in the GDR, as well as more specifically that of culinary uniformity. Therefore, memory of food in the GDR in *Sushi in Suhl* is more pluralistic in a post-ostalgic manner. Although the mediatisation of this biographical story is the result of a selection process, the depiction of such individual experiences helps to further refute misconceptions of standardised East German life stories. This arguably fosters more democratic remembrance of the GDR.

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[28] David. E. Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts: an Anthropology of Food and Memory* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001).

[29] The Handelsorganisation was the largest state-owned retail business in the GDR, and shall be abbreviated as HO in the following.

[30] Robert Pincus, 'Wine, Place, and Identity in a Changing Climate', *Gastronomica: The Journal of Critical Food Studies,* 3.2 (2003), 87–93.

[31] Robert Feagan, 'The place of food: mapping out the 'local' in local food systems', *Progress in Human Geography,* 31.1 (2007), 23–42 (p. 32).

An increased number of individual accounts of East Germany also prompt depictions of the relationship between food and personal identity. When Deane W. Curtin writes that '[f]ood structures what counts as a person in our society', he points exactly to this relationship.[32] In the film *Sushi in Suhl*, chef Rolf Anschütz distinguishes himself from other members of the HO and most of his customers by having an open mind to new recipes from both traditional Thuringian and Japanese cuisine. His Japanese dishes, in fact, receive a regional touch as he replaces the elusive original ingredients of soy sauce and salmon with typical elements of the East German cuisine, namely Worcester sauce (normally used to spice *Würzfleisch*) and locally caught carp. Post-ostalgic remembrance of eating in the GDR here highlights individuality and that personal identity can be expressed through food choices. In particular, eating and cooking habits represent both a rootedness in a specific region and openness to explore foreign cuisine.

As the depictions of food and identity in the case studies demonstrate, post-ostalgic memory rejects the idea of an East German identity that is somehow distinct from the West. Mainly through the means of comedy, satire and exaggeration of previously held stereotypes pertaining to both East and West Germans, the films and museums remind us of the similarities between East and West German cuisine. In the same way in which post-ostalgia deconstructs the concept of East German national identity, it challenges the idea of the homogeneity of culinary culture in the GDR and instead fosters a regionalisation. Thus, reading depictions of food through the framework of identity has revealed the ways in which post-ostalgic remembrance normalises everyday life in the GDR and allows for a democratised formation of cultural memory that includes the fringes and biographical remembering.

3.2 See Food: Sensory Food Experiences in Visual Culture

When considering food as a memory icon, it becomes clear that its putridness and non-durability add a level of complexity. David Sutton posits that food may well serve as a 'place of memory' in the sense of Pierre Nora's lieux de mémoire.[33] Many societies, Sutton argues, construct food as a place of cultural memory, which affirms their group identity.[34] Thus,

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[32] Deane W. Curtin, 'Food/Body/Person', in *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food,* ed. by Deane W. Curtin and Lisa Maree Heldke (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 3–22 (p. 4).

[33] Pierre Nora, 'Between History and Memory: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*', *Representations*, 26 (Spring 1989), 7–24.

[34] Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts*, p. 11.

although foodstuff is perishable, the idea of certain foods, dishes, and recipes is a lasting one, as the book *In Memory's Kitchen* exemplifies.[35] A collection of recipes originally written down by inmates of Nazi concentration camps, this book is a memory icon not only of the women who wrote the recipes, but also of Czechoslovak and Jewish food cultures, and not least of the atrocities that the Nazis committed. For the authors' descendants who mostly live in Israel or the United States, the recipes not only help to keep alive the memory of their murdered family members but also to reconstruct an Eastern European Jewish identity in diaspora. According to Deborah Lupton, food can be a means of national and cultural identity affirmation in diaspora.[36] This idea of food as a place of cultural memory can also be applied to remembrance of the GDR. In particular, during the 1990s, several former East German food brands became lieux de mémoire of everyday life in the East. Their revived popularity shortly after unification was one of the first signs heralding in 'ostalgic' reminiscence among former East Germans.

What makes items of food a compelling memory icon is the fact that they stimulate all five senses and can therefore evoke five types of sensory memory.[37] Memory of taste includes at least the two senses of taste and smell since mainly the nose rather than the taste buds perceive flavours. Before we ingest food, we look at it and perhaps touch it with our hands. Some foods create specific sounds as they are eaten, such as the cracking of crisps. Therefore, memories created around food are a whole package of sensory experiences that involve work, such as cutting, peeling and chewing. The French writer Marcel Proust engaged with different forms of sensory memory in the last volume of his novel *À la Recherche du Temps perdu*. Here, Proust first explored in detail how food creates particularly memorable experiences. He employed the French pastry madeleine as a memory icon, the taste of which not only evokes gustatory memory of the food itself but also multi-layered memory of the main character's stay in the French town of Combray, including visual memory of places and people.[38] Proust's main point is that stimulating one sense is sufficient to remember experiences initially captured by other senses.[39] His writings enhance the discussion of items of food as multi-sensory memory icons and their impact on personal and cultural memory of the GDR. They help to engage with the issues visual culture faces in depicting perishable items and in stimulating senses other than vision, as the upcoming discussion will demonstrate.

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[35] Cara De Silva, *In Memory's Kitchen: A Legacy from the Women of Terezín* (Northvale and London: Jason Aronson Inc., 1996), pp. xxviii-xxx.
[36] Lupton, *Food, the Body and the Self*.
[37] Ibid., p. 13.
[38] Marcel Proust, *Time Regained*, trans. by S. Schiff (London: Chatto and Windus, 1931), Kindle edition.
[39] Ibid., location 2789-92.

Projecting multi-facetted memory of a whole set of experiences onto a single object or a single sensation, as Marcel Proust suggested, seems to over-simplify the concept of memory. Such simplistic ideas have also been used to describe memory of the GDR. Franka Schneider, for instance, explains how the scent of the *Intershop* – in fact a mélange of Western items including coffee, washing powder, cigarettes and chewing gum – connotes the intimate sensory and often emotional experiences of East Germans with the GDR. Its mnemonic meaning today, however, is not so much rooted in the smell itself but in the fact that it refers to something that no longer exists, i.e. the GDR.[40] Schneider draws on Gottfried Korff's discourse on 'politische Olfaktorik' as another distinguishing factor between East and West, which created antagonistic 'Systemgerüche'. Typical smells of the GDR, such as the cleaning agent *Wolfasept* or the exhaust fumes of the Trabant, have gained cultural significance as malodours in contrast to the fragrant scent of Western commercial products, such as those available at the *Intershop*.[41] Interestingly, some of the museum case studies draw on the East German 'Systemgeruch', as the smell of *Wolfasept* has persisted in their buildings. This sensory experience of the GDR in the *DDR Museum* in Pirna, *Olle DDR* in Apolda, *Museum im Kino* in Malchow, and *DDR Geschichtsmuseum* in Perleberg adds a level of perceived authenticity to their exhibitions, in particular for experiential generations who are able to identify the smell.

Addressing the question of taste is a complex venture for both museums and films. As an intangible medium, film relies on image and sound to transport the taste of food to the viewers. David Sutton calls the sound of taste a form of 'linguistic elaboration of the senses' that represents a particular type of synaesthesia.[42] The case studies *Sushi in Suhl* and *Der Turm* illustrate Sutton's observation as they turn both pleasure and displeasure in the taste of food into words, noises and facial expressions. Rolf Anschütz in *Sushi in Suhl* expresses his distaste for the intense sharpness of the alien wasabi with a gasping noise. The foreignness of the wasabi to Anschütz is also emphasised when the camera focusses on him as he takes a whole spoonful of the green paste, clearly unaware of its spicy character. The scene highlights in an ironic manner the culinary naivety and petite bourgeoisie in the culturally shielded GDR. By addressing these issues with the help of irony and the visual, *Sushi in Suhl* appears to adopt

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[40] Franka Schneider, 'Der Intershop', in *Erinnerungsorte der DDR,* ed. by Martin Sabrow (Munich: C.H.Beck, 2009), pp. 240–52 (p. 251).

[41] Gottfried Korff, 'Volkskundliche Notizen zur politischen Olfaktorik', in *Ethnographisches Wissen: Zu einer Kulturtechnik der Moderne*, ed. by Konrad Köstlin and Nikitsch, Herbert (Wien: Selbstverlag, 1999), pp. 83–98 (p. 90).

[42] David Sutton, 'Cooking Skills, the Senses, and Memory', in *Food and Culture: A Reader,* ed. by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, 3rd edn, (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 299–319 (pp. 301–02).

reflective nostalgia as a way to remember the GDR. In *Der Turm* – the story of a privileged family clan in Dresden during the 1980s[43] – Richard Hoffmann makes the taste of a homemade pasta sauce a conversation topic at the lunch table with his secondary family. He indicates his distaste for the dish in a wordy manner: 'Was hast du da dran gemacht, an diese…. Soße? …Ist interessant, oder?' The pause before 'Soße', in particular, highlights his criticism of the pasta sauce, as he struggles to find a suitable term describing the food. Rather than commenting on the taste of the food, however, Richard aims to tease his lover and entertain his daughter. The scene as a whole looks at the act of commensality within the family, and how Richard engages with his extramarital lover, daughter and stepson. The atmosphere is relaxed and joyful in stark contrast to the tensions arising during meals with Richard's primary family. The exploration of food, taste and personal relationships is a fresh narrative in depicting East German culinary culture. Family life and eating are normalised with fixed gender roles of the cooking woman and the man assessing her skills. Both depictions in *Sushi in Suhl* and *Der Turm* highlight that filmic exploration of the taste of food in the GDR is rarely about the taste itself but instead about broader societal issues in the sense of post-ostalgic remembrance.

A number of museums have recognised both the mnemonic and the monetary value of the taste of the GDR, following the example of the 'Domklause' at the *DDR Museum* in Berlin. Some of the case study museums, namely those in Perleberg and Thale, also attempt to sell the taste and thus the 'real' culinary experience of the GDR, albeit on a smaller scale. Their cafés offer light refreshments from former East German brands that enjoyed a revival during the 1990s. As Silke Arnold-de Simine argues, such commercial strategies highlight the theme park style approach of those institutions to remember the GDR, as they claim to facilitate a chance to relive the past through multi-sensory experiences.[44] For former East Germans, however, there is little incentive to pay high prices for items that they can consume at home on a regular basis, while non-experiential generations might not link the GDR with interesting or tasty cuisine that is worth trying. Therefore, similar to the now closed 'Domklause', the case study cafés have a rather bleak outlook.

In order to compensate for the lack of real food, other museal case studies have resorted to plastic replicas of perishable tropical fruits, mainly bananas. Rather than merely solving the

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[43] *Der Turm*, dir. by Christian Schwochow (Universum Film GmbH, 2012).
[44] Silke Arnold-de Simine, 'Theme Park GDR? The Aestheticization of Memory in post-*Wende* Museums, Literature and Film', in *Cultural Memory and Historical Consciousness in the German-Speaking World since 1500: Papers from the Conference 'The Fragile Tradition', Cambridge, 2002*, 1, ed. by Christian Emden and David Midgley (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 253-80.

problem of decay of real fruit, such props offer a point of departure for not only dealing with the question of substance and texture but also the idea of absence and prolonging the past into the present. While the *DDR Museum* in Pirna presents the fake fruits in the context of scarcity, privilege and bartering, themes that feature in section 3.4 on food and society, the museums *Olle DDR* in Apolda and *DDR Museum* in Thale retrospectively create the (plastic) banana as a common East German living room wall unit accessory. Peter Hübner called the living room wall unit a pre-museal shrine for the vestiges of East German everyday life and state socialism at the same time.[45] Placing it prominently in a basket in the reimagined wall unit enshrines the banana as an iconic artefact worth displaying, both in the present of the exhibition and in the reimagined GDR past. Both museums attempt to circumvent the elusiveness and perishability of an actual banana by replacing it with a plastic specimen. This lasting artefact, then, eternalises both the presence of the museum object in the present and the absence of real fruits in the past. As an eternal reminder of the relative absence of bananas in the GDR, this plastic object becomes what Gottfried Korff calls a 'Realmetapher' for the West German hegemonic view on the cultural and civil divide between the East and the West.[46] Following Korff's interpretation, a single object is able to epitomise the cultural memory debate around the GDR in the 1990s. The banana, in particular, has carried this status since at least the late 1980s, as the satire magazine *Titanic*'s 1989 cover demonstrates. It portrays the East German craze for bananas with the help of character 'Zonen-Gaby' who proudly presents to the camera her first banana, which is in fact a partly peeled cucumber.[47] This depiction aptly expresses the Western understanding of the East-West divide towards the end of the Cold War.

Despite employing a number of narratives relating to the smell, taste or texture of food, the case studies draw largely on the mnemonic effect of visual images. David Sutton notes a pattern of western favouritism towards visual culture that puts vision at the top of the hierarchical order of the senses.[48] Consequently, western memory culture favours visual forms of memory such as those in museums and films. Marcel Proust has claimed, however, that mere visual prompts of food, such as the ones in films and museums, are not suitable to trigger

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[45] Peter Hübner, '"Revolution in der Schrankwand?" Die Objektkultur des DDR-Alltags und ihre Musealisierung in der Perspektive sozialhistorischer Forschung', in *Alltag und soziales Gedächtnis: Die DDR Objektkultur und ihre Musealisierung*, ed. by Gerd Kuhn and Andreas Ludwig (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 1997), pp. 152–69 (p. 162).
[46] Gottfried Korff, *Simplizität und Sinnfälligkeit: Volkskundliche Studien zu Ritual und Symbol* (Tübingen: Tübinger Vereinigung zur Volkskunde e.V., 2013), p. 333.
[47] This caricature will be discussed in more detail in chapter four on clothing since the imagery also highlights the West German view of the Eastern lack of fashionability.
[48] Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts*, p. 13.

remembering. In his discourse on multisensory memory, he describes visual memory as inferior to all other sensory memories by assuming that they 'have no life in them' and therefore cannot revive the genuine experience that has become a memory.[49] In this context, Proust labels visual memory 'conscious memory' since it is the result of a deliberate decision to store images, such as a 'catalogue', that has little meaning to the person remembering.[50] The experience of the taste of the madeleine, in contrast, puts a person in a state outside of time, a kind of meta-time, in which the past infiltrates the present.[51] This act of remembering is a form 'involuntary memory' for Proust since a person does not choose to recollect the events surrounding a taste, or in fact, any non-visual sensory experience. Proust's claims regarding the inferiority of visual memory seem unsubstantiated and equally biased as the contemporary western preference for visual culture.

The imagery around food in the exhibition *Alltag in der DDR* in Berlin and the film *Barbara* is certainly memorable and a point of departure for the analysis of East German food memory, as they form a stark contrast in depicting the aesthetics of fresh produce. The exhibition *Alltag in der DDR* in Berlin, opened in 2013 as the first state-run permanent exhibition dedicated to the quotidian in the GDR, draws on the narrative of East German inferior product quality with its photographs of fresh produce displays. The photograph, many scholars have argued, is an object that can help the museum visitor to connect with the past in a personal way. For Marianne Hirsch, photographs are ideal triggers for postmemory as they 'reembody and reindividualize' a past through which the viewer did not live, and thus give museums the opportunity to make cultural memory accessible and open to becoming personal memory.[52] Criticism of such a view of photography came from Roland Barthes, who reflected on an image of his mother. He wrote:

> The photograph does not call up the past (nothing Proustian in a photograph). The effect it produces upon me is not to restore what has been abolished (by time, by distance) but to attest that what I see has indeed existed.[53]

For Barthes, a photograph is primarily a piece of evidence that the past itself and the situation that has been captured on image was there; it cannot evoke the past or recreate it as Hirsch claims. On the contrary, as Barthes continued, a random photograph evokes little more than

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[49] Marcel Proust, *Time Regained*, location 2731.
[50] Ibid., location 2789–92.
[51] Ibid., location 2761–87.
[52] Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', p. 115.
[53] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), p. 82.

indifference in the viewer unless she knows the subject of the photograph personally.[54] While Barthes questioned the emotional impact of photography on people per se, Susan Sontag warns of the ideological misuse of photographs to represent cultural memory. Sontag notes that iconic photographs help to renew memories in order to keep them in our conscious mind. However, her concern is the use of these objects to transport certain mnemonic narratives that might follow a hegemonic political agenda.[55] In this case, she argued, the purpose is not to remember the past but to shape public opinion about the past, and indeed the present, so that it matches the ideological conviction of political rulers. Sontag's remarks about cultural memory as a means to align public political opinion are not surprising given her argument that collective memory does not exist. The exhibition *Alltag in der DDR* aims to provide an authentic account of what groceries in the GDR looked like with its four A3-sized colour photographs featuring in the shelves of an exhibit about the *Konsum*. According to Roland Barthes, this use of photographs is a claim for historical truth, as they seem to capture reality at the time they were taken.[56] In fact, however, the prints carry no information about their provenience at all, and thus even the origin of these photographs from an East German grocery store is a mere assumption. This greatly reduces their value as historical sources since it is impossible to contextualise them in terms of time and place. With this exhibition strategy, the museum misses a chance to juxtapose contemporary food aesthetics with those in the GDR effectively. Still, the photographs are likely to achieve the desired effect: two images of apples, oranges and lemons in wooden cradles reveal the utterly unappealing look of the fruits. Visitors looking at these photographs are very likely to notice how these food items would not meet contemporary western aesthetical standards. The accompanying museum text confirms this visual narrative by pointing out that '[n]ach frischen und qualitativ guten Produkten suchen die Menschen häufig vergeblich'. With its choice of narrative, the museum in Berlin draws on hegemonic narratives that emerged in the FRG when Germany was still divided, and which persisted during the 1990s to establish the dominance of Western cultural memory of the GDR. This exhibit illustrates that despite the increased number of more nuanced post-ostalgic depictions of everyday life in East Germany, binary black and white narratives of the 1990s still persist.

The film *Barbara*, a 2012 cinema release narrating the story of the politically defiant paediatrician Barbara Wolff,[57] offers a stark counter-narrative in this context as it depicts

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[54] Ibid., p. 73.
[55] Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others,* pp. 68–69.
[56] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 82.
[57] *Barbara*, dir. by Christian Petzold (Pfiff Medien GmbH, 2012).

aesthetically pleasing vegetables from the allotment that are a bartering good in an exchange of nutritional care for medical care. The bowl of freshly harvested vegetables becomes the focal point as it fills the frame completely in an overhead shot. The camera only stays with this image for a brief moment but the complementary contrast of the red of the tomatoes and the green of the courgettes enriches the idea of the produce being fresh, healthy and tasty. The vegetables thus epitomise the idea of seasonal growth,[58] and more importantly the concept of care as they are the successful outcome of a long process of tending. For Barbara, however, the vegetables represent the opposite of care, namely oppression as they were produced by the family of Klaus Schütz, the Stasi officer who leads the operation against her. The vegetables were given to her boss André in exchange for medicine stolen from the hospital for the Stasi officer's terminally ill wife, Friedl Schütz. Barbara queries André's ethical conduct, confronting him about his relation to the Stasi officer's family by asking 'Machen Sie das öfter? […] Arschlöchern helfen?' While André denies any non-altruistic motivation behind his medical attention to Friedl, his involvement with the Stasi casts doubt on his claim of selflessness. When André cooks a meal from the fresh garden produce and adds herbs from his own allotment, he demonstrates his care for Barbara, which leads to the first kiss between the couple. Post-ostalgic remembrance in *Barbara* focusses on the characters' relationship to food to represent diverse and individual interrelations between people and the East German state. This focus on food produce explores the different characters' relations to the concept of care, rather than commenting on the East German food economy. Thus, this depiction normalises food quality and availability in East Germany in contrast to the exhibition in Berlin, as it illustrates that fresh produce was indeed available in the GDR. The gustatory appealing aesthetics of fresh produce in *Barbara* emphasise a more nuanced remembering of food in the GDR in the sense of post-ostalgia.

The engagement of the case studies with food is largely reduced to visual aspects due to the specific features of films and museums as visual memory media. Sensory experiences of taste and smell are translated into sound and image to transport them to film viewers. For museums, the perishability of food further complicates its meaning as a memory icon, since real food items cannot be displayed and instead are represented by photographs and plastic props. As Pat Caplan has noted, food represents meaning beyond nutrition, and the case studies demonstrate this, as they use food and eating to narrate wider social aspects of GDR society.

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[58] Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts*, p. 28.

3.3 Food Power: Food as a Symbol of Power Relations

Michel Foucault has pointed to the root of power relations in society, writing that 'in any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse'.[59] When looking at the GDR, the concept of *Bückware*, referring to all those scarce and sought-after goods that were only available under the counter for those customers who could offer a favour in exchange,[60] has epitomised a number of discourses around food and power. Although it emerged as a coping mechanism for economic shortages, such acts of bartering only exacerbated shortages due to the economic hierarchies they created. In such an exchange, certain scarce food items adopt a similar status to a currency, as they become goods of almost universal exchange value.[61] The reason for this heightened status is, according to Sidney Mintz, that people charge food with what he calls 'inside' and 'outside' meaning.[62] While 'outside meaning' refers to wider social, economic, and political circumstances that affect the cultural significance of objects, in this case certain food items, 'inside meaning' captures the everyday practices around food consumption and their symbolic denotation for individuals.[63] The relationship between meaning and power has been examined by Eric Wolf. He posits that meaning is the very basis for power. According to him, power dwells and draws on meaning in order to sustain and maintain itself.[64] Thus, without the meaning or significance that both societies and individuals place on certain things or issues, they bear no power in themselves. This arguably also applies to scarce items of food, which only gained meaning through short supply.

The *DDR-Geschichtsmuseum* in Perleberg, a privately-run museum in the federal state of Brandenburg founded in 2006, emphasises the meaning of food as an object invested with

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[59] Michel Foucault, 'Two Lectures', in *Power/Knowledge,* ed. by Colin Gorden (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), pp. 78–108 (p. 93).

[60] Anna Kaminsky, 'Einkaufsbeutel und Bückware', in *Erinnerungsorte der DDR*, ed. by Martin Sabrow (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2009), pp. 195–205 (p. 196).

[61] Caroline Humphrey and Hugh-Jones, Stephen, 'Introduction: Barter, exchange and value', in *Barter, exchange and value: an anthropological approach*, ed. by Caroline Humphrey and Stephen Hugh-Jones (Cambridge, New York and Oakleigh: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 1–20 (p. 1).

[62] Sidney W. Mintz, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the* Past (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), p. 30.

[63] Ibid., p. 20.

[64] Eric Wolf, 'Facing Power: Old Insights, New Questions', *American Anthropologist*, 92.3 (1990), 586–96 (p. 593).

power in its display of a grocery shop. In contrast to the exhibition in Pirna, which employs bartering as an act of social cohesion as argued in the following section, the museum in Perleberg contextualises the social practice of bartering with questions of power in general and with the theme of privilege in particular. It stresses the influential position of those with access to scarce goods and the way in which they used and, from the perspective of the museum directors, abused this power. In *The Philosophy of Money*, Georg Simmel explains the power relations at play in an exchange such as bartering:

> In contrast to the simple taking-away or gift […] exchange presupposes […] an objective appraisal, consideration, mutual acknowledgement, a restraint of direct subjective desire. It does not matter that originally this may not be voluntary but enforced by the equal power of the other party; rather, the decisive, specifically common factor is that this equivalence of power does not lead to mutual theft and struggle but to a balanced exchange in which the one-sided and personal possession or desire for possession enters into an objective concerted action arising out of and beyond the interaction of the subjects.[65]

Although Simmel emphasises the power equality between the parties involved in bartering, it becomes clear that there is an imbalance of power concerning those partaking in the exchange and those who are excluded from it. The museum in Perleberg engages with this issue in a text that accompanies the grocery shop display. It claims that *Bückware* were exclusively available to 'auserwählte[n] Bürger[n]'. By using a term with religious connotations, namely 'aus*er*wählt' (chosen, elect) instead of the more neutral term 'aus*ge*wählt' (selected), the museum emphasises both the powerful status of the shop assistant who chooses the recipients of *Bückware,* as well as the customers who are chosen to have access to the reserved goods. However, in contrast to Simmel's definition, this choice of vocabulary implies a hierarchy within the exchange that stresses the power of the shop assistant over the bartering partner. Thus, a three-tiered hierarchy of power emerges in which the shop assistant ranks highest above chosen customers and not least customers without the privilege to buy scarce goods.

Following Mintz and Wolf, however, it is not economic shortage itself that creates these micro power relations, but the 'outside meaning' that former East Germans, such as the museum directors in Perleberg, have invested and still invest in scarce goods and the concept of *Bückware*. Therefore, as the museum's critical text illustrates, economic power relations are established not only by those who profited from bartering but also those who were excluded from such exchanges. In doing so, the exhibit in Perleberg perpetuates the 'outside meaning' formerly imposed on scarce goods and the perceived powerlessness of those Eastern citizens

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[65] Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 314.

who were unable to obtain them. In addition, by giving the power over scarce goods with the shop assistant, the museum shifts the problem of abuse of power from the state to individual citizens. Michel Foucault has emphasised that power is exercised on a micro rather than a macro level when he wrote that

> power isn't localised in the State apparatus and […] nothing in society will be changed if the mechanisms of power that function outside, below and alongside the State apparatus, on a much more minute and everyday level, are not also changed.[66]

While the state can only provide the framework and structures for intra-societal power relations, it is individuals and their everyday actions that maintain them. The grocery shop display in Perleberg focusses on the responsibility of those citizens who engage in bartering. It is, thus, a reminder of the complicity of ordinary citizens in fostering established power relations and thus stabilising the East German state apparatus as a whole. As the museum emphasises the effects of state socialism amongst individual citizens and the relationships between them, it engages in post-ostalgic remembrance of East Germany. This critical portrayal of bartering illustrates that private museums of everyday life in the GDR are indeed spaces of reflective negotiation with the GDR, which contribute to a more democratic and pluralistic cultural memory of East Germany.

Some of the case study films explore the interdependence between food and power more explicitly. Their thematisation of privilege is differentiated, as they show how access to food creates privilege, and how economic or societal privilege is confirmed through access to rare food items. The film *Der Turm* exemplifies this difference in the way it depicts the relationship between the Rohde/Hoffmann family and scarce exotic fruits. Due to their elevated economic position in society, the family manages to obtain oranges and coconuts for their Christmas celebrations. Peter Wallensteen noted that 'the market will provide food primarily to those who have money and/or power', thus marking scarce food items as a symbols of economic or political prowess.[67] Notably, Wallensteen's comment concerns the capitalist market economy rather than the socialist state economy, yet it aptly describes the distribution of exotic fruits in the GDR depicted in *Der Turm*. Barbara Rohde adopts an arguably cynical stance when she points out the harmfulness of the pith for the digestive system as she devours an orange. Despite knowing the potentially ill health effects of the fruit, she welcomes the

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[66] Michel Foucault, 'Body/Power', in *Power/Knowledge,* ed. by Colin Gorden (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), pp. 55–62 (p. 60). Capitalisations in original.
[67] Peter Wallensteen, 'Scarce Goods as Political Weapons: The Case of Food', *Journal of Peace Research*, 13.4 (1976), 277–98 (p. 285).

position of economic power that she gains by purchasing and eating scarce oranges. In a similar fashion, Barbara leads the rather clumsy dissection of an even rarer coconut during a Christmas gathering of the family a few years later. In both cases, the taste of the fruits is not the primary reason for their desirability but the fact they are rare. Possessing them creates a sense of economic power and distinction from those who are unable to gain access to these food items. The figure of Barbara Rohde highlights hedonistic thinking patterns that were not alien to East German society, thus showing how power corrupted East Germans not only on a high political level but also on an everyday level, which underlines Michel Foucault's observation about the societal distribution of power. As the socialist society and economy share features with the market economy of the FRG in *Der Turm*, the film normalises cultural memory of the GDR.

The film *Das Wunder von Berlin*, a story about generational conflicts between a Stasi officer, his father who was in the *Wehrmacht* and his punk son first broadcast on TV in 2007,[68] looks at the ethical dilemma and intra-familiar tensions that arise from privileged access to food. The scene in question demonstrates the universal powers of the Stasi as officer Jürgen Kaiser uses his Stasi identity card to get access to a table in a fully booked restaurant. The mere sight of the Stasi ID card prompts the restaurant owner to ask a family who have only just received their food to vacate their table. Kaiser's son Marco, who is celebrating his swearing in as an NVA conscript,[69] rejects the privilege of jumping the queue. He questions the morality of the underlying power structures, which enable the economic and political privileges that his family enjoys. He acknowledges that their elevated position in East German society is a result of the political loyalty of his family. Consequently, he rejects the idea of benefitting from it at the cost of other members of society. This narrative helps to broaden cultural memory of East Germany, as it highlights that critical discourses around power also happen within groups with access to rare goods, thus pluralising remembrance of the GDR.

Contributing to a broader and more diversified image of power relations within the society of the GDR, *Der Turm* also depicts how the presence of scarce exotic fruits denotes power, in particular political power. When the siblings Anne Hoffmann and Meno Rohde attend a gathering of the local SED to celebrate the anniversary of the *Tag der Befreiung*, exotic fruits, such as pineapples and bananas, serve as a decoration on the buffet table. Their presentation in what appears to be more of an aesthetic installation than a food buffet to be consumed indicates

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[68] *Das Wunder von* Berlin, dir. by Roland Suso Richter (ZDF/ZDF Enterprises GmbH/Teamworx Television & Film GmbH, 2008).
[69] NVA is short for Nationale Volksarmee.

their role as symbols of political power that confirm the societal status of those present at the event. Consequently, the guests ignore the fruits, as they have little nutritional meaning but instead value as status symbols. Eating the fruits would, on the contrary be counter-productive as they would vanish as status symbols. The camera captures this within several frames that show Anne and Meno, disengaged from the self-righteous farce of the event, with the fruits in the background. This scene contradicts the narrative of queuing for scarce goods, which became ingrained in cultural memory of the 1990s.[70] While viewers shaped by these ingrained narratives are likely to expect that the participants of the celebration would leap at the luxurious food items, the depiction challenges this theme and instead normalises the access of privileged members of East German society to such goods. Instead, this depiction highlights that scarce food items have the same heightened meaning for the political and intellectual elite as for ordinary citizens. This is denoted by the presence of the rare products rather than their absence. The groups holding powerful positions in society visualise their power through the presence rather than the consumption of rare goods.

While *Der Turm* explores how the SED state rewarded politically loyal elites with access to certain food items, the films *Sushi in Suhl* and *Go West* show how authorities use non-access to certain food items as a punishment or leverage against disloyal citizens. In both cases, state representatives execute authoritarian power over citizens.[71] In *Sushi in Suhl*, access not only to exotic items but also to standard restaurant supplies depends on the benevolence of the *HO*. When pub owner Rolf Anschütz hosts a meal for members of the HO leadership at the 25th anniversary of the organisation, he is promised privileged supply of well sought-after goods. The local HO manager promises him: 'Wenn die zufrieden sind, dann kriegste demnächst alles frei Haus; Wildschwein, Rehrücken, Kristallaschenbecher.' Instead of receiving such deliveries, however, Anschütz faces drastic cuts to regular supplies such as mustard, coal igniter and cotton table clothes after he insulted the HO leadership with his Thuringian cockchafer soup. With this narrative, the film addresses in a rather comical way the ways in which the state used food as a means of power to regulate citizens' behaviour. This ironic criticism is a form of reflective nostalgia in Svetlana Boym's terms.[72] She explicitly mentions humour and irony as vehicles to remember the past in a critical manner and thus as an indicator of acceptance that the past is lost and will never return. Thus, the film's depiction of a politically motivated

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[70] Kaminsky, 'Einkaufsbeutel und Bückware', p. 195.

[71] Peter Wallensteen has compared the effective use of commodities, such as food, to the use of military weapons. Wallensteen, 'Scarce Goods as Political Weapons', p. 277.

[72] Boym, 'Nostalgia and Its Discontents', p.13.

shortage of food clearly distances itself from both 'ostalgic' remembrance and hegemonic readings of the GDR.

The 2010 TV film *Go West*, the tale of the odyssey of three teenagers attempting to flee the GDR,[73] adopts a much more serious reading of the misuse of state power towards individual citizens in relation to nutrition. In contrast to the rather tame sanctions imposed by the HO in *Sushi in Suhl*, the methods of the Stasi in *Go West* are cruel and threaten the life of a young man.[74] When the Stasi capture Alex Baumgarten on his escape from the GDR, the officers violently force him to collaborate with the secret police in order to catch his companions who are still on the run. As Alex is a diabetic and depends on insulin injections, the Stasi refuse to supply him with both water and the life-saving digestion hormone until Alex vows to decoy his friends.[75] Although mainly for dramatic purpose, this narrative depicts the individual citizen as completely powerless against the Stasi and the state apparatus as a whole. It exemplifies what Michel Foucault called the 'capillary form of [power that] reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives'.[76] The film visualises state power exercised through the Stasi and its effect on the body of the individual in very graphic images, as we see Alex suffer and begging for insulin when he is on the verge of collapse during his interrogation. Although the narrative of capillary power is dominant in this scene, the film also addresses the question of personal conscience and culpability of those who exercise power when two Stasi officers negotiate for how much longer they can withhold insulin from Alex. When one officer, who is also the father of one of Alex's fellow escapees, urges his superior to stop the torture, he himself faces the methods of *Zersetzung* by being reminded that the safety of his son depends on Alex's cooperation. *Go West* thus also explores the idea of differentiation between individual members of the Stasi and their personal struggle with the ethics of their methods. This way of remembering the GDR contests the notion of homogeneity and universal evil within the Stasi that emerged in the memory discourse of the 1990s, and thus offers a more considered view on the past in the sense of pluralistic post-ostalgic memory.

As food satisfies the most basic human needs, it is a fruitful field for mediated

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[73] *Go West*, dir. by Andreas Linke (Kinowelt GmbH, 2010).

[74] Wallensteen argued that withholding food could be life threatening. Wallensteen, 'Scarce Goods as Political Weapons', p. 277.

[75] Although insulin itself is not food, it is a hormone essential for the human digestion of food. Diabetics insert insulin to their bodies, similar to food.

[76] Michel Foucault, 'Prison Talk', in *Power/Knowledge,* ed. by Colin Gorden (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), pp. 37–54 (p. 39).

engagement with the relationship between food, power and East Germany. Similarities between the East and the capitalist West become apparent through depictions of privileged access to food. In this area, the effects of the *Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption* are particularly visible, as the case studies illustrate the infiltration of everyday life with state power, a memory narrative that was first state-sanctioned by the *Fortschreibung*. Overall, the case studies depict various levels of power reaching from grocery shop assistants to consumers and representatives of the socialist authorities, namely the HO and the Stasi. These depictions go beyond purely hegemonic narratives of the East German *Unrechtsstaat* and instead offer a more differentiated and balanced image of everyday life in the GDR.

3.4 Communist Commensality: Reflecting East German Social Relations through Depictions of Food

Eating can be a highly social practice and thus looking at depictions of food consumption in the case studies is helpful to understand broader social relationships in the GDR. Sigmund Freud's discourse in *Totem and Taboo* highlights the idea that eating together materialises and attests already existing social relationships, as he writes that '[t]o eat and drink with some one [sic] [is] at the same time a symbol and a confirmation of social community and of the assumption of mutual obligations'.[77] Pierre Bourdieu adds to this idea by pointing out that commensality as the act of eating together not only confirms but also creates social bonds.[78] Since Freud, scholarly interest in commensality has expanded from ethnological studies of rural cultures in remote areas to anthropological interest in the everyday lives of Western cultures.[79] The initial idea that ritualisation of eating only existed in indigenous tribes has been revised. Scholars such as Mary Douglas have pioneered the notion that rituals – often informed by religious traditions – equally govern western eating habits.[80] Although this spiritual aspect has largely vanished, the regular repetition and quotidian nature of these habits renders them a valuable source of study.[81] Looking at commensality can therefore provide insights both into closer and wider social relationships pertaining to the family unit as the smallest entity, to a group of colleagues or entire social groups.

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[77] Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, trans. by Abraham Brill (New York: Cosimo, 2009), p. 174.
[78] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 194.
[79] Lupton, *Food, the Body and the Self*, pp. 8–9.
[80] Mary Douglas, 'Deciphering a Meal', *Daedalus,* 10.1 (1972), 61–81 (pp. 67–70).
[81] Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts*, p. 29.

A common example for the way in which food defines entire social groups is the distribution of meat in patriarchal societies. Within a family setting, men receive often the largest portion of meat due its high energetic and monetary value that is most needed by the man as the provider for the family.[82] Hence, this behaviour in the everyday life situation of a shared family meal reflects and confirms men's elevated position in comparison to women in both family and society. In the case studies, we see these expressions of masculinity represented mainly in the two films *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie* and *Das Wunder von Berlin.* Both depict gendered distributions of cooking tasks with men preparing meat while women handle all other food items and jobs around cooking. David Sutton links this gendered division of labour to Claude Lévi-Strauss's culinary triangle and claims that roasting is associated with men while boiling is associated with women.[83] Lévi-Strauss explained that the difference between boiling and roasting lies in mediation: boiling requires both water and a vessel in contrast to the 'unmediated conjunction' of fire and food in roasting.[84] Using fire directly in the cooking process of meat is considered to affirm masculinity. In both films, men who do not normally engage in kitchen chores take the lead on the barbecue.

The 2009 TV film *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie*, which is based on the life experience of East German Jutta Gallus who was separated from her children during her escape from the GDR,[85] reinforces the idea of gender-specific meal preparation by separating women and men into groups during a garden barbecue scene. While two men stand around the barbecue and discuss the financial issue of purchasing a house, their female partners set the table and engage in conversations about their relationships. Female empowerment becomes a major theme in this scene, as her heavily pregnant friend advises protagonist Sara Bender to bottle up her dissatisfaction at being downgraded at work for political reasons and to make a cake instead. For Sara's friend, baking is not only a female coping strategy in general but also a way of avoiding political conflicts, and thus a form of adaption to the socialist system. This conversation is symptomatic of the gender roles employed around eating in both films. In *Das Wunder von Berlin,* Jürgen Kaiser is not only portrayed as head of the family and thus the 'natural meateater' in David Sutton's terms,[86] he is also the distributor of the meat that his wife

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[82] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 193; Lupton, *Food, the Body and the Self*, pp. 59–63; Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts*, pp. 25–27.

[83] David Sutton, 'The Anthropology of Cooking', in *The Handbook of Food and Anthropology,* ed. by Jakob A. Klein and James Watson (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. 349–69 (p. 350).

[84] Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'The Culinary Triangle' in *Food and Culture: A Reader,* ed. by Carole Counihan and Penny van Esterik (New York and London: Routlegde, 2013), pp. 40–47 (p. 41).

[85] *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie*, dir. by Miguel Alexandre (UFA Fernsehproduktion GmbH, 2007).

[86] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 190.

Hanna has cooked for Christmas dinner. Both films thus normalise social relations in the GDR as they present gender norms that are similar to those in the FRG and therefore familiar to a west German audience as well. Hence, East German society as a whole appears less alien and exotic to non-experiential generations since gender expectations of large parts of the audience are met rather than challenged, highlighting the post-ostalgic efforts to normalise the GDR by approximating it to the West.

While these two films capture an image of male roles around food preparation and eating, the *DDR Museum* in Thale and the *DDR Museum* in Pirna comment on the female ones. In their exhibitions, the kitchen unequivocally becomes a purely female space through the presence of women mannequins. By placing them there, both museums also declare tasks related to the kitchen as predominantly carried out by women. With the help of a magazine article on bottling fruit from the late 1950s or early 1960s, the museum in Thale, situated in Saxony-Anhalt and opened in 2011, highlights the narratives of resourcefulness and thrift as typical traits that an East German woman was expected to possess. The title 'Wer klug ist, baut vor' implies that failing to have these traits was a sign of stupidity. The term 'vorbauen' was arguably a reference to the state motto of *Aufbau,* and thus reminded women of their role in the process of constructing socialism on German soil through a strong economy. The political idea of women constructing the newly founded state through labour in the late 1940s and early 1950s[87] is here projected onto everyday life and the female chore of providing food for their family. This exhibit highlights how socialist ideology permeated everyday life and the role of women around food preparation.

In addition to narratives about women, the depiction of kitchens in the case studies also reveal how family life in the GDR is being remembered. Looking at the set-up of kitchen tables in the museums, for instance, helps to understand how they imagine a representative East German family. While the *DDR Geschichtsmuseum* in Perleberg and the *Olle DDR* in Apolda (Thuringia) showcase a kitchen table set for four people, the *DDR Museum* in Pirna exhibits a table for two. The former two museums reimagine an idealised family life with parents and two young children.[88] Although there is only one mannequin, namely a doll representing a toddler in Apolda, the crockery indicates that both families consist of two adults and two children. With its high divorce rates, high number of single parents and patch-work families,[89] the GDR was

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[87] Anna Kaminsky, *Frauen in der DDR* (Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag GmbH, 2016), pp. 68–69.
[88] Statistics show that women in the GDR had on average between 1 and 2 children. Kaminsky, *Frauen in der DDR*, p. 173.
[89] Ibid., p. 161.

not necessarily the home of the ideal four-person families that these museums attempt to show. They rather create in retrospect the image of a perfect socialist family that, in fact, represents contemporary western standards of the ideal family,[90] highlighting efforts to normalise the GDR in comparison to the FRG.

The *DDR Museum* in Pirna (Saxony) offers an interesting contrast to this as it exhibits a kitchen table set up for an adult and a toddler in a high chair. A reimaging such as this one is able to tell the story of single mothers the GDR, juggling their jobs, household, and bringing up children.[91] It could also inform visitors about high divorce rates as a result of forcing couples into marriage at a young age through so-called *Ehekredite* and the right to rent a flat together.[92] Instead, the only text pertaining to the kitchen display introduces some of the kitchen appliances and the reliability of East German technology in general. Hence, the discrepancy between textual and visual narrative impairs the theme of single mothers and the double burden of paid work and household chores for women as a societal issue in the GDR. Addressing this previously largely ignored topic through its visual narrative is first step to make it part of cultural memory of East Germany. This post-ostalgic memory narrative provides a more pluralistic image of East Germany society.

While the museal representations of commensality comment only on the composition of an East German family, some of the cinematographic case studies explore how family members interact with each other around the food table. The films *Der Turm* and *Das Wunder von Berlin*, in particular, look at both intra- and intergenerational conflict that comes to the fore when the families eat together. In *Der Turm,* the relationship between father Richard and son Christian is strained due to the high expectations that Richard has of Christian in terms of academic success. When Christian returns from boarding school for his Christmas break, a fight breaks out at the family Christmas dinner table because of a low mark that Christian achieved in his maths test. Born in 1932, Richard belongs to the generation that consciously experienced War World II and the hardship of the early post-war years, including the foundation of the GDR.[93] Consequently, he accuses Christian's generation of baby boomers of a lack of respect for older generations by taking their cosy lives for granted, not trying hard enough, and

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[90] Alain Girard and Louis Roussel, 'Ideal Family Size, Fertility, and Population Policy in Western Europe', *Population and Development Review*, 8.2 (1982), 323–45, (p. 329).
[91] According to statistics on divorces in the GDR, women were given custody of children in 90% of cases. Karin Böttcher, 'Scheidung in Ost- und Westdeutschland: Der Einfluss der Frauenerwerbstätigkeit auf die Ehestabilität' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Rostock, 2005), p. 23.
[92] Kaminsky, *Frauen in der DDR*, pp. 146–47.
[93] Lehmann, 'Generation and Transition', p. 105.

not being thankful for the support of their parents. Richard's self-righteous tirade displeases his brother-in-law Meno Rohde in particular as he has a very close relationship with Christian and is thus more aware of his struggles than his father. The film emphasises the close bond between uncle and nephew through another act of commensality when Meno picks up Christian from boarding school for a spontaneous picnic in the countryside. In stark contrast to the rather formal family meals at the Hoffmann villa, this picnic encapsulates the closeness of the uncle-nephew relationship as Meno and Christian sit on a bench eating hand-sliced bread and drinking beer from a bottle. These portrayals of commensality explore family life, in particular the difficult father-son relationship, a common trope in the genre of the family saga, and thus a depiction that normalises the GDR.

In the film *Das Wunder von Berlin,* the intra-family conflict spans three generations from the grandfather who actively fought in the *Wehrmacht*, to the father, and the son who are of similar ages to Richard and Christian in *Der Turm*.[94] The frictions exist on two levels as father Jürgen is in conflict both with his own father Walter, and with his son Marco. Jürgen belongs to the first generation of GDR citizens who were still socialised during fascism. The German scholar René Lehmann argues that this generation experienced the end of World War II as a biographical caesura. Building a new society based on socialism thus filled the void that fascism had left behind.[95] Jürgen Kaiser embodies the passionate first generation of the GDR, and therefore he despises his father Walter who still tells the tales of Stalingrad and consumes exclusively West German media. For his own son, Jürgen is concerned about Marco's political and ideological nonchalance that jeopardises the future of the GDR. René Lehmann calls people in Marco's age group, whose socialisation took place entirely in East Germany, the second generation of socialism. Their relationship to the socialist state varies strongly from conformism to opposition.[96] Marco's rather oppositional stance becomes the trigger for an altercation at a family barbecue when his girlfriend Anja asks whether Jürgen's position within the Stasi helped her to be released from detention after attending an illegal punk concert. The dispute quickly turns to grandfather Walter's Nazi past and Jürgen's struggle to cope with this family history. Jürgen's shame to descend from a Nazi collaborator is thus revealed as the root

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[94] The film *Das Wunder von Berlin* does not specify the ages of its characters. Son Marco is about 18 to 20 years old when he commences his military service in 1988, and thus up to five years younger than Christian. Father Jürgen appears perhaps slightly younger in 1988 than Richard appeared in 1982 when we first meet him in the film. Therefore, Jürgen was approximately born around 1940 and has thus little conscious experience of the Nazi dictatorship and World War II.
[95] Lehmann, 'Generation and Transition', p.105.
[96] Ibid., p.109.

of all intra-family conflicts in this scene of a garden barbecue. Here, the film adopts elements of the genre 'father literature' that thematised the ruptures between those who served the Nazis and their children.[97] This conflict is transferred onto the relationship between the first (Jürgen) and the second generation (Marco) of GDR citizens. With their exploration of generational tensions in general, and clashes between the first and second generation of GDR citizens in particular, the films *Der Turm* and *Das Wunder von Berlin* provide a new layer for cultural remembrance of the GDR. They offer fresh narratives around different generations and their different attitudes towards socialism. Their post-ostalgic approach to remembering the GDR thus helps to offer a more varied image of East German society and overcome the idea of standardised East German biographies. Intergenerational conflict, in particular between father and son, becomes a narrative means to demonstrate the normality of everyday life in the GDR.

Another factor of diversification in East German society is class. As Pierre Bourdieu has noted, class is reflected in every family meal.[98] Depictions of family meals in the case studies visualise this observation, as the film *Der Turm* demonstrates prominently. Since protagonist Richard Hoffmann leads a double life, the film is capable of comparing the lives of the politically, academically and economically privileged first family and the socially somewhat deprived second family. The social differences between the two become particularly striking through family meals. While we see Richard dine with his primary family only during special occasions, such as Christmases, birthdays and weddings, the only time he eats with his secondary family is one lunch at their home. In Richard's home, a suburban villa, meals take place in a dining room with antique furniture and the extended family of the in-laws, following a rather strict order. With his secondary family, Richard eats cramped around a small table in the confined kitchen of a pre-World War II building and jokes with his daughter while eating. When juxtaposing both settings, Bourdieu's class distinction of a family meal becomes apparent: 'In opposition to the free-and-easy working-class meal, the bourgeoisie is concerned to eat with all due form […], which implies expectations, pauses, restraints.'[99] This stark contrast between the two families reminds the viewer that the privileged position of the Hoffmann/Rohde clan was not the norm for family life in the GDR. For Richard, part of the appeal of having a second family arguably lies in the fact that having a child with a single mother in a precarious situation marks a strong opposition to his apparently perfect and successful first family. By eating with his less privileged family, Richard negotiates his position

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[97] Assmann, 'Limits of Understanding', pp. 33–34.
[98] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, pp. 192–94.
[99] Ibid., p. 194.

within East German society, as he is torn between the bourgeois lifestyle of his primary family and the working-class background of his secondary family that resembles his own roots. Social class here is also embodied in the food itself. For Bourdieu, the simple pasta dish that mistress Josta serves in said scene epitomises working class requirements for food, namely a high nutritious value and affordability.[100] The juxtaposition of eating habits highlights not only the existence but also the material differences between various social classes in the GDR. This narrative has not featured prominently in the memory discourse on the GDR in the past. The film thus offers a more differentiated view of East German society as a whole that is part of the wider trend of post-ostalgia. The class system depicted in *Der Turm* resembles that of West Germany, which demonstrates a westernised image of the GDR.

The rather ambiguous relationship between Richard Hoffmann and class is juxtaposed with his son Christian's unequivocal rejection of class privilege, which he expresses through his food choices. Throughout the film, he displays an almost Spartan attitude towards life in general, and food in particular. He works meticulously for academic success, which is epitomised when he eats an apple while studying. The camera draws the viewer's attention to the apple with a close up of the partially eaten fruit as Christian puts it down on the desk. By eating apples, Christian arguably opposes the social status of his family, in particular his aunt Barbara Rohde and her desire for exotic fruits such as oranges and coconuts. In addition to apples, eating bread symbolises Christian's rejection of his family's elitism and privilege. Although Peter Peter refers to German national identity when he writes 'Brot bleibt Identität',[101] Christian's preference for bread over more sophisticated food items on two specific occasions exemplifies how food shapes social and class identity. In particular, at the wedding of his cousin, eating bread becomes an act of deviation from the feasting of other guests for Christian. His encounter with members of the working class at the NVA have radicalised his opposition to the socially elevated status of his family. During his time at the military prison in Schwedt, he writes a letter to his parents, explaining how, for the first time in his life, he feels accepted and part of a group. While we hear a voiceover reading out of the letter, the visual image shows Christian during a lunch break eating and joking with his fellow inmates. This act of commensality epitomises his sense of belonging to the working class rather than the academic elite of his family. Post-ostalgic remembrance of eating in the GDR here highlights individuality and that personal identity can be expressed through food choices. In

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[100] Ibid., p. 188.
[101] Peter Peter, *Kulturgeschichte der deutschen Küche* (Müchen: C.H. Beck, 2008), p. 78.

particular, eating habits represent class awareness and opposition to the class system of East Germany.

While *Der Turm* engages with social distinction through food, the museum in Pirna reimagines the role of food in complex manifestations of social cohesion in the GDR. The display of a plastic banana behind the counter of the *Konsum* store is contextualised not only as a lasting exchange good but also as the 'glue' that underpins solidarity. In order to mark the banana as *Bückware*, it is hidden behind the counter and only visible through a mirror on the opposite side. Although the museum in Pirna appears to use the banana to engage with questions of economic shortage and privilege, the tropical fruit becomes a memory icon for social cohesion and solidarity in the GDR. As the accompanying text shows, the museum considers bartering as part of East German cultural memory that every former citizen can identify with. Describing a rather complex system of exchanges between the shop assistant, her husband, a customer, their colleague and a group of car mechanics, the museum expresses pride in the improvisation skills of East Germans in the face of shortages. The uncanny generalisation of the persons involved ('die Verkäuferin', 'der Mann der Verkäuferin', 'die Fahrer vom Großhandel' and 'ein Bekannter') help to establish a cultural memory of solidarity that is disguised as the individual memory of an unnamed shop assistant. In particular, the vague descriptions of participants in the bartering allow the visitors to identify with these generic stories and to fill them with their personal memories.

Although the museum seeks to depict East German society as a socially cohesive community, in which people help each other to overcome economic obstacles, this exhibit reveals solidarity as an extrinsically driven behaviour that serves to satisfy shallow economic desires. The myth of solidarity expressed through these personal relationships has played an important role in the attempt to establish a distinct East German identity in the aftermath of unification.[102] In a study of oral history interviews and questionnaires, Mary Fulbrook has found out that even in 2005 'solidarity among people' was still a main narrative through which they not only remembered the GDR but also evaluated their current situation in united Germany. In retrospect, these interviewees interpreted 'solidarity' as the glue of society in the GDR that seemed to be lacking in the Federal Republic.[103] These responses are not necessarily a declaration of loyalty to the socialist system of the GDR and the economic mismanagement

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[102] Hogwood, 'Identity in the Former GDR', p. 75.

[103] Mary Fulbrook, 'Living through the GDR: History, Life Stories, and Generations in East Germany', in *The GDR Remembered: Representations of the East German State since 1989*, eb. by Nick Hodgin and Caroline Pearch (Rochester: Camden House, 2011), pp. 201–20 (p. 214).

that facilitated bartering. Rather, they are a statement of a sentiment of misplacement in unified Germany because of personal failure to adapt to the capitalist market. In this context, Peter Thompson likens former East Germans to immigrants by calling them 'foreigners in their own land'.[104] He applies the various stages of the 'culture shock' theory to the experience of former GDR citizens in newly unified Germany in order to explain the emergence of East-Germanness as a counter-identity.[105] The museum in Pirna appears to perpetuate this idea of East German otherness in its display of a non-perishable plastic banana as an epitome of prolonged counter-cultural memory. The complexity of the bartering in the invented story, however, suggests an ironic undertone that, in fact, looks critically at retrospectively imagined social cohesion. Challenging 'ostalgic' narratives around everyday life in the GDR in general, and food culture in particular, is a specific way in which post-ostalgia renegotiates how we remember the GDR today.

The 'ostalgic' narrative of solidarity is scrutinised more explicitly in the films *Der Turm* and *Barbara* within the setting of workplace meals. In both films, the themes of unity and social cohesion within a workplace *Brigade* are exposed as superficial and mostly propagandistic concepts.[106] In *Der Turm,* the three surgeons Dr Hoffmann, Dr Weniger, and Dr Wernstein as well as the ward nurse share an evening meal on their night shift in Hoffmann's office. While the nurse – by sharing her homemade tomato salad – and to a certain extent the young surgeon Dr Wernstein – by telling his struggles with car repairs - engage in the idea of solidarity, the two more experienced doctors Hoffmann and Weniger take on a rather passive role and thus mark the gathering and the idea of community as a farce. This becomes obvious when Josta Fischer enters in order see her lover Hoffmann, an affair that none of the colleagues is aware of. As Weniger notices the tension between the surgeon and the secretary, he confronts Hoffmann about the single status of Josta in a face-to-face conversation. The act of commensality within a *Brigade* is supposed to serve as a confirmation of the group status. Hoffmann and Weniger almost silently protest against this idea by not engaging in the conversations and instead reserving personal matters for a private talk afterwards. Their anti-social behaviour demonstrates that the everyday experience of commensality at work was not the place of social cohesion in which *Brigadetagebücher* painted them. Hoffmann's and

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[104] Thompson, '"Worin noch niemand war"', p. 253.
[105] Ibid., pp. 253–54.
[106] The *Handlexikon des Bibliographischen Instituts Leipzig* defined a *Brigade* as 'Kollektiv von Werktätigen in sozialistischen Betrieben; arbeitet nach dem Prinzip der gegenseitigen Hilfe und Unterstützung'.
Bibliographisches Institut, 'Brigade', *BI Handlexikon in zwei Bänden*, 2 vols (Leipzig: VEB Bibliographisches Institut, 1984), I, p. 161.

Weniger's behaviour questions the very idea of sociability of eating together with colleagues at work.

The objection to fake social behaviours in the context of eating is even stronger in the film *Barbara*. Protagonist Dr Barbara Wolff refuses to have lunch with her colleagues on her first day at work when she passes by the canteen table around which everyone else in her *Brigade* is sat. In doing so, she indicates that she does not care for social conventions or expectations, which causes uproar in her work unit. Her social exclusion, or 'separation' as her superior André calls it, from the team demonstrates Barbara's rejection of state socialism in general. Eating together with her colleagues poses a threat to Barbara, as she fears further surveillance after her relocation from the prestigious *Charité* in Berlin to the northern province was a punishment for her political disloyalty. Since the *Brigade* also served as a control mechanism of individual members,[107] sitting elsewhere allows Barbara to avoid being involved in private conversations. Both films demonstrate how the idea of social cohesion and solidarity as pillars of socialism was little more than an illusion and a post-*Wende* narrative of nostalgic longing rather than a reality. Instead of rejecting these concepts, the films showcase how individual perceptions of and commitment to solidarity varied. The character of the ward nurse in *Der Turm*, for instance, embodies the ideal member of a socialist collective by preparing and sharing food with her colleagues. Other characters, such as Barbara Wolff and Richard Hoffmann, do not engage in what they consider a farce at best, or a dangerous tool of control, at worst. This varied depiction of commensality at work contributes to a more balanced image of adaption and deviation in the GDR in German cultural memory.

Since eating can be a highly social act, it has offered a compelling point of departure for examining the ways in which visual culture portrays GDR society through acts of commensality. Norms of gender, class and family are embodied in the ways the case studies visualise cooking and eating. By constructing strict gender roles through depictions of commensality, the case studies adopt a westernised image of the GDR, with which non-experiential generations can identity. Overall, the case studies employ the theme of class in a critical manner not only by pointing out the existence of middle and upper classes in the GDR but also the internal struggles of members of the bourgeoisie with their status. Stereotypical 'ostalgic' narratives of social cohesion are dismantled. This reading of food culture and

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[107] Angelika Wolters, 'Alltagskommunikation in der DDR: Eine pragmalinguistische Untersuchung der Textsorte Brigadetagebuch' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Otto-von-Guericke University of Magdeburg, 2004), p. 209.

everyday life in general promotes a more diversified and pluralistic image of East Germany in German cultural memory.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has revealed the ways in which post-ostalgic remembrance of former East Germany employs the realm of food to depict everyday life in more democratic, pluralistic and normalised terms. Items of food have been particularly intriguing memory icons due to their putridness that causes specific challenges for museums and films as visual memory media. According to their distinct characteristics, both types of media have attempted to address these issues through synaesthetic means, photographs and replicas, thus eternalising the otherwise timely limited existence and sensory experience of food.

Depictions of food and eating have also offered a rich field for exploring post-ostalgic remembrance of everyday life in the GDR in visual media, and highlighted its three dominant trends of democratisation, pluralisation and 'normalisation'. Looking at the periphery of rural East Germany and its food culture, the case studies provide a democratised image of everyday life in the GDR and its regions as opposed to the previously established narrative of a socialist monoculture. The privately-run 'Alltagsmuseen' portray critical accounts of East German culinary culture, and thus offer a more differentiated reading of the GDR than many commentators have granted them. Hence, these institutions contribute to a more democratic remembrance of the GDR that recognises memory from below through biographical accounts as well as remembrance at the fringes.

As a consequence of the pluralisation of memory of East Germany, depictions of culinary culture mirror broader issues of East German society, such as gender construction, the distribution of power and class. By focussing on these themes, the case studies have clearly moved on from the memory debates around food in the GDR in the 1990s and early 2000s. These concentrated on economic issues, with hegemonic readings of East German food culture emphasising shortages and low food quality, or material culture, reading East German brands as lasting places of memory, an idea which culminated in the film *Good Bye, Lenin!*. Instead, visual media have largely shifted their focus towards social aspects around food and eating in East Germany. Representations of commensality, in particular, have allowed observations about how societal structures on both micro and macro levels are being reimagined in films and museums. The idea of privilege becomes a major theme when narrating scarcity as a social

consequence of economic shortages that further destabilised East German society. In such depictions, the idea of an East German classless society, a socialist myth perpetuated through 'ostalgic' remembering, is disproved. They highlight capitalist tendencies in the GDR where bartering flourished as a tool to maintain material advantages and display economic prowess.

Although East German products persist in German supermarkets today, and brands such as *Radeberger* beer and *Rotkäppchen* sparkling wine have become accepted as unified German trademarks, their meaning as memory icons is continuously cooling down. Since food brands served as a source of a sense of national belonging for some former East Germans, their ever-decreasing significance in remembering the GDR is symptomatic for a rejection of the idea of a distinct East German identity. Specifically the case study films dismiss the concept of East Germanness with ridicule or exaggeration. Through the means of comedy, irony, reversed and fresh narratives, stereotypical differences between the East and the West are being renegotiated. Thus, East German food culture is normalised in comparison to the FRG. This is also visible in depictions of gender roles around food preparation and eating, as they follow the patriarchal divide between men as decision makers and meat eaters, and women as meal preparers and servers, a narrative that is relatable to non-experiential generations and challenges the idea of the GDR as the 'other' Germany.

4 Fashion-East-a:[1] Reimagining Sartorial Memory of the GDR

Clothing has political significance because it affects the relationships among citizens. Clothing is not simply a private or personal matter; it implies the existence of an intersubjective social world in which one presents oneself and is seen by others.[2]

On the cover of its November edition in 1989, the West German satirical magazine *Titanic* depicted 'Zonen-Gaby', a fictional East German refugee who had crossed the border between the Hungarian People's Republic and Austria. Her appearance was striking: a lack of make-up, a short perm, and most importantly a blue denim jacket.[3] As 'Gaby' explained in an interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in 2010, it was the look of the overly large denim jacket made by the Italian company *Rifle* and worn with the collar down – which was not fashionable at the time – that labelled her an East German woman.[4] For the magazine editors, this image summarised the relationship between East Germans and fashion, which was essentially a mixture of the desire to wear what was *en vogue* in the West, in this case the denim jacket, and a simultaneous lack of knowledge about *how* to wear it. The character of 'Zonen-Gaby' illustrates that the definition of what constituted East German fashion was largely a Western one, epitomised in the idea of an 'imaginary East German'. Stereotypes such as an inferior sense of fashion in comparison to the West were stipulated onto GDR citizens, in particular women. This idea persisted after the *Wende*, as cultural memory of East German clothing in the 1990s adopted this narrative of inferiority and predominantly revolved around the themes of shortage, uniformity, poor quality and improvisation.[5]

Enabled by the temporal gap of some 25 years since the *Titanic* cover, this image has largely vanished from mediated memory of the GDR. In fact, an uncanny counter-narrative to 'Zonen-Gaby' emerged through the 2015 TV series *Deutschland 83*, the story of a young East German sent as an undercover agent to the FRG by the Stasi to collect intelligence about

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[1] Homage to Djurdja Bartlett's book *FashionEast*.

[2] Joshua I. Miller, 'Fashion and Democratic Relationships', *Polity*, 37.1 (2005), 3–23 (p. 3).

[3] Martin Zips, 'Zonen-Gaby packt aus', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 17 May 2010, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/titanic-covergirl-zonen-gaby-packt-aus-1.48095> [accessed 15 November 2015]

[4] In order to prevent any doubt about 'Zonen-Gaby's origin, the satirical magazine also placed a half-peeled cucumber in her hands with the heading 'Meine erste Banane'. This interplay between a lack of a sense for fashion and inexperience regarding food culminates in stereotypes of Eastern inferiority and naivety.

[5] Judd Stitziel, *Fashioning Socialism: Clothing, Politics and Consumer Culture in East Germany* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2005), p. 166.

NATO's strategic plans.[6] Print media hailed the beauty of East German fashion in the successful TV series. While the American magazine *The New Yorker* praised the visuals, including the fashion, as 'aesthetically aspirational as "Mad Men"',[7] the British newspaper *The Guardian* likened the styles of the main characters Martin and Lenora Rauch to the creations of successful contemporary fashion designers Hedi Slimane and JW Anderson.[8] In these reviews of *Deutschland 83*, memory of fashion in the GDR during the 1980s becomes enmeshed within the ongoing broader global trend of reappraising the 1980s and its fashion. In particular, the character of Lenore Rauch in *Deutschland 83* is depicted as a fashion icon who adopts not only the style of the 1980s but a contemporary 'retro chic' reimagining of 1980s fashion design. Thus, *Deutschland 83*, albeit not a primary case study in this thesis, highlights the workings of post-ostalgic remembering as it calls into question memory narratives of the 1990s and replaces them with more nuanced narratives of everyday life in the GDR.

Looking at the way East Germans dressed opens up discussions about the symbolic meaning of fashion more generally, but specifically in the GDR. Joshua Miller points to the social and political implications of clothing in his quote at the beginning of this chapter. Rather than merely fulfilling basic human needs, such as protecting the naked body from both outside weather and being viewed by others, fashion encapsulates what Sidney Mintz calls, as discussed in the previous chapter, 'inside' – mundane and everyday – and 'outside' – larger economic, political, social or cultural – meaning.[9] The meaning that we impose onto clothing is manifold, as a brief overview of discourses around fashion illustrates. Roland Barthes has concluded that covering the naked body with clothing is the result of people's neurotic relationship with their nudity.[10] Competing feelings of prudery and the wish to emanate attractiveness mean that people want to mask and display their naked bodies at the same time. J.C. Flügel contradicts the idea of clothing's primary purpose to protect and cover the body, and instead emphasises fashion's significance as a decorative element.[11] The term 'decoration' here implies 'inside' and 'outside' meaning that we impose onto clothing in order to represent both the self and the groups to which we belong. Following Flügel, clothing can be a visual

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[6] *Deutschland 83*, RTL, 9 February 2015.

[7] Emily Nussbaum, 'The eighties flashbacks of "Halt and Catch Fire" and "Deutschland 83."', *The New Yorker*, 10 August 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/08/10/clone-club> [accessed 21 May 2017]

[8] Imogen Fox, 'The seven things we like about the fashion in Deutschland 83', *Guardian*, 4 January 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/tvandradioblog/2016/jan/04/fashion-in-deutschland-83> [accessed 25 March 2016]

[9] See chapter 3.2 for Mintz's definition of the terms. Although Mintz has defined these terms in relation to food, they are applicable to fashion as they describe more generally how we create meaning of our material culture.

[10] Roland Barthes, *The Language of Fashion* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013), p. 25.

[11] J. C. Flügel, *The Psychology of Clothes* (London, The Hogarth Press Ltd., 1950), p. 17.

statement pertaining to a number of issues, such as identity, social status, political views, and not least aesthetic preferences. Thus, looking at depictions of clothing in the GDR can illustrate how we remember a number of wider and more complex topics in East German society.

Taking these ideas as a starting point, this chapter examines how the way in which we remember East German clothing styles has changed to explain the 'quantum jump'[12] from a source of ridicule to a blueprint of revived 1980s fashion. It argues that this reappraisal of clothing culture in the GDR indicates a more democratic remembering in which former East Germans reclaim memory of everyday life in the socialist state in a process of democratisation. While scholars such as Roland Barthes have explored the meaning of wearing fashion and clothes as body-worn signifiers of 'something',[13] in the context of the GDR, it is useful to widen the scope of analysis to explore also the areas of fashion supply and production in the context of the socialist economy of the GDR. Depictions of clothes manufacturing and distribution can tell us how the specific economic circumstances in the GDR affected the everyday lives of East German citizens, and more importantly how we remember dress culture within the complex framework of the GDR through more pluralistic and nuanced narratives. The museum and film case studies portray all three areas of clothes production, mainly home dress making rather than industrial manufacturing, acquisition, mostly giving clothes as presents or borrowing them, and consumption in the form of wearing attire and combining individual pieces to create an outfit.

In the following four sections, I will argue that post-ostalgic depictions of dress in museums and films comment on wider issues of East German culture, society and identity. Notably, Alexei Yurchak's *imaginary West* and in this context also the complementary *imaginary East*, as discussed in the previous chapter, provide a conceptual starting point to explore the relationship between clothing and a distinct East German identity. This East German identity emerges as a counter-narrative to West German identity. Secondly, focussing on the area of consumer culture and desire allows locating fresh narratives around East German fashion culture beyond scarcity and improvisation. Thirdly, by exploring the realm of youth culture and counter-cultural tendencies we can see a diversification in the depiction of social groups in the GDR. Lastly, when we look at gender roles in the GDR, which are expressed through clothing, we can identify a trend towards the 'normalisation' of East German society in visual culture, as Western binary gender ideals are replicated. All four realms show more

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[12] 'Quantum Jump' is the name of the first episode of *Deutschland 83*.
[13] Barthes, *The Language of Fashion*, p. 29.

balanced or more diverse narratives relating to East German clothing culture through post-ostalgic remembrance.

4.1 Imagined Comraderies: Deconstructing Eastern Identity through Dress

The appearance of 'Zonen-Gaby' illustrates clearly that clothing is a material expression of national identity.[14] In his work on national identity and popular culture, Tim Edensor claims that '[i]n ceremonies, folk dancing, tourist displays and official engagements, clothing becomes an important marker of national identity'.[15] 'Zonen-Gaby', however, shows that everyday clothes, as opposed to Edensor's examples of formal and celebratory dress, are equally a visual statement of nationality recognised by others. According to Edensor, the typical occasions on which national clothing is worn, in particular 'folk dance' and 'tourist displays', suggest an underlying ethnological perspective on national dress. Joanne Eicher and Barbara Sumberg explain the difference between 'national' and 'ethnic dress', a distinction that Edensor fails to make, defining them as follows: ethnic dress refers to 'the items of tradition that are worn and displayed to signify cultural heritage',[16] while national dress is 'linked to the socio-political concept of nation-state and political boundaries, identifies citizens with their country'.[17] Although the term ethnic dress does not readily apply to the GDR, mainly due to its lack of 'cultural heritage', the case studies, in particular the films *Westwind* and *Sushi in Suhl*, present Eastern and Western forms of national dress.

As outlined in regard to food, the film *Westwind* – a biographical story – is very much based on a continuous comparison between Eastern and Western standards of living, which directly clash at Lake Balaton where teenagers from both sides of the Iron Curtain meet. Clothing style becomes not only a marker of East German national identity but also the basis for a class system with disproportionate economic disadvantages for the East Germans during a nightclub scene in the film. Georg Simmel noted of the relationship between clothing and class that '[f]ashion is a product of class distinction and operates like a number of other forms […] the double function of which consists in revolving within a given circle and at the same time emphasizing it as separate from others.'[18] Simmel's observation that fashion can express

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[14] Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, p. 108.

[15] Ibid., p. 108.

[16] Joanne Eicher and Barbara Sumberg, 'World Fashion, Ethnic, and National Dress', in *Dress and Ethnicity: Change Across Space and Time*, ed. by Joanne Eicher (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1999), pp. 295–306 (p. 299).

[17] Ibid., p. 302.

[18] Georg Simmel, 'Fashion', *The International Quarterly*, Vol. 10 (Oct 1904), 130–55 (p. 133).

both belonging to and differentiation from a class becomes clearly visible in *Westwind*. Queuing at the entrance of a nightclub, the twin sisters Doreen and Isabel realise that their outfits do not match the standard of those guests allowed to enter. Subsequently, the bouncer asks them for a hefty entrance fee of 100 Forints each.[19] Despite their sartorial efforts to fit into the tourist nightclub scene, the bouncer recognises their East German origin based on their outfit and style alone. Thus, their clothing is a marker of their national identity in a similar way to national dress, yet it is one that is imposed on them by others. Rather than being a source of pride, as national dress can be,[20] the extrinsically stipulated status of 'East German dress' becomes a stigma for the sisters. This is signalled through the entrance fee, which almost successfully keeps them out of the club but Doreen is determined to meet the West German teenagers again with whom they have a date. As those guests with Western outfits enter free, the sisters are punished twice for their unfashionable clothing; they pay in money and also receive derogatory looks. Being visibly identified as East German in this crowd of international tourists renders them second-class visitors who are compartmentalised from wealthier Western tourists, a theme that recurs in the 2017 TV film *Honigfrauen*.[21] This narrative was also thematised in the 2009 temporary exhibition *Deutsche Einheit am Balaton: Die private Geschichte 1961 – 1989* at the Collegium Hungaricum Berlin, which collected and exhibited the memories of both East and West Germans from their holidays in Hungary. These eyewitness accounts largely confirm that many Easterners were treated as inferior to West Germans during their holidays in Hungary.[22] Acknowledging this experience helps former East Germans to feel represented and it raises awareness in non-experiential generations about what being from the GDR meant in an international context. This depiction, thus, democratises cultural memory of East Germany, as bottom-up memory feeds into it more prominently.

As the scene in *Westwind* continues inside the club, the twins' feeling of inappropriateness and inferiority is emphasised through the movement of the camera. The casual footwear of the sisters is juxtaposed with the elegant shoes of other guests, when the camera follows a pair of stylish high heels walking past a pair of trainers and sandals that belong to Doreen and Isabel. With this shot, the film highlights the subtle yet significant

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[19] 100 Forint equalled about 16 East German Marks.

[20] Yvonne Seng and Betty Wass, 'Traditional Palestinian Wedding Dress as a Symbol of Nationalism', in *Dress and Ethnicity: Change across Space and Time*, ed. by Joanne Eicher (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1999), pp. 227–54 (p. 227).

[21] *Honigfrauen*, dir. by Ben Verbong (Seven Dogs Filmproduktion GmbH, 2017).

[22] Stefanie Flamm, 'Wo Ost und West sich gern hatten', *Zeit*, 8 October 2009 <http://www.zeit.de/2009/42/ Balaton/komplettansicht> [accessed 27 March 2018]

cultural differences in clothing. Although the sisters have made an effort to appear fashionable, certainly by adopting the look of the then East German fashion icon Kati Witt, as gleefully noticed by children at the pioneer camp, their interpretation of beauty is perceived to be below the standard of the Western-dominated club. This depiction is rather ironic as, from the perspective of contemporary viewers, the sisters' apparently inappropriate outfits blend easily into the geographical and temporal framework of a night club in the late 1980s. The viewers' temporal distance of thirty years is likely to homogenise the outfits shown in the film as part of 1980s 'retro' fashion. Hence, this post-ostalgic remembrance exposes the idea of cultural differentiation between East and West based on clothing as very much rooted in perceptions at the time, i.e. the 1980s, of what counts as fashionable and the ideological background of the Cold War. However, it questions the idea that fashion created a distinct East German identity beyond the Cold War imagination.

The film *Sushi in Suhl* explores how East Germanness emerges as a counter-identity to a perceived West German identity. With the help of humour, it both fosters and contests the stereotype of a higher quality of Western fashion items and thus shows the workings of the *imaginary West*.[23] In his search for kimono-style coats for the first Japanese-themed evening at the restaurant, chef Rolf Anschütz turns to the local Betriebssportgemeinschaft (BSG) for judo to inquire about the origin of their judogi. When he finds out that the outfits are made from 'hochwertigem Frottee aus'm NSW',[24] he is even more determined to steal and repurpose them. His delight at the Western origin of clothing carries a strong sarcastic undertone to mock the judo coach's pride in possessing outfits from the NSW. In fact, however, Anschütz has little regard for the Western origin, demonstrated by the fact that he dyes the coats red. In doing so, he cancels out their alleged Western superiority and substitutes it with socialist symbolism. This renegotiated meaning is epitomised not only in the colour red but also in the East German wit and improvisation skills used to transform the judogi into Japanese style kimonos. While the judo coach places prestige onto the coats because of their origin from the NSW, they become prestigious for Anschütz after he has transformed them into East German imitations of kimonos.

The undisputed trust in products from the West becomes a clear metaphor for unified Germany in another scene in the film. When the 'geisha'-esque hairstyle of waitress Giesela

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[23] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*.
[24] NSW was a common abbreviation for 'Nichtsozialistisches Wirtschaftsgebiet' and refers to non-Eastern Bloc states, i.e. the West.

fails to stay in place, sous-chef Helga sees Western products as the only solution to the problem: 'Da braucht man irgendwas Spezielles. Irgendwas…. aus'm Westen.' Her thinking represents the essence of the *imaginary West* since for her the solution to practical problems can only be found in the West, although the dress style they are attempting to imitate is eastern, from a Eurocentric point of view. The film's setting in 1971 arguably provides a different economic and political background from the other film case studies set in the 1980s. Citizens such as Helga are disillusioned about the socialist rhetoric of 'überholen ohne einzuholen',[25] and instead worship West Germany as a consumer paradise. The GDR's economic failings on a larger scale are easily transferred to the smaller scale of everyday life and its obstacles, such as fixing a complicated hairdo. Rolf Anschütz, played by Uwe Steimle who is a cabaret artist and the alleged creator of the neologism *Ostalgie*,[26] however, personifies the rather economically liberal idea that personal resourcefulness and creative solutions to everyday issues can compensate for the struggles of the East German economy as a whole. For him, admiring the West and having false hopes about universal fixes magically appearing from the other side of the Iron Curtain, as Helga does, is pointless and a waste of time. In this particular situation, instead of lamenting, he finds a practical solution and uses the long handle of a star-shaped whisk to keep the hairdo in place. In doing so, the film not only celebrates the stereotype of East German improvisation skills but in fact the capitalist concept of the self-made man whose individualism and hard work lead to success. Thus, while the GDR is criticised for its economic policies, bureaucracy, and inadequate leaders, some individual citizens are portrayed with an independent and problem-solving mentality. Others, like Helga, who imagine the West to bear the solutions to all East German problems, are depicted as equally naive as those who believed in socialism as an economic success. When transferring this metaphor to unified Germany, it becomes clear that the film not only criticises a lack of enlightened self-determination in the past but also in the present. It reminds former East Germans that the key to economic success in the united Federal Republic lies in taking responsibility for their own lives. Post-ostalgic remembrance here means to reflect on the past, similar to Svetlana Boym's 'reflective nostalgia',[27] and recognise its potential to inform the present.

While the *imaginary West* in *Sushi in Suhl* is a place of unlimited resources of useful everyday items, including dress, the film *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie* imagines the West

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[25] Raymond Stokes, 'Von Trabis und Acetylen – Die Technikentwicklung', *Überholen ohne einzuholen: Die DDR-Wirtschaft als Fußnote der deutschen Geschichte?*, ed. by André Steiner (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2006), pp. 115–25 (p. 115).

[26] Ahbe, *Ostalgie*, p. 7.

[27] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, pp. 49–50.

as 'the other' in terms of sartorial aesthetics. When Marlene, the stepmother of protagonist Sara Bender, appears without prior notice, Sara's youngest daughter Bine immediately recognises the Western origin of the woman without ever having visited the FRG. The child's scrutiny of the strange woman's outfit is visualised through camera movements. Starting at her feet, the camera slowly tilts up to Marlene's hip, thus imitating the child's eye movement. This brief survey of her style leads Bine to the conclusion: "Mama, hier ist eine Frau aus dem Westen." The main aspects that seem to distinguish Bine's mother, the East German Sara, and the West German Marlene – apart from shoes – are the use of make-up and jewellery. As Eicher and Sumberg argue, these supplements and changes to the colour of the body are an essential part of the concept of dress,[28] and thus should be considered in a discussion on fashion. While Sara has opted to go without make-up and jewellery, thus adopting a natural look, Marlene is visibly made-up with lipstick, eye shadow, and eyebrow treatment, and wears earrings as well as a large brooch. Although the film arguably highlights the difference between the two women, it eschews to establish an aesthetic hierarchy in which Sara appears less fashionable than Marlene. Unlike 'Zonen-Gaby', the character of Sara Bender – played by Veronica Ferres who has embodied the cultural ideal of female attractiveness in German cinema since her leading role in *Das Superweib* in the mid-1990s – equally represents feminine beauty and a sense for fashion. The juxtaposition of the two women in *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie* represents a more differentiated reading of the differences between Eastern and Western clothing styles without drawing on stereotypes. This contributes to a 'normalisation' of not only clothing culture but everyday life in the GDR.

Comparing recent depictions of clothing in the GDR to 'Zonen-Gaby' – who functioned as an icon of unfashionable Eastern dress in the Western imagination – has highlighted post-ostalgic remembrance today. The implied narrative of Western superiority in the image of 'Zonen-Gaby' is equally being renegotiated as the stereotype of East German inferiority, largely through the means of direct visual juxtaposition of East and West Germans, often in an ironic manner. In retrospect, the films thus normalise clothing culture in the GDR, as they challenge the idea of an aesthetic hierarchy between West and East without denying sartorial differences. The memory politics at play here aim to revalue East Germans and their sense for fashion; yet remind contemporary viewers of the Western perception of the GDR as lacking of aesthetic taste during the 1980s. By acknowledging the experience of East Germans, who were made to feel inferior and mediating biographical memory of it, the case studies enhance the process of

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[28] Eicher and Sumberg, 'World Fashion, Ethnic, and National Dress', p. 298.

democratising memory of the GDR.

4.2 Insatiable Desires: Remembering Clothing as an Index of East German Consumer Culture

Consumer culture in East Germany offered a vast field of exploration for academics during the 1990s, and for some a contributing factor to the end of socialism. Notably, the governmental *Enquete Kommissionen* have claimed that economic shortages not only contributed to the demise of state socialism but also largely caused it.[29] This view, however, reflects one-sided Western stereotypes about the GDR, its production and consumption. Ina Merkel has argued that 'ostalgia' has challenged these commonplaces as it revolved around East German consumer culture and belatedly bestowed a sense of 'distinction and new admiration' onto everyday objects.[30] According to Merkel, this is due to the political meaning of consumer culture as a field in which the battle of ideological systems of East and West had been particularly visible. With unification and the integration of the GDR into the Federal Republic, this struggle had been ultimately lost for the East, which made way for hegemonic readings of the GDR economy in unified Germany.[31]

In recent depictions of fashion in the context of Eastern consumer culture, a trend towards 'normalisation' is visible, as new narratives have emerged. The portrayal of East German consumers diversifies as films and museums present various different attitudes of East Germans towards material goods. In some depictions, East Germans appear to be driven by the same material desires as their Western counterparts and are equally susceptible to capitalist marketing strategies, while others acknowledge a more critical engagement of GDR citizens with consumerism. A second prominent narrative in visual culture links clothing to technological progress in production methods and thus acknowledges East German achievements in the field of engineering. These two narratives offer a broader understanding of consumer culture in the GDR in the sense of post-ostalgia beyond Cold-War inspired stories about scarcity, inferiority, uniformity and improvisation.

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[29] Ina Merkel, 'Luxus im Sozialismus: Eine widersinnige Fragestellung?', in *"Luxus und Konsum"- eine historische Annäherung,* ed. by Reinhold Reith and Torsten Meyer (Münster et al.: Waxmann, 2003), pp. 221–36 (pp. 221–22).
[30] Ina Merkel, 'From Stigma to Cult: Changing Meanings in East German Consumer Culture', in *The Making of the Consumer: Knowledge, Power and Identity in the Modern World,* ed. by Frank Trentman (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006), pp. 249–70 (p. 249).
[31] Ibid., pp. 249–50.

The most prominent piece of clothing to encapsulate East German consumer desires are arguably blue jeans. The German scholar Rebecca Menzel has dedicated a whole monograph to *Jeans in der DDR* where she describes the ambivalent relationship between the trousers, GDR citizens, and the political leadership.[32] According to Menzel, the discrepancy between fulfilling consumer desires on the one hand, and enforcing socialist ideals that condemned consumerism on the other, constituted a 'balancing act' for East German politicians.[33] Young East Germans had developed a fascination with American culture and fashion from the 1950s on because of the images of popular American singers and actors from films and the radio station RIAS.[34] Leather jackets and blue jeans were highly contested items of clothing. At school or at events organised by the FDJ, it was prohibited to wear *Nietenhosen*,[35] as they represented a rebellious youth and thus undermined the idea of workers and peasants determined to build socialism as a peaceful alternative to Western imperialism.[36] The SED's prejudgement of people wearing denim as 'Rowdys' who sympathised with aggressive West Germany and the United States was rejected by the wearers of jeans. Notably, the 1957 film *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* depicts a group of mostly troubled teenagers who travel between East and West Berlin in order to watch the latest American films and buy jeans.[37] At first, the correlation between their fascination for American culture and the struggle to fulfil socialist norms appears to serve a propagandistic agenda. However, by offering an insight into the young people's equally troubled families, the film holds their social backgrounds accountable for failing the socialist ideal rather than their trips to West Berlin. In doing so, the film opposes prejudices against the youth on the sole basis of their choice of attire. The perception of jeans in GDR society, however, gradually shifted from being the symbol of the ideological enemy ('Klassenfeind') during the 1950s,[38] to a common piece of clothing across generations in the 1980s.[39] As the majority of film case studies are set in the 1980s, this struggle to gain acceptance for jeans in the GDR is no longer relevant. Instead, the film *Liebe Mauer* and the museum *Alltag in der DDR* address the strong desire of Easterners for original Western denims

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[32] Rebecca Menzel, *Jeans in der DDR: Vom tieferen Sinn einer Freizeithose* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2004).
[33] Ibid., p.8.
[34] Ibid., pp. 10–11, 14.
[35] This was the East German version of jeans. Menzel, *Jeans in der DDR*, p. 26.
[36] Gerlinde Irmscher, 'Der Westen im Ost-Alltag', in *Wunderwirtschaft: DDR-Konsumkultur in den 60er Jahren*, ed. by Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst (Köln, Weimar and Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1996), pp. 185–93 (p. 190).
[37] *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*, dir. by Gerhard Klein (DEFA, 1957).
[38] Menzel writes that pupils were suspended from school for wearing jeans, and that teenagers were denied entry to FDJ dance evenings if they attempted to disregard the ban on denim items. Menzel, *Jeans in der DDR*, p. 41.
[39] Ibid., p.141.

that persisted throughout the 1980s.

The film *Liebe Mauer* uses irony to scrutinise the East German obsession with jeans by exaggerating the measures one would take to acquire a pair from the West. When East German border guard Sascha tries to impress his West German date Franzi, he borrows a pair of original jeans from his friend Uschi. Uschi and her love for the jeans are ridiculed in the film as she is cast in the role of 'Zonen-Gaby'. When the film depicts the clothes swap between Uschi and Sascha, the viewer realises that her beloved jeans are in fact an ill fit – similar to Gaby's denim jacket – and suit the taller Sascha much better. Clearly emotionally attached to her piece of clothing, Uschi warns Sascha about the consequences of staining or damaging the precious item. These include her escape from the GDR via the Austro-Hungarian border – which she announces in a heavy Saxon accent: 'Da mach isch äben 'rüber' – in order to obtain a new pair of jeans from the *KaDeWe*. The only reason for her to leave the GDR is to purchase Western products, in particular a pair of denims, only to return to her everyday life in the East.[40] As the film is set in the weeks leading up to the Peaceful Revolution, such a plan appears rather cynical, in particular in contrast to the subplot of a waitress who has left the GDR for political reasons. Although her tirade is not entirely serious, Uschi represents a type of materialistic consumer who has little interest in politics, and embodies the capitalist idea of consumption as 'opium for the people'. Consumption is depicted here as a form of conformism, as it distracts people from broader political discourses, in this case the wave of East Germans leaving the GDR and the disintegration of the state. Her character, thus, helps to understand the spectrum of relationships between GDR citizens of the second generation and the state. As René Lehmann writes, political conformism was widespread among this group;[41] the character of Uschi thus represents the group of younger East Germans who value access to fashion over political engagement, a theme that we also see in the film *Der Turm*.[42]

In order to impress the West German Franzi, Sascha adopts a pronounced American rock 'n' roll style with his outfit, which includes jeans, a white t-shirt and a black leather jacket, a style that East Germans attempted to copy since the 1950s.[43] In doing so, he seeks to appear more fashionable, which he recognises is only achievable by looking less East German. This

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[40] This narrative recurs in *Sedwitz*, when the border guard secretly travels to Bavaria in order to purchase a Rubik's cube.

[41] Lehmann, 'Generation and Transition', p.109.

[42] Ina Rohde expresses her anticipation of moving from Dresden to East-Berlin because of the broader selection of clothes in the *Jugendmode* stores there. The actual reason for her move is the political disagreement of her fiancé Dr Wenstein with his employer in Dresden.

[43] Menzel, *Jeans in der DDR*, p. 11.

strategy proves successful when Franzi notices that 'ohne Uniform siehst du gar nicht mehr so anders aus'. Her definition of 'anders' is informed by her experience of West German dress styles, and Sascha's appropriated Western look passes as such. In fact, however, the couple look 'anders' as opposed to their surroundings in East Berlin, as they stroll through the city. The images emphasise the otherness of Sascha and Franzi's appearance, the latter wearing a green faux leather coat over a white dress, by juxtaposing them with East German onlookers, such as teenagers in blue FDJ shirts who turn their heads towards the couple, and a Stasi officer in the infamous light-grey *Dederon* jacket who observes them. The pair of jeans that was a symbol of conformity for Uschi, thus, shifts its meaning to an item of political opposition and eventually treason on Sascha's body, which is caused by his interaction with a West German.

While the film *Liebe Mauer* avoids commenting on East German product quality, the exhibition *Alltag in der DDR* roots the desire for Western jeans in economic scarcity and inferior fabrics and styles in the GDR. In a part of the exhibition dedicated to holidaymaking, the museum tells the story of East German tourists overcoming obstacles to purchase licensed Levi's denims during their holiday in the Hungarian People's Republic. The accompanying text calls Western jeans 'cult' objects for teenagers in the GDR, and stresses the low quality of East German reproductions of denim trousers. Although the museum reads this desire for original jeans as an East-West phenomenon, Georg Simmel's writings offer a broader perspective on consumer behaviour pertaining to fashion: 'there exists a widespread predilection for importing fashions from without, and such foreign fashions assume a greater value within the circle, simply because they did not originate there.'[44] For Simmel, the exoticness of foreign items is the reason for their popularity, an idea that helps to deconstruct the myth that the East German desire for Western products was about the West in particular and its political order. Another text in the same section argues that East Germans attempted to save money on food during their holidays in order to be able to afford goods such as jeans, records or books of Western origin. This narrative of sacrifices being taken to obtain jeans from the FRG assumes an almost religiously charged relationship between GDR citizens and denims. Here, the exhibition misses a chance to highlight the difference in aesthetics and fabric quality by not displaying a pair of *Nietenhosen*. This would allow visitors to draw their own conclusions rather than to impose narratives of Eastern inferiority onto visitors, which perpetuate hegemonic cultural memory of the GDR in united Germany. This exhibit illustrates that the general trend towards post-ostalgic remembrance of everyday life in the GDR does not

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[44] Simmel, 'Fashion', p. 136.

imply the immediate end of top-down narratives rooted in the ideological divide of the Cold War that persists mainly in larger state-run institutions.

The GDR's failure to supply original clothing from the West or produce attire of equivalent quality and aesthetics, as the exhibit in Berlin highlights, led some East Germans to replicate Western fashion at home. Djurdja Bartlett discusses this phenomenon across the Eastern Bloc in her seminal work *FashionEast.*[45] She argues that the discrepancy between the ideology-driven ready-to-wear fashion available in stores and the model clothing in women's magazines, which often followed Western fashion trends, disgruntled consumers and amplified their desire for more fashionable apparel.[46] Although Bartlett's observations mainly concern what she calls the 'middle class', a social group that aspired to achieve the chic of Coco Chanel, the desire to wear Western *en-vogue* clothing was common in many parts of East German society. The *DDR Museum im Kino* in Malchow, which opened in 2006 in the federal state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, deals with homemade children's apparel that is based on a knitting pattern from West Germany. The exhibit of a handmade jumper with an image of Pumuckl on it,[47] that the museum director Irina Gräser had produced herself, addresses how adults projected the desire for Western clothing styles onto children and their outfits. According to the accompanying contemporary newspaper article in the local *Nordkurier*, Gräser produced the jumper assuming that her son wanted a piece of clothing with the popular gnome from the FRG, which was impossible to obtain from an East German shop. As the article outlines, making the jumper was only possible thanks to a bartering deal with friends at the local carpet factory who could provide the yarn. Despite this recycling of the 'ostalgic' narratives of resourcefulness and solidarity, the newspaper article offers a counter-narrative to the Eastern desire for Western fashion as it admits the son's disappointment about the present, and his preference for a jumper with the image of a football. This revelation exposes the desire for goods from the West as partly imagined, and possibly a cultural behaviour that East German parents instilled into their children. It thus questions the idea of the uniform East German consumer who desires original Western attire or fashion reproduced to emulate the aesthetics of the West. This depiction help to diversify memory of consumption in the East and thus offers a broader scope for narratives beyond materialistic urges.

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[45] Djurdja Bartlett, *FashionEast: The Spectre that Haunted Socialism* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: The MIT Press, 2010)

[46] Ibid., pp. 205, 248.

[47] During the 1980s, the gnome Pumuckl with his iconic red hair became very popular with children in the FRG due the eponymous TV programme.

The film *Barbara* offers another strong counter-narrative to the image of universal East German desire for Western clothing. Drawing on the idea of the *Imaginary East*,[48] the film shows the protagonist's rejection of nylon stockings imported from West Germany. A brief look at the history of nylon helps to contextualise the meaning of this memory icon not only in the film *Barbara* but also in *Sonnenallee*, where a similar narrative appears. Although polyamide fibres – the chemical term for nylon – were used in both German states, it was the textile industry in the FRG that mastered the production of nylon stockings already in 1950,[49] while the Eastern equivalent made of the synthetic fabric *Dederon* was only launched in 1963.[50] Due to this temporal advantage, nylon stockings became emblematic for Western superiority in production methods and product quality at the time.[51] The film *Sonnenallee* contests the cliché of the East German longing for Western stockings by portraying it as a largely imagined Western view of East German consumer desires by the late 1970s. When uncle Heinz from West Berlin smuggles perfectly legal tights across the border, his gleeful expectation of gratitude is met with indifference and sarcasm by his East German sister Doris. The film satirises the West German perspective on East Germany in general, and the economic and cultural value of Western stockings in particular, when we see Heinz undress in order to reveal the tights smuggled under his trousers. Thus, the film questions both the idea of an imaginary inferior East as well as the Western self-image of superiority and generosity, instead of perpetuating stereotypes.

The film *Barbara* uses a similar situation to expand the discourse around stockings to the theme of Eastern and Western gender stereotypes. During their secret meeting in the woods, the West German Jörg presents his romantic partner Barbara with a bag of gifts from the FRG, including a pack of stockings and a box of cigarettes. Barbara ignores the tights while her attention is drawn to the cigarettes. In contrast to Jörg, the viewer has noticed that Barbara never wears tights despite her preference for skirts over trousers. Not even on the long way home from the meeting with her lover, when she is forced to walk after somebody has sabotaged her bike, is Barbara inclined to wear stockings in order to avoid blisters.[52] Given her

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[48] See section 3.1 for a discussion of the terms *Imaginary West* and *Imaginary East*.

[49] Bartlett, *FashionEast*, p. 130.

[50] Mühlberg, Dietrich, 'Auf der Suche nach der 'Sozialistischen Bekleidungskultur'', in *Künstliche Versuchung: Nylon, Perlon, Dederon. Begleitbuch zur Ausstellung im Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, ed. by Stiftung Haus der Geschichte (Köln: Wienand Verlag, 1999), pp. 140–51 (p. 145).

[51] Peter Borscheid, 'Der Wirtschaftswunderfaden', in *Künstliche Versuchung: Nylon, Perlon, Dederon. Begleitbuch zur Ausstellung im Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland,* ed. by Stiftung Haus der Geschichte (Köln: Wienand Verlag, 1999), pp. 58–83 (pp. 60–61).

[52] We see how Barbara takes off her shoes when she arrives at the hospital for her night shift after the walk from the woods. Walking such a long way barefoot has left Barbara's heel chafed, an injury that wearing stockings

refusal to wear stockings, Jörg's present is a clear misjudgement of Barbara's clothing style and personality. It is an early sign of his fixed and rather conservative attitudes towards the relationship between men and women in general, and his unwillingness to accept Barbara's career ambitions as a paediatrician. Georg Simmel wrote that people express 'segregation by means of differences in clothing', due to the 'danger of absorption and obliteration'.[53] This is precisely the case for Barbara when she rejects the tights, in order to protest the looming decline of her professional career in the socially more conservative FRG. The film portrays tights as an item that epitomises Western gender roles and stricter rules of decency that persisted in some parts of Western society since the 1950s.[54] For Barbara, who is planning to flee the GDR for the FRG, the stockings are a reminder of certain lifestyle choices, including dress and profession, that she is able to make more freely in the otherwise oppressive GDR, and thus casts doubt on her expectation of finding belonging in West Germany. Stockings, thus, become an object over which Barbara and Jörg negotiate gender equality. By rejecting the gift, Barbara demonstrates that she disagrees not only with Jörg's vision of womanhood but also with the Western idea of women's roles in society. Therefore, Barbara appears to be a conscious consumer who engages with the societal and political implications of her styling choices. Such a portrayal challenges the idea of unreflective East German material desires and thus adds variation to the portrayal of consumer behaviour to post-ostalgic cultural memory of the GDR.

Women's hosiery and artificial fabrics also offer a point of departure for cultural memory of East German technological progress in the realm of clothing. In its development of plastic fabrics, the GDR played a pioneering role within the Eastern Bloc as delegated by the Soviet Union. Newly developed materials containing up to 100% of artificial fibres represented an image of socialist technological and scientific progress, and not least modern aesthetics, that the Soviet Union and the GDR were eager to spread both within the Eastern Bloc and outside.[55] Practical aspects, such as avoiding expensive imports of commodities,[56] and foregoing the need to iron in order to save women time on household chores were at the forefront when

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may have prevented.

[53] Simmel, 'Fashion', p. 137.

[54] Volker Ilgen, 'Normen, Nymphchen, Nitribitt', *Künstliche Versuchung: Nylon, Perlon, Dederon. Begleitbuch zur Ausstellung im Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland,* ed. by Stiftung Haus der Geschichte (Köln: Wienand Verlag, 1999), pp. 102–11 (p.106).

[55] Bartlett, *FashionEast*, p. 220.

[56] Wolle, Stefan, '"Chemie gibt Brot, Wohlstand und Schönheit": Das Chemieprogramm der DDR – ein mißglückter Laborversuch', in *Künstliche Versuchung: Nylon, Perlon, Dederon. Begleitbuch zur Ausstellung im Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, ed. by Stiftung Haus der Geschichte (Köln: Wienand Verlag, 1999), pp. 114–31 (p. 126).

conceptualising textiles produced by the petrol industry.[57] With this emphasis on logistics, aesthetic considerations were largely neglected. The area of clothing, and in particular newly developed fabrics, such as *Dederon*, are a prime example of the misguided efforts of party leaders to manage consumer desires. Commentators such as Ina Merkel have argued that the SED regime's inability to respond to East German consumers and their material desires contributed profoundly to the demise of the GDR.[58] Notably, the museums *DDR Museum im Kino* in Malchow and *Alltag in der DDR* in Berlin tell the story of *Dederon* and *Präsent 20* as innovative artificial fibres from East German production. Comparing these two exhibitions and their readings of textiles from the GDR highlights the memory politics at play in different museums.

The exhibition *Alltag in der DDR* in Berlin exhibits East German clothing innovations in the context of political propaganda, socialist uniformity and inferior product quality. It devotes a rather large space to the topic of East German fashion by displaying four outfits on headless tailor mannequins in front of a huge propaganda poster reading "Moderne Menschen – moderne Kleidung – Ausdruck unserer sozialistischen Entwicklung". To the eyes of contemporary visitors, however, the four sturdy suits for women and men in bold colours look anything but modern. A predominantly aesthetic reading of modernity, as the museum arguably suggests with its arrangement of objects, is in contrast to the East German political elite's understanding of modernity as uniquely rooted in technological progress and innovation.[59] This depiction of colourful outfits (red, white, light blue and green) is a visual step forward from the display of East German clothing in the head branch of the *Haus der Geschichte* in Bonn. Here, the permanent exhibition juxtaposes East and West German fashion with the clear aim to highlight the greyness of everyday life in the GDR. The exhibit of an East German dark grey skirt and jacket combination next to a boldly patterned mini dress complemented by a red coat and white knee-high leather boots from the FRG mark a clear visual contrast. This exhibit underscores Chloe Paver's argument that the colour grey epitomises West German stereotypes about the drabness of life in the GDR.[60] While the *Haus der Geschichte* draws on the idea of a 'grey' everyday life in East Germany, *Alltag in der DDR* acknowledges how colourful clothing

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[57] Mühlberg, 'Auf der Suche nach der 'Sozialistischen Bekleidungskultur'', p. 145.
[58] Ina Merkel, 'Alternative Rationalities, Strange Dreams, Absurd Utopias: On Socialist Advertising and Market Research', in *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, ed. by Katherine Pence and Paul Betts (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008), pp. 323–44 (p. 342).
[59] Bartlett, *FashionEast*, p. 221.
[60] For the full discussion, see: Chloe Paver, 'Colour and Time in Museums of East German Everyday Life', in *Remembering and Rethinking the GDR: Multiple Perspectives and Plural Authenticities*, ed. by Anna Saunders and Debbie Pinfold (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 132–46 (pp. 134–35).

in the GDR was.

Despite this progress towards post-ostalgic remembrance of everyday life in the GDR, the narrative of the accompanying museum text returns to criticism of mass production methods in East Germany and the lack of breathability of the fabric, which contradicts the displayed flyer from the launch campaign of *Präsent 20*. It fosters the idea of complete political penetration of life in the East by saying 'Die Kollektion ist ein staatliches Programm, entwickelt zum 20.Jahrestag der DDR 1969. […] Die Propaganda präsentiert es als „Geschenk" der Partei- und Staatsführung an die Bevölkerung.' In the East German political elite's own script, the GDR should be known for its newly developed and highly sophisticated fabrics, such as *Präsent 20* and *Dederon*. Progress in the realm of synthetic fibres equalled economic progress and was ultimately seen as another step towards a socialist utopia.[61] The rather patriotic names of some of these fabrics – *Präsent 20* was launched 1969 on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the foundation of the GDR,[62] and *Dederon* containing one letter each of the acronym DDR at the beginning of each syllable[63] – reflected the GDR's pride in pioneering the development of synthetic fabrics. It shows that despite the rhetoric of brotherhood and friendship, there was ongoing competition between members of the CMEA, and the GDR was keen to adopt a leading role in light industry and heavy industry alike,[64] which will be a recurring theme in the following chapter on transportation and car production.

In contrast to the exhibition in Berlin, the museum in Malchow reads the launch of *Präsent 20* in more neutral terms by omitting the word 'Propaganda' and looking at the advantages and disadvantages of the fabric in more objective terms. The museum names the place of production and launch date of the prestigious textile in a hand-written museum text that reads 'Am 3. Sept. 1969 wurde im Textilkombinat Cottbus zum 20. Jahrestag der DDR die Textilmarke „Präsent 20" vorgestellt.' Mild criticism comes across by mentioning the Western origin of the primary fibre Polyester in the fabric, and the likelihood of over-heating for the wearer. However, positive features such as crease-resistance and suitability for machine-washing at home balance these aspects out. The museum argues that these qualities enabled items of clothing made from it, such as the displayed jacket of a groom worn for his wedding

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[61] Bartlett, *FashionEast*, p. 222.

[62] Cordula Günther, '"Präsent 20"- Der Stoff, aus dem die Träume sind', in *Wunderwirtschaft: DDR-Konsumkultur in den 60er Jahren*, ed. by Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst (Köln, Weimar and Wien: Böhlau Verlag GmbH & Cie, 1996), pp. 144–51 (p. 144).

[63] Stefan Paul, 'Die Dederon-Kampagne 1959', in *Künstliche Versuchung: Nylon, Perlon, Dederon. Begleitbuch zur Ausstellung im Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland,* ed. by Stiftung Haus der Geschichte (Köln: Wienand Verlag, 1999), pp. 132–37 (p. 132).

[64] Bartlett, *FashionEast*, p. 220.

in 1975, to outlast the GDR in the wardrobes of some former East Germans. In doing so, the museum adopts the marketing arguments of durability and user-friendliness that were already advertised in the original flyer displayed at *Alltag in der DDR* in Berlin. The museum in Malchow diminishes these qualities by listing major disadvantages of the fabric. The exhibit questions the fabric as a source of pride for East German technological progress as the production of *Präsent 20* relied on innovations from West Germany. This rather balanced view on clothing from the East enables reflective remembering that acknowledges technological and societal achievements without omitting their downsides. Such narratives appear less driven by the cultural and ideological divides that dominated remembrance of the GDR in the 1990s.

Reading clothing in the GDR through the framework of consumer desires has revealed further examples of post-ostalgic remembrance in visual culture. It provides diversified images of East German consumer culture pertaining to clothing. The previously portrayed naive East German obsession with Western fashion items is largely being deconstructed through various narrative means, such as comedic exaggeration. Other portrayals depict conscious East German consumers, highlighting more pluralistic memory of the GDR. Biographic counter-memory, in this context, enables more democratic remembering of the relationship between East Germans and fashion from the FRG. As most depictions revalue Eastern fashion aesthetics and technological innovations, they normalise the GDR and its clothing culture beyond hegemonic narratives of the 1990s.

4.3 Dress to Express: Remembering the Influence of Fashion on East German Youth Culture

Dress style is a particularly effective means of challenging societal norms as it visualises opposition. A number of case studies explore how young people express deviation from and adaption to the political norms in the GDR through their sartorial choices. Within the vast body of literature on defiant dress and antifashion, Fred Davis's definition of the terms stands out as especially useful. He writes that antifashion 'must via some symbolic device of opposition, rejection, studied neglect, parody, satirization, etc., address itself to the ascendant or "in" fashion of the time'.[65] For the GDR leadership, Western clothing embodied the very idea of antifashion for ideological reasons, as argued with reference to jeans in section 4.2. The newly

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[65] Fred Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 161.

renovated and textually revised permanent exhibition at the *DDR Museum - Lernort Demokratie* in Pforzheim focusses on the lives of young people in East Germany as a way of making GDR history more accessible to younger generations of Germans with no experiential memory of division.[66] Through this new focus and its museum texts, the museum leads the way towards a less ideologically charged image of the GDR in German cultural memory. As one caption reads: 'Wie überall auf der Welt bedeutet *jung sein* auch in der DDR *anders sein*'.[67] Here, being different is synonymous with deviance from a socially accepted norm, and the museum acknowledges that this behavioural pattern during adolescence was just as common in the GDR as in the West. Such post-ostalgic narratives challenge the idea of the GDR as the 'other' Germany, and instead integrate more balanced remembrance of the East into cultural memory of unified Germany.

Since the SED had given up its fight against the jeans by the 1980s, and the majority of filmic case studies are set in the last decade of the GDR, their exploration of sartorial defiance is often based on punk culture rather than jeans as a form of youth rebellion. The films *Das Wunder von Berlin* and *Go West*, as well as the museums *Alltag in der DDR* in Berlin and *Lernort Demokratie* in Pforzheim explore the relationship between youth, punk and the East German authorities. Punk clothing fits Fred Davis's definition of antifashion aptly: it uses 'symbolic devices of opposition' in order to maintain a 'dialogue of fashion symbolism and countersymbolism'.[68] Davis emphasises that antifashion does not equal indifference towards clothing but sends out a highly structured visual message. Although punk style is often associated with little care for clothes, as they look worn and ripped, it is, in fact, a carefully assembled look that shows attention to detail, through features like spikes and patches on leather jackets or the colours of hair dye. The film *Das Wunder von Berlin* engages in particular with the carefully crafted style of a punk, when it illustrates how he applies the finishing touches to his look for a punk concert. The frame in the very first scene of the film consists of Marco's mirror image – with the camera behind his right shoulder – as he makes a lot of effort for his hair to look stringy and unwashed. Fred Davis notes that young people are more susceptible to antifashion because they do not depend on a conventional look in order to earn

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[66] Foundation member Frau Roos explained this new concept during an informal conversation at the museum in March 2016. The current website of the museum states that it aims to keep memory of the GDR alive for younger generations who take a united Germany for granted. DDR Museum Pforzheim, *Home* (Pforzheim: DDR Museum Pforzheim, 2015) <http://www.pforzheim-ddr-museum.de/> [accessed 6 June 2017]
[67] Emphasis in original.
[68] Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*, pp. 161–62.

a living.[69] This is certainly applicable to Marco who benefits from the social and economic status of his family who support him financially; this is a recurring point of tension between Marco and his father Jürgen. It becomes clear that Marco's style is a direct response to his rather conservative and bourgeois family. Both of his parents reject their son's punk style, however for different reasons. While mother Hanna is concerned about Marco's professional prospects in future, his father fears repercussions for his own career as a high-ranking member of the Stasi nomenclature. The father's selfishness and disregard for the emotional needs of his own family are the true source and target of Marco's rebellion. By wearing the punk outfit, he attempts to create an antithesis to his father's conservative style that involves a suit, a tie, ironed shirts, and a clean side parting. Opposing the GDR and the political circumstances play a marginal role for Marco. On the contrary, he later starts to defend his military service as a patriotic act in front of his friends. As the film depicts teenage defiance as a rather apolitical act, it normalises adolescence in East Germany in comparison to the West. In doing so, it also rejects the idea of homogenous biographies of GDR citizens, and instead helps to integrate diverse narratives of youth in the East into German cultural memory.

In contrast, the film *Go West* links the punk outfit to the idea of political opposition. As Anna Saunders argues, 'anarchism, pacifism, non-conformity and individualism' were integral aspects of punk identity in East Germany.[70] Teenager Thomas in *Go West* exemplifies these characteristics as he revolts against the political system of the GDR rather than his family. This becomes clear when he deserts his immediate conscription in order to flee the GDR with his friends. His profound fear of not fitting in with the army because of his looks and lack of discipline are a decisive factor for his actions. Unlike Marco in *Das Wunder von Berlin,* Thomas has opted for a more moderate punk look that substitutes leather trousers with jeans, and omits both hair dye and a spiked leather neckband. Arguably, this is due to the lack of a punk scene in the provincial town of Brandenburg as opposed to the vibrant punk culture in East Berlin to which Marco belongs. Thomas's punk outfit draws public attention, which becomes a disadvantage when on the run from the Stasi. Consequently, the escape agent forces him to cut his hair and take off the spiked leather jacket. Thus, escape changes Thomas's appearance in the same way as military conscription would have done. Both accounts of punk culture include the element of revolt against norms set by authorities, namely parents or the state. The punk clothes worn by both young men reflect this state of mind and are supposed to

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[69] Ibid., p. 167.
[70] Anna Saunders, *Honecker's children: Youth and patriotism in East(ern) Germany*, 1979-2002 (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 65.

represent their individuality.[71] In the course of both stories, this individuality is, however, crushed by yet another authority different from the one that they are initially revolting against. Both young men adjust to and learn to live with the changes to their appearance; in fact, they thrive in a disciplined environment. In depicting this change as a positive development, and presenting punks as people who avoid work in general, both films criticise punk culture as a whole and not only with respect to the GDR. The tensions between young people and authorities that arise from youth rebellion embodied in punk clothing are not specific for East Germany. By showing punk culture in the East, these films somewhat normalise the East German youth in the eyes of viewers from the West, as this subculture was also a common feature of West German cities during the 1970s and 1980s.[72]

The museum *Alltag in der DDR* in Berlin presents punk culture as a counter-narrative to the FDJ, and a refuge for those teenagers who opposed state-run youth organisations. The display juxtaposes a white shirt with a red scarf as an example for a youth uniform with a worn black jumper and a spiked wristband as representatives of punk culture. In the accompanying text, the museum notes the repression that punks faced, including dissociation, surveillance, and persecution by the Stasi. In depicting punk as a form of East German opposition, the museum denies the fact that not only the GDR authorities but also West German conservative forces objected this particular subculture during the 1980s.[73] As the examples from film have shown, being a punk in the GDR did not necessarily equal opposition to the socialist state in general. According to Rebecca Menzel, punk style was for many young people in the GDR a way to stand out visually from their peers.[74] The museum exaggerates the meaning of punk culture as a form of political opposition to the SED in order to emphasise that many East Germans rejected state socialism. At the same time, it victimises punks as potential targets of the Stasi. This reading is arguably influenced by the *Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption* and its aim to remember everyday life in the GDR strictly in the context of the dictatorship. Although this portrayal represents the troubles of many punks in the GDR, it fails to acknowledge a wider spectrum of experiences around punk culture in East Germany. It thus underlines the importance of looking at a variety of films and museums for a

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[71] Menzel, *Jeans in der DDR*, p. 154.

[72] Philipp Meinert and Martin Seeliger, 'Punk in Germany', in *Perspectives on German Popular Music*, ed. by Michael Ahlers and Christoph Jacke (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 208–212 (p. 209).

[73] Melanie Eis and Fabian Eckert, '"1979 Deutschland" *Holocaust*, West German Memory Culture, and Punk's Intervention into the Everyday', in *Beyond „No Future": Cultures of German Punk*, ed. by Mirko Hall, Seth Howes and Cyrus Shahan (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic Press 2016), pp. 109–28 (pp. 119–20).

[74] Menzel, *Jeans in der DDR*, pp. 145-46.

more varied reading of the past through different memory narratives.

While punk clothing embodies juvenile non-conformism, pioneer outfits have epitomised the idea of adaptation if not loyalty to socialism. Recently, however, post-ostalgic remembrance has introduced diversified narratives around pioneer uniforms as the case study films and museums vividly illustrate. At the height of commercial 'ostalgia' around the turn of the millennium, pioneer uniforms represented an idyllic childhood in the East. Notably, a series of TV entertainment shows, aimed at nostalgic east Germans and curious west Germans alike, centre-staged pioneer uniforms as iconic East German clothing since both adult presenters and guests, such as Katharina Witt, wore them.[75] Through such depictions, which fostered cultural memory of a standardised experience of everyday life in the GDR, the pioneer uniform retrospectively became a form of national garment for the East German youth. Due to the lack of historically-grown national dress with cultural significance, political uniforms such as the pioneer outfits adopted this function for the GDR.[76] Recent museum exhibitions and films have largely revisited this post-*Wende* reading of pioneer clothing, and reframed it within a variety of narratives. The pioneer uniform, thus, becomes a multi-faceted memory icon for the relationship between young East Germans and the pioneer organisations, ranging from belonging and adaption to the social exclusion of pioneers. In their entirety, the case studies represent the different functions of the East German youth organisations through their portrayals of uniforms, such as militarism and proletarian internationalism, which Anna Saunders has explored in her book *Honecker's children.*[77]

The *DDR Museum* in Pirna, for example, currently displays pioneer uniforms in the context of social cohesion and the socialist ideal of solidarity. In a room filled with flags, signs and books about the East German youth organisations, there are three fashion mannequins, which would normally appear in a contemporary clothing shop window, in pioneer attire. Their extravagant postures, make-up and doll-like faces are in absurd contrast to the unfashionable cuts and colours of the uniforms. This portrayal is in a bizarre contrast to the more modest appearance of actual pioneers, as depicted on a historical poster in the same room. Mark Sandberg has argued that museums use mannequins to avoid what he calls the *missing person effect.*[78] According to this theory, museums reimagine spaces to appear as if they have only

[75] Martina Ölke, 'Reisen in eine versunkene Provinz: Die DDR in der literarischen Perspektive', in *Wende des Erinnerns?: Geschichtskonstruktionen in der deutschen Literatur nach 1989*, ed. by Barbara Beßlich, Katharina Gratz and Olaf Hildebrand (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag GmbH & Co, 2006), pp. 209–24 (p. 209).
[76] Saunders, *Honecker's children*, p. 32.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Mark Sandberg, *Living Pictures, Missing Persons: Mannequins, Museums, and Modernity* (Princeton and

been vacated recently, and the original inhabitants would return any minute. Since these inhabitants, in this case the GDR citizens, are historically absent, such a display is an invitation for visitors to imaginatively inhabit the space. The mannequins in this particular exhibit, however, alienate the visitor, as they are an awkward intruder into the historical space.[79] The realisation that these dolls now occupy their painstakingly reimagined living spaces makes the idea of a return, whether physically or mentally, impossible for the visitor. Thus, different exhibition strategies enable the museums to change the way in which visitors experience and are able to connect with the past, an idea that will become clear through the comparison of the Pirna exhibit of pioneer uniforms with the exhibition in Berlin.

The narratives around pioneer uniforms created in Pirna mainly revolve around the theme of solidarity. The museum creates, as in many other places, the narrative through the composition of objects rather than explanatory texts. On the one hand, this exhibition method provides a space for visitors to find their own narratives in the display. However, this method opposes traditional museum learning theory in which texts and labels represent the curator's voice and explain the significance and context of objects.[80] Consequently, a museum omitting explanatory texts risks not only a misinterpretation of an object. It also faces failure to position itself within the memory discourse and achieve its purpose, usually manifested in its mission statement. The *DDR Museum* in Pirna promises its visitors 'Interessantes und [W]issenswertes über das alltägliche Leben der Menschen in der DDR' and 'eine interessante und durchaus auch mal amüsante Reise in die jüngste, deutsche Geschichte'.[81] This purpose of delivering infotainment and the simultaneous neglect of educational functions of the museum explain the focus on objects and absence of texts. In the case of the pioneer room, this means that the narratives of community and solidarity are conveyed through objects. A large sign reading 'An der Seite der Genossen - Immer bereit!', for instance, fosters the idea that youth organisations created social cohesion between young people and older members of society, in particular members of the SED. A handcart with empty glass bottles and old newspapers underneath the sign reminds visitors with experiential memory of the GDR of pioneers collecting recycling to raise money for charity in support of other socialist countries. Visitors without such experience or knowledge through the works of communicative memory will perhaps misread the display

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Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 1.

[79] Ibid., p. 4.

[80] Robert W. Rydell, 'World Fairs and Museums', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Sharon Macdonald (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2011), pp. 135–51 (p. 140).

[81] DDR Museum Pirna, *Ausstellung* (Pirna: DDR Museum Pirna, 2017) <http://www.ddr-museum-pirna.de/ausstellung> [accessed 10 June 2017]

as the story of environmentally friendly behaviour rather than the narrative of solidarity among pioneers and with comrades abroad. The museum romanticises the idea of solidarity and omits the fact that charitable work was, in fact, a requirement for members of the FDJ that served the ideological purpose to avoid xenophobic tendencies within the otherwise fostered socialist patriotism.[82] Overall, the exhibit whitewashes the youth organisations, in particular, but also East German society as a whole by depicting it as a utopian community of advanced social cohesion, expressed through wearing a pioneer outfit.

A comparative approach to the exhibitions in Pirna and the *DDR Geschichtsmuseum* in Perleberg exemplifies that similar exhibition strategies can result in vastly different memory narratives. It also illustrates that the meaning of an object in museums, and indeed film, depends on the way in which it is contextualised. Although both museums rely on over-crowded displays with books, flags and fashion mannequins dressed in pioneer clothing, their retrospective evaluation of the pioneers differs significantly. While we find an exclusively positive image of youth organisations in Pirna, the museum in Perleberg reminds the visitor of the paramilitary nature of the youth groups. Rifles hanging from the ceiling as well as posters advertising the Free German Youth as the 'Kampfreserve' of the party underpin this idea visually, and are in stark contrast to the idea of pioneers as recycling pickers for charity depicted in Pirna. In a similar fashion to the exhibition in Pirna, the museum in Perleberg avoids texts and instead allows the objects and documents to speak for themselves. The pronounced critical reading of the pioneer organisation is expressed by exhibiting a report from a paramilitary manoeuvre of the Thälmann pioneers, which included searching the woods for saboteurs. For the museum directors, the mere mention of such activities amounts to a condemnation and criticism of the GDR's socialist education system. Nevertheless, visitors who are already likely to be visually overstimulated by the vast number of objects, may easily overlook the folder containing a detailed report of the manoeuvre. Thus, the overall visual narrative of the exhibition space is a rather positive one that hardly differs from the uncritical account of youth organisations in Pirna. However, if we look at the objects more closely and examine their arrangement, it becomes clear that the museum directors in Perleberg are critical of it. In fact, they use the number of objects related to the pioneers and the slogans written on them in as a way to demonstrate the omnipresence of such organisations in the lives of children in the GDR. By contextualising pioneers through military education, one of the functions of these

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[82] Saunders, *Honecker's children*, p. 40.

organisations,[83] the museum emphasises an essential narrative about wearing the pioneer uniform that helps to diversify cultural memory of East Germany.

The film *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie* contests the image of the pioneer organisations as a place of integration for everyone and solidarity with everyone. On the contrary, the power structures within the pioneers offer effective leverage with which to put pressure on politically disloyal families, and the pioneer uniform is no longer a memory icon of community but of forced adaption. When Sara Bender applies for *Ausreise* to the FRG, her daughters move from inside the community to the outside, as they are excluded from the pioneer summer camp. The film visualises this process in detail, when we see a group of young pioneers and Thälmann pioneers during a group building activity. The pioneers sit in a circle and pass around a long ribbon, a game that only works due to the children's meticulous group effort. The frame creates the visual image of harmony and a sense of community as it is filled completely by the circle of pioneers. Both the materiality and the abstract idea of community are destroyed when a teacher calls Sabine and Silvia to inform them about their exclusion from the camp. Despite wearing the red and blue scarf respectively to show their belonging to the pioneers, Silvia and Sabine become outsiders. Thus, the film exposes the image of community within the youth organisations as superficial. Instead, it becomes clear that these institutions only offer companionship to those who are politically loyal to the state, and Silvia and Sabine have lost their right to profit from it due to their mother's defiance. The overall narrative of the film is ambiguous as it shows that harmonic togetherness is possible for those who adapt to the rules of socialist society.

In contrast to the rather ambivalent representations of East German youth organisations in the museum in Perleberg and the film *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie*, the exhibition *Alltag in der DDR* in Berlin demonstrates an unequivocally negative image of the pioneers. Unlike the two privately run museums in Pirna and Perleberg, this exhibition features pioneer clothing laid out in a showcase behind glass rather than worn by a mannequin. In doing so, the museum marks the shirts as museum objects, called *Semiophoren* by Krzystof Pomian,[84] which have lost their use as pieces of clothing. Instead, it emphasises the shirts' function as a sign of membership of the pioneers and thus a sign of loyal GDR citizenship as a phenomenon of the past. At the same time, the accompanying museum text questions political loyalty as an intrinsic meaning of wearing the pioneer uniform as it stresses the indifference rather than genuine

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[83] Saunders, *Honecker's children*, p. 36.

[84] See Krzystof Pomian, *Der Ursprung des Museums: Vom Sammeln* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 2001), pp. 73–90.

enthusiasm of many East German teenagers towards joining the Free German Youth. It claims that the impact of the youth organisations on children's lives were almost always negative: they were either formed into socialist personalities, or had to face the consequences of failing to do so, including surveillance and sometimes even prosecution by the Stasi. This unilateral interpretation of the pioneer uniform as a memory icon of state influence and oppression perpetuates the schism of terror versus everyday life that shaped the memory discourse of the GDR in the 1990s and early 2000s in unified Germany. The museum's depiction of the pioneer shirt and scarf condemns 'ostalgia' and instead attempts to establish an antithesis to it. This memory from above excludes a large group of former East Germans from being represented in cultural memory of everyday life in the GDR. This example demonstrates that, despite the dominance of post-ostalgic remembrance in contemporary visual culture, some of the hegemonic readings from the 2008 *Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption* persist.

In comparison to the previous four case studies, the film *Der Turm* offers the most inclusive and widely encompassing depiction of individual experience of youth mass organisations. It challenges the notion of the blue shirt of the Free German Youth as a symbol of uniformity and instead creates it as a memory icon of individual biographies in the GDR. Protagonist Christian Hoffmann is part of the FDJ school board when an extraordinary meeting is held about fellow pupil Verena's refusal to write an in-class essay on the reasons for the victory of socialism over capitalism. Although all of the six board members in this meeting look rather uniform due to their blue FDJ shirts, their different opinions find an expression immediately. Svetlana, the chairwoman of the board sits at one end of the table, with Verena at the other end of the table, visualising the ideological opposition between the two women. Verena's friend Reina defends her actions by using the excuse of 'female problems', yet the viewer knows that the real reason is Verena's rejection of the political system of the GDR. Reina's support stems from their friendship rather than her agreement with Verena's political opinion. Christian Hoffmann keeps quiet in this meeting even when Svetlana calls for a vote on the matter despite his role of secretary. His reluctant vote in favour of Verena is rooted in his secret romantic interest in her. Consequently, Svetlana accuses him of opportunism and using the FDJ as a stepping-stone for his medical career, which appears to be a valid assertion of his agenda as a board member.

The plurality of positions presented here shows that there were many reasons to be a member of the youth organisation, and even pursuing a leading role within the FDJ was not necessarily a political statement of loyalty to socialism. Christian, for example, has learnt to

adapt despite his political indifference. However, his attempts to appear as a convinced socialist are regularly dismissed by his teachers, which becomes clear when his essay is marked down for using too many platitudes. Svetlana, on the other hand, believes in the victory of socialism and the importance of her work within the youth organisation. She is deeply concerned about mere followers like Christian, and is the harshest critic of Verena in this meeting. The scene shows that sartorial uniformity, created through the Free German Youth shirts, does not imply uniform ways of thinking. Wearing the FDJ shirts becomes part of performing the act of a loyal East German citizen, the need for which the adolescents have already internalised. The motives for partaking in this particular performance of the committee meeting are individual and very complex; they depend both on their current state of mind, and on their general political conviction. In presenting the potential moral dilemmas that lead to a pioneer membership and the specific behaviour within the organisation, the film transcends the dichotomy between victims versus perpetrators. This more balanced way of remembering everyday life in the GDR that embraces individual experience and perception is at the heart of post-ostalgia. As it incorporates a wider range of individual experiences of socialism, this portrayal fosters democratised remembrance of the GDR as opposed to one-sided top-down readings of the early post-*Wende* years.

The relationships between the GDR leadership and young East Germans have recently gained much attention in visual culture, and clothing has been an effective means to materialise them. Films and museums have explored memories beyond adaption or political opposition, thus pluralising remembrance of both youth culture and clothing. Instead, some portrayals have attempted to find a common ground for identification in both East and West to normalise memory of youth culture in the GDR. In this context, punk attire as a form of protest against authority has warmed up as a memory icon in films and exhibitions, thus highlighting a pluralisation of remembrance. In the same way that memory icons have become pluralised, this section has illustrated that artefacts have pluralistic meanings in contrast to the previously portrayed black and white narratives of everyday life in the GDR. Post-ostalgic remembrance offers a platform to present various readings in order to diversify cultural memory of the GDR in contemporary Germany.

4.4 *Frau Modes* Launen und *Herrn Geschmacks* zeitlose Ästhetik: Reimagining Norms of Femininity and Masculinity in the GDR through Dress

Created in 1946 in the Soviet Occupation Zone,[85] the metaphors of *Frau Mode* and *Herr Geschmack* epitomised a gendered view of the relationship between East Germans and fashion. At the same time, they offered a rationale for the ideological considerations surrounding clothing in the early days of the GDR. The regime tried to silence female consumers, who were unafraid to complain about selection, quality and designs of ready-to-wear clothing, by dismissing female interest in fashion trends as 'arbitrary moods of *Frau Mode* […] dictated by Western, capitalist designers' while praising *Herrn Geschmacks* sense for timeless taste.[86] In this context, the Soviet-imported concept of the 'New Women', a social construct of the Stalinist era, embodied the moral and corporal superiority of socialist women over their Western counterparts.[87] The qualities of modesty and asexuality, in particular, merited gender equality in socialist societies.[88] The task of fashion in East Germany was to support this ideal of socialist femininity, that was, in fact, rather an approximation to masculinity with its images of robust and physically strong women. This becomes clearer when looking at depictions of women in rural or industrial environments wearing overalls and headscarves as advertised in women's magazines and public spaces.[89] With this kind of imagery, female presence in formerly male dominated spaces such as factories or tractors was both normalised and idealised.

As the New Woman and her distinctive way of dressing proved to be a utopian dream of the communist party leaders rather than a well-received reality, memory of this phenomenon is rare in the case studies. Only the *DDR Museum* in Pirna displays images of idealised working women from the 1950s and 1980s, and the film *Barbara* depicts an outfit that can be linked to the idea of the New Woman. Juxtaposing these two depictions illustrates how different memory actors contextualise the same object with different narratives. In the museum in Pirna, we find several images of working women in an exhibition area dedicated to agriculture in the GDR due to the region's importance in the manufacturing of agricultural machinery during socialism. The two most recent ones from the 1980s are particularly interesting as a basis for comparison with the film *Barbara*, which is set during the same period. The first photograph from a book

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[85] R. Kn., 'Anarchie im Reich der Mode', *Die Frau von heute*, 15 February 1946, p. 20.
[86] Stitziel, *Fashioning Socialism*, p. 54.
[87] Bartlett, Djurdja, *FashionEast: The Spectre that haunted Socialism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: The MIT Press, 2010), p. 102-03.
[88] Stitziel, *Fashioning Socialism*, pp. 58–59.
[89] Bartlett, *FashionEast*, p. 109.

about agriculture in the GDR shows a female farmer operating a combine harvester with her male colleague standing below her. This positioning above the male farmer in conjunction with her outfit, comprising an overall and a headscarf, represent the socialist ideal of womanhood. As Djurdja Bartlett writes, '[a] woman wearing overalls while driving a tractor was an icon with a well-defined symbolic meaning in the visual propaganda of all the East European countries.'[90] By displaying such propagandistic imagery without any critical engagement, the museum suggests that the scene is authentic.[91] Statistics, however, show that female peasants were underrepresented in managerial positions within the LPG,[92] and thus highlight the image's purpose to propagate a utopian gender equality that did not match socialist reality.

In a second image, the dress of the New Woman represents the idea of prosperity through hard work. The political poster from the XI. SED Party Congress in 1986 shows the slogan 'Wohlstand – ich schaffe ihn mit' – in reference to the contribution that agriculture made to the GDR's economy – and the portrait of a smiling female peasant in her late fifties wearing a headscarf and a dark blue overall. The poster indicates that relative affluence and prosperity in the 1980s were also the result of the sacrifices of the first generation of GDR citizens and their drive for *Aufbau*, a key term of socialist ideology up until the rise to power of Erich Honecker.[93] The attempt to combine elements of its early days, namely the concept of the New Woman, with the later doctrine of affluence creates a utopian propaganda image that is incongruent with everyday life in the GDR. Despite the change of terminology from *Aufbau* to *Wohlstand*, this artificial perpetuation of ideological clothing styles from the 1950s to the 1980s highlights the detachment of the political leaders from the everyday lives of their citizens who desired denim jeans instead of working overalls. The outfits of the women portrayed in both images suggest female empowerment and gender equality as envisaged by the SED. The exhibition, thus, appears to repeat uncritically the official image of women in the GDR and create a rather nostalgic memory of female empowerment in the East.

In contrast to the museum in Pirna's reading of the style of the New Woman as a visual marker of gender equality in the GDR, the film *Barbara* shows that the concept of the New Woman as a whole was another misguided effort of the political leadership to control its

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[90] Ibid., p. 103.
[91] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 82.
[92] Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaften (LPG) were state-run agricultural combines in the GDR. Christel Panzig, 'Hin zum eigenen Beruf: Frauen in den Landwirtschaftlichen Produktionsgenossenschaften der DDR', in *Frauen arbeiten: Weibliche Erwerbstätigkeit in Ost- und Westdeutschland nach 1945*, ed. by Gunilla-Friederike Budde (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), pp. 171–82 (p. 180).
[93] Kaminsky, *Frauen in der DDR*, p. 14.

citizenry. In this particular case, the SED imposed the style of the New Woman onto deviant adolescents as part of their socialist re-education programme. The Jugendwerkhof Torgau, where troubled teenager Stella is detained, can be considered a form of juvenile prison. Michel Foucault argued that the function of the prison is to act upon individuals and transform them.[94] The film illustrates the methods of transformation, including forced labour and prison clothing. After the *Volkspolizei* returned Stella from hospital to her work camp, we see her and other detainees of Jugendwerkhof Torgau scooping reed from a stream as a form of forced labour. The adolescents are marked as detainees through their outfits that draw on the style of the New Woman with blue overall dresses and headscarves. In this scene, the dress style of the New Woman thus embodies the oppressive nature of state socialism rather than gender equality. By imposing the ideologically charged style of the New Woman onto opponents of socialism, the state uses its power directly on the body of its citizens. This depiction underscores Foucault's assertion that 'nothing is more material, physical, corporal than the exercise of power'.[95] Stella demonstrates her oppositional views against the Jugendwerkhof and the state as a whole, as she is the only one without a headscarf and with her hair down. In doing so, she indicates that any attempt to re-educate her in a socialist way is futile, as she will not accept the living conditions in the GDR. Her actions in this scene underpin this, as she attempts to escape once more when the group's guard is distracted. The film, thus, highlights how imposing a socialist appearance onto a person does not necessarily shape them into convinced socialists. On the contrary, the forced dress style prompts Stella to escape not only the camp but eventually the GDR with the help of Barbara. Thus, the readings of the overall and headscarf in both depictions diverge, as they symbolise empowerment of women in the Pirna exhibition and oppression of female adolescences in the film *Barbara*.

The case studies demonstrate that the Stalinist era dress style of the New Woman plays a marginal role in remembrance of the GDR today. Other pronounced items of female clothing, however, have gained significance over the last twenty years. A prominent example is the *Dederon* smock, which is represented widely across contemporary German visual culture pertaining to the GDR. Made from *Dederon*,[96] the smock became the de facto working class uniform of women in GDR. Djurdja Bartlett has argued that an important factor for the success of *Dederon* was its wearing comfort in contrast to the sturdy *Präsent 20*.[97] A survivor of the

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[94] Foucault, 'Prison Talk', p. 40.
[95] Foucault, 'Body/Power', pp. 57–58.
[96] Paul, 'Die Dederon-Kampagne 1959', p. 136.
[97] Bartlett, *FashionEast*, p. 222.

great clear-out of the *Wende*, the apron remained in many former East German wardrobes during the 1990s.[98] Its status as an icon of communicative memory was re-evaluated recently, notably by the temporary exhibition *Alltag Einheit: Portrait einer Übergangsgesellschaft* at *Deutsches Historisches Museum* in Berlin.[99] The poster design for the exhibition portrays a middle-aged woman wearing a sleeveless *Dederon* apron over her outerwear packing a bundle of German flags.[100] The smock serves as a signifier to denote the woman as East German. As this exhibition deals with the immediate post-*Wende* era, the combination of the apron with the flags also hints at the fact that many former East Germans of the time struggled not only to rid themselves of material remains of the GDR, such as the apron, but also of the political, social and economic ways of thinking as an East German citizen. Looking at the portrayal in the context of women in the GDR, however, it reveals the importance of the smock as the female work uniform not only in the GDR but also in contemporary cultural memory of East Germany. Here, it has become a memory icon of womanhood in the GDR in general, and female work in particular, as it connotes both paid labour outside of the home as well as unpaid work at home.

Due to its popularity in the GDR and its post-*Wende* persistence, many of the case studies feature the *Dederon* apron; however, there is an uncanny difference between its representation in museums and films. While almost all exhibitions display the apron, often in a number of different contexts such as the home or workplace, only one film shows it, notably to comment on class differences. This relative neglect of the smock in recent films is in contrast to its role in the film *Sonnenallee* where mother Doris Ehrenreich appears to wear it on an everyday basis. Not wearing the apron is noticed immediately by other family members and causes reasonable suspicion about her intentions.[101] This reading of the smock as an everyday piece of attire for East German women continues to be depicted in the museal case studies. The museums in Pirna, Thale and Perleberg, and the exhibition *Alltag in der DDR* present the apron's meaning at the intersection of work, both public and household. This representation follows Anna Kaminsky's assertion of the meaning of the smock, when she writes: 'Zum Symbol des neuen Frauenbildes zwischen Werkbank, Haushalt und Öffentlichkeit wurde die Kombination von Handtasche und Schürze, die auch als "Arbeitskleid" bezeichnet wurde.' [102]

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[98] Mühlberg, 'Auf der Suche nach der 'sozialistischen Bekleidungskultur'', pp. 145–46.
[99] Deutsches Historisches Museum, *Alltag Einheit* (Bonn: Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 2015) <https://www.dhm.de/fileadmin/medien/relaunch/ausstellunngen/AlltagEinheit/DHM _AlltagEinheit_Flyer.pdf> [accessed 4 June 2017]
[100] It is not clear whether these are flags of the GDR or the FRG.
[101] The only time, Doris takes off the apron is when she attempts to cross the border to West Berlin illegally with an FRG passport that she found by coincidence.
[102] Kaminsky, *Frauen in der DDR*, p. 187.

A photograph in a display about female working lives in the GDR at *Alltag in der DDR* shows a group of exclusively female factory workers who all wear aprons. The variety of patterns, colours and cuts of the smocks in the photo reveals that this piece of attire was by no means a homogenous uniform imposed on women by their employer but rather a working garment chosen by the women themselves. For the museum, the photo is representative of the working woman in the GDR, since it is used as a background for statistics into female labour in the East. Nevertheless, the meaning of the smock as a memory icon is rather subliminal here as the museum fails to mention explicitly its importance as an item of clothing for many women in the workplace. Similarly, the museums in Pirna and Apolda contextualise the *Dederon* apron with paid work, notably in depictions of store assistants at a grocery shop. In doing so, both museums not only comment on the apron as female work attire but also on the grocery shop as a pronounced female workspace.

While the display of smocks in the museum case studies suggests the universal popularity of this piece of clothing with women across GDR society, the filmic portrayal of the *Dederon* apron reveals its meaning as a memory icon of the lower social classes, i.e. the working classes, in the GDR. As Dietrich Mühlberg writes, *Dederon* is the 'Stoff der kleinen Leute'.[103] An important indicator for this is the almost complete omission of the smock in the films with stories revolving around what Djuardja Bartlett calls the 'middle class' in socialist societies, which included social climbers, the old and the petit bourgeoisie.[104] The female protagonists in the films *Der Turm*, *Der Wunder von Berlin* and *Barbara* all belong to the political or academic elite. Anne Hoffmann in *Der Turm*, for instance, wears an apron in the kitchen, however, one that is not made from *Dederon* but of a thicker, non-synthetic fabric and with a more subtle pattern. The narrative of social class distinction through the choice of apron is even more explicit in the film *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie,* where social decline is signalled by the *Dederon* apron. When protagonist Sara Bender is forced to step down from her position as team leader to work as a packer for political reasons, her work uniform changes from a long-sleeved white cotton tunic to a short-sleeved *Dederon* apron with a floral pattern. The professional demotion also includes an economic and social downgrading with lower pay and withdrawal of personal interaction with senior colleagues. The smock is only the visual signifier of this regression but since the apron informs all colleagues of her downgrading, it becomes a sartorial stigma for Sara. In this depiction, the *Dederon* apron is clearly branded as

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[103] Mühlberg, 'Auf der Suche nach der 'sozialistischen Bekleidungskultur'', p. 146.
[104] Bartlett, *FashionEast*, p. 182.

the working outfit of a low-wage position and thus a sign of a lower economic and social status in society as a whole. By emphasising that the significance of *Dederon* aprons was limited to certain social milieus in the GDR, the remembrance of this piece of clothing is thus also limited to these groups. Considering that the privately-run museums make ample use of the smock in their painstakingly detailed reimaginings of East German living spaces, they appear to represent cultural memory of lower social classes in East Germany. Many of the more recent filmic case studies, on the other hand, depict academically or politically, and thus economically privileged women who wear neither *Dederon* attire nor the apron. Hence, the apron as a memory icon has become a means to diversify memory of the GDR in terms of depicting different social groups within East German society.

In addition to the contextualisation of the apron with paid work for women, the museums in Pirna, Thale, Perleberg and Berlin also connect the smock with unpaid labour in the home. The most prominent spaces for displaying the apron are representations of kitchens, followed by bedrooms, and bathrooms or laundry rooms. In most of these displays, the *Dederon* smock is a prop as it hangs on the wall or over the back of a chair. This contextualisation serves two main purposes: firstly, the apron as a pronounced female accessory marks the spaces as dominated by women and thus indicates women's duty to do the majority of chores at home, a narrative previously discussed in section 3.4 on social aspects of depicting food culture in the GDR. Secondly, in its role as a prop, the smock is supposed to make an exhibit more realistic. The museum in Berlin also displays the *Dederon* apron in the realm of leisure within its exhibit of an allotment cabin. Here, a bright green flowery smock hangs over a kitchen chair. With this rather prominent placing in the exhibition, the museum appears to have moved on from considering the apron as 'Un-Mode', a term Dietrich Mühlberg used to describe the contemporary Western view of this piece of clothing in the catalogue to the 1999 exhibition *Künstliche Versuchung: Nylon, Perlon, Dederon* at the *Haus der Geschichte* in Bonn.[105] Instead, the choice of a rather upbeat-looking specimen appears to draw on the perception of the smock in the 1960s and 1970s when consumer catalogues advertised them as a means to look 'auch zu Hause schick'.[106] Apart from aesthetic considerations, displaying the smock in the context of the allotment highlights its meaning as a hybrid piece of clothing between work and leisure. Similar to the allotment itself, the apron denotes both spheres of life that are not always simple to discern in the GDR. This contextualisation of the smock, thus, shows that

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[105] Mühlberg, 'Auf der Suche nach der 'sozialistischen Bekleidungskultur'', p. 146.
[106] Kaminsky, *Frauen in der DDR*, p. 190.

female working duties continued both at home and in spaces of leisure, such as the allotment. In the way the museums display the apron, they emphasise not only its universal application as work and home fashion, but also the hybrid nature of leisure time in the GDR. Rather than providing rest from work, leisure time was largely governed by chores. This narrative supports the museum's mission to show "die Kluft zwischen dem Herrschaftsanspruch des SED-Regimes und der Lebenswirklichkeit der Menschen in der DDR".[107] In this context, the *Dederon* apron hung over the back of a chair may also indicate the refusal of some East German women to disturb their leisure time with work, which is symbolised by taking off the smock as a work uniform.

The female double burden at work and at home is a recurring theme in the case studies and pertaining to fashion. It is not only the choice of attire that transports this narrative but also the realm of private clothes production that tells the story of unpaid female work at home and the blurred lines between work and leisure in former East Germany in general. Looking back at the history of tailoring at home, Judd Stitziel notes that it has been the primary source of clothing in the post-war years in East Germany.[108] Although dress making at home ceased to be a necessity in the 1960s, women continued to sew throughout the existence of the GDR.[109] In recent years, this area of everyday life has been incorporated into cultural memory of everyday life in the GDR and features across visual culture. The object embodying this memory is the sewing machine, which the filmic and museal case studies use to define womanhood per se and to address female relationships and bonding. Almost all museums display sewing machines in the context of the home, either in the living room (museums in Thale and Perleberg) or in the bedroom (museums in Pirna and Apolda). By placing it next to typical items of furniture of these rooms, such as a bed or a sofa, the sewing machine becomes part of both the inventory and the function of these rooms. Since bedrooms and living rooms are generally considered spaces of rest and relaxation, it is striking to see de facto working equipment in the form of the sewing machine displayed in this context. Here, the borders between leisure space and working space blur, and thus show also how labour not only subverted dedicated leisure space but also leisure time.

Despite the fact that there is little indication in these exhibits about who carries out

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[107]Museum in der Kulturbrauerei, *Dauerausstellung: Alltag in der DDR* (Bonn: Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 2015) <https://www.hdg.de/berlin/museum-in-der-kulturbrauerei/ausstellungen/dauerausstellung/> [accessed 13 January 2016]
[108] Stitziel, *Fashioning Socialism*, pp. 49–50.
[109] Ibid., p. 149.

sewing work at home, scholars have argued that housework in general,[110] and home-dressmaking in particular,[111] were pronounced female duties in socialist East Germany. The exhibition creators, however, eschew to discuss explicitly the gender inequality of household chores or the extra burden for women to make clothing after work. Both issues are somewhat normalised as a part of everyday life in the GDR in the way that they are depicted in all four museums. In fact, the accompanying sewing boxes containing an abundance of colourful yarn, similar to a palette of painting colours, associates sewing with arts and crafts rather than work. In conjunction with the lack of photographs showing the actual work of producing clothing or mannequins reimagining the act of home-dressmaking, the depictions of sewing machines romanticise tailoring at home as an enjoyable pastime. Comparing this depiction with data from a survey about sewing by the East German women's magazine *Für Dich* from 1968, however, shows a vast discrepancy between memory of sewing and its perception in the GDR. Almost two thirds of the women interviewed for the article regularly produced clothing at home but only 4% of them considered this a hobby.[112] These exhibits thus exemplify the workings of nostalgia for an aspect of everyday life, in this case sewing, which most women in the GDR considered a chore, but which is retrospectively re-evaluated as a positive memory of home, place and belonging.

When looking at the filmic case studies, we see both a romanticised and a more critical depiction of tailoring. While *Das Wunder von Berlin* portrays sewing as an activity to foster female bonding, the film *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie* shows the extra burden that sewing represented for women in paid work. In the former, Hannah Kaiser and her son Marco's girlfriend Anja adjust some of Hannah's old outfits to fit Anja. As they spend an afternoon together chatting and tailoring, sewing appears as an enjoyable pastime for the two women during which they can bond and discuss their concerns about Marco who is completing his NVA duty service. The scene focusses on the close relationship between the women rather than sewing as an extra burden or highlighting the scarcity of fashionable ready-to-wear apparel in the GDR. The film depicts sewing as a basis for the generational exchange of knowledge. Living with three men has left Hannah feeling lonely and without a female reference person. Anja's presence therefore stirs up maternal feelings in her, and presents an opportunity to engage in what Hannah considers female activities, such as sewing. In doing so, the film clearly

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[110] Heike Trappe and Rachel A. Rosenfeld, 'How do Children matter? A Comparison of Gender Earnings Inequality for Young Adults in the Former East Germany and the Former West Germany', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62.2 (2000), 489-507 (p. 491).
[111] Stitziel, *Fashioning Socialism*, p. 26.
[112] Ibid., p. 151.

depicts needlework as a pronounced female pastime that may help to establish a mother-daughter-like relationship between the women. By disregarding economic reasons for making attire at home and instead focussing on sewing as a female retreat in an otherwise male dominated household, the film adds a new dimension to the realm of sewing to diversify cultural memory of everyday life in the GDR. As the film romanticises the idea of female bonding over tailoring clothes, it draws on a stereotypical definition of femininity.[113] Such a depiction seeks to normalise cultural memory of everyday life in former East Germany, as it appropriates strict gender roles found in the FRG at the time.

The depiction of sewing in the film *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie* differs significantly from that in the film *Das Wunder von Berlin* in which sewing is presented as a solitary chore completed under time pressure rather than a sociable leisure activity. Protagonist Sara Bender, incidentally played by the same actress as Hannah Kaiser, creates her own wedding attire. In contrast to Hannah Kaiser, Sara only finds the time to sew her costume during the night when her daughters are already asleep. We see her frantically pushing the fabric along the path of the fast-stitching automatic needle, as there are only a few days left until the ceremony. In fact, the rattling noise of the machine penetrates the silence of the night waking one of Sara's daughters. Under pressure to finish her outfit, Sara does not bond with her daughter while sewing; instead, her daughter's presence disturbs her workflow. Although the product of Sara's efforts service a romantic purpose, namely marrying her partner, the act of producing the outfit is not romanticised as in other depictions of sewing discussed above. On the contrary, sewing appears to be extra work on top of a full-time job, housework and childcare. In this way, the film engages with the struggles of a single mother. The fact that Sara manages an overall high workload and is yet able to show patience and compassion for her daughters even in stressful situations renders her an *Übermutter*,[114] thus fostering the fetish with this idealised image of women as mothers. In addition, Sara's skills to create her own wedding costume under time pressure supports the depiction of her as a resourceful and independent woman who works hard to achieve her goals in life. The film thus offers a discourse on women in East German society, and specifically the role of the mother. This

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[113] Sewing has been considered an important activity in a woman's life for centuries. See Barbara Burman, 'Introduction', in *The Culture of Sewing: Gender, Consumption and Home Dressmaking*, ed. by Barbara Burman (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1999), pp. 1–20 (pp. 1–2)

[114] For a discussion on the ideal mother and the concept of the *Übermutter*, see: Johanna Lalouschek, 'Meine Mutter trinkt: Zur Inszenierung von Normalität und Abweichung in TV-Talkshows', in *Sosein - und anders: Geschlecht, Sprache und Identität*, ed. by Johanna Hofbauer, Ursula Doleschal and Ludmila Damjanova (Berlin: Peter Lang Verlag, 1999), pp. 55–76 (p. 64).

narrative transcends nostalgic portrayals of everyday life in the GDR in favour of exploring broader societal issues. This pluralisation of memory narratives pertaining to sewing and family life in the GDR fosters post-ostalgic remembrance.

Alongside this examination of sewing as work carried out almost exclusively by women, it is worth also exploring how clothing as the product of sewing is able to express and shape both femininity and masculinity. According to feminist theory, the idea of femininity emerged in fashion, as in other societal areas, as a counter-narrative to the notion of masculinity, thus rendering femininity a deviation from the norm.[115] In their loose definition of masculinity and masculine fashion, Evans and Thornton list a number of narratives that they associate with being a man, including power, sobriety, moral uprightness, self-control and autonomy.[116] They define women's fashion as a 'field of representations of the female body [that] becomes a significant text of how culture constructs femininity and how it addresses that representation to women'.[117] Considering this definition, the perceived female lack of masculine attributes also translates into the realm of fashion, which is then supposed to represent these attributes. These discourses are also highly relevant for the remembrance of gender norms in the GDR. While the ideal of femininity in East Germany was highly political, as politicians feared the female consumer and her 'Launen',[118] everyday male dress was less shaped by socialist norms. Professional and institutional male dress, on the other hand, offers a broader scope for the discussion of socialist masculine normativity.

Military uniforms and their effect on young conscripts features prominently in a number of film case studies. Instigated by the 2005 comedy *NVA*,[119] the meticulous engagement in a number of films with military service, its attire and manhood, arguably challenges Nina Leonhard's claim that the NVA is almost forgotten in cultural memory in unified Germany.[120] Examining the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the *Bundeswehr* and the NVA, Leonhard argues that the public non-celebration of the NVA landmark was a sign of forgetting. As the NVA was dissolved and taken over by the *Bundeswehr* in 1990, the narratives of military prowess and political importance of the army in the GDR were unlikely to persist and enter unified German cultural memory. Instead, personal experiences of the military service have

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[115] Caroline Evans and Minna Thornton, 'Fashion, Representation, Femininity', *Feminist Review*, 38 (1991), 48–66 (p. 57).

[116] Ibid., pp.50, 57, 61.

[117] Ibid., p. 49.

[118] Stitziel, *Fashioning Socialism*, p. 54

[119] *NVA*, dir. by Leander Haußmann (Delphi Filmverleih Produktion, 2005).

[120] Nina Leonhard, 'The National People's Army as an Object of (Non) Remembrance: The Place of East Germany's Military Heritage in Unified Germany', *German Politics & Society*, 26.4 (2008), 150–63 (p. 151).

found a platform in films and museums. In particular, the filmic case studies *Das Wunder von Berlin*, *Der Turm*, *Liebe Mauer*, and *Go West* have adopted conscription as a common feature in the context of male coming-of-age stories. Although these depictions vary in the extent to which they engage with details of everyday life within the army, they demonstrate that the NVA has become a significant theme of East German remembrance in visual media. The aforementioned *Sedwitz* and *Deutschland 83* are additional examples of the growing number of plots engaging with the East German army, which even offer a platform for cultural memory beyond conscription. While *Sedwitz* tells the story of an NVA officer who becomes a regular yet illegal border crosser to Bavaria, *Deutschland 83* deals with a young NVA member who adopts the identity of a West German *Bundeswehr* officer as part of a military intelligence mission.

In their discourse on masculinity pertaining to conscription and the military uniform, the two films *Der Turm* and *Das Wunder von Berlin* offer new perspectives on manhood in the GDR that were marginalised in the film *NVA.* Christian Hoffmann in *Der Turm*, and Marco Kaiser in *Das Wunder von Berlin* show little interest in the military itself, or the hierarchical and pronounced masculine culture surrounding it. After joining the army, both undergo the visual and mental changes to adopt the 'ideal military masculinity' that Tom Smith describes in his analysis of the *DEFA* film *Ein Katzensprung* and the novel *Fassonschnitt* by Jürgen Fuchs.[121] Most strikingly for the viewer of *Der Turm* and *Das Wunder von Berlin*, both characters dramatically change their emblematic hairstyles upon commencing their service. Christian's medium length curly hair, which distinguished him and his interests in music and literature from other pupils at the boarding school, is turned into a *Fassonschnitt*.[122] While the film *Der Turm* does not explain Christian's change of hairstyle, the film *Das Wunder von Berlin* depicts Marco's metamorphosis in two steps. On his way to the military base, Marco's friends amateurishly cut off his punk hair in large chunks. His shorn locks are then submitted to further maltreatment at the barracks when his hair is re-cut into a military style. Marco is clearly filled with dread as he awaits his turn in the queue. By filming the stages of his military grooming (a punk is unmade to make a military man), *Das Wunder von Berlin* grooms deviance into what Smith calls 'ideal military masculinity'.[123] Smith's definition of 'ideal military masculinity' is based on the East German publication *Vom Sinn des Soldatenseins*, a reader for future

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[121] Tom Smith, 'Narrative and the Body in Uniform: East German Military Masculinities in Claus Dobberke's Ein Katzensprung and Jürgen Fuchs's Fassonschnitt', *The Modern Language Review*, 110.1 (2015), 204–21 (p. 205).
[122] This is a type of short haircut for men.
[123] Smith, 'Narrative and the Body in Uniform', p. 211.

conscripts. This book outlined desirable characteristics of a recruit, including strength and stamina, military championship and iron discipline, unruly will to combat and the unbreakable hunger for victory.[124] The *Fassonschnitt* as the standard haircut at the army embodies precisely these virtues that it imposes onto its wearer.

In addition to the imposed haircut, the change of dress style from casual intellectual in the case of Christian Hoffmann or punk for Marco Kaiser to the conscript uniform provokes changes in both men's personalities and behaviours. When Marco returns home during military leave, he attempts to recreate his pre-military self by putting on his punk outfit and joining his old friends at their favourite spot by the lake. However, his attempts to restore his old lifestyle and personality by merely wearing his old clothes proves misguided when a dispute erupts over the question of work and ambitions in life. During conscription, Marco has internalised the idea of hierarchy, and realises that working for his country as part of the army elevates him to higher moral ground than his friends, enabling him to criticise their lifestyles. Tom Smith has observed that the military uniform 'leav[es] bodies changed and marked'.[125] The example of Marco illustrates that the bodily changes through military service have also marked his mind and instigated a process of coming of age. Taking off his uniform did not mean leaving behind the ideals of military masculinity in the GDR that he had already internalised.

In contrast to Marco, Christian Hoffmann in *Der Turm* embraces the look of military masculinity by wearing his uniform for his cousin's wedding. Joshua Miller argues that because clothing is one of the first visual impressions when we encounter another person, it shapes our perception of them. At the same time, since we are aware of the importance of fashion, we choose our own attire according to the kind of response we are trying to evoke in other people.[126] Christian chooses to wear his uniform rather than a suit at the wedding as an act of defiance, and to separate himself from the other guests. For him, the military service with other conscripts from different social and economic backgrounds opens his eyes to his life in the protective bubble of an affluent area in Dresden, a narrative that occurred also in *Das Wunder von Berlin*. His friendship with Stefan, son of a travelling family, raises Christian's awareness of his privileges in terms of education, career opportunities and living conditions, which he subsequently begins to despise. Parading his uniform is not a sign of support for the army or the state in general, but a previously obedient teenager's revolt against his bourgeois parents.

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[124] Ibid., p. 206.
[125] Smith, 'Narrative and the Body in Uniform', p. 205.
[126] Miller, 'Fashion and Democratic Relationships', pp.5–6.

In a similar fashion to Marco in *Das Wunder von Berlin,* the uniform has changed Christian's attitude towards other aspects of life, a fact that he communicates through continuing to wear his uniform in a civilian context. The plot around Christian highlights the differences between the military uniform and the pioneer outfit. While wearing the latter is a mere performative act with little influence on the body and mind of the wearer, the military uniform changes young men permanently.

In both accounts of conscription, social dynamics arise from wearing a uniform. Newly arrived conscripts face oppression and sometimes even physical violence by those who have been serving longer. In the film *Das Wunder von Berlin,* a hierarchy is quickly established upon arrival, when fellow soldier Freese challenges Marco in the first exercise to change into their combat uniform against the clock. Watching the soldiers undress and dress again raises the viewer's understanding of the complexity of the uniform and importance of not only what soldiers wear but also how they wear it. For Freese, the uniform evokes a quest for competition and hierarchy based on discipline and bodily strength – the ideal military masculinity that Tom Smith has described. However, for Marco, and similarly for Christian in *Der Turm,* the uniform represents egalitarian structures among those of the same rank. In consequence, they come to question their pre-military lives including all the privileges they had as children of the academic or political elite respectively. In contrast to their rather self-centred tendencies before joining the NVA, it appears that wearing the uniform has taught Marco and Christian to care for others. While Marco risks disciplinary measures for calling help for a fellow conscript with a broken arm, Christian attacks a superior for refusing to help a dying soldier. Thus, wearing the uniform does not force the type of ideal masculinity in the Prussian sense that the army aimed for,[127] but in fact raises their awareness of the cruelty of this idealised masculinity. Rather than criticising the NVA in particular, the films offer critical engagement with the concept of military service in general. This highlights that representations of the past are highly influenced by discourses of the present, considering that compulsory military conscription for men was abolished in Germany in 2011 after a prolonged public debate that was ongoing when the two films were produced.

Across the case studies, the realm of fashion offers a platform to discuss female and male normativity in the GDR. Their sartorial choices define both women and men, and the definitions of femininity and masculinity govern the aesthetics of female and male fashion.

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[127] Smith, 'Narrative and the Body in Uniform', p. 206.

Gendered clothing, often contextualised with stereotypical gender roles in work and home, normalise cultural memory of everyday life in the GDR, as they emphasise similarities to West German patriarchal society. Through post-ostalgic remembrance, certain gendered items of clothing have become more visible, notably the *Dederon* smock and military uniforms. As memory icons of fashion in the GDR become more pluralised, the accompanying narratives equally broaden to portray a wider spectrum of everyday life in East Germany.

4.5 Conclusion

Recent portrayals of clothes production, acquisition and consumption in the GDR in films and museums have confirmed the trend towards more pluralistic and normalised post-ostalgic remembrance of everyday life in East Germany. As opposed to food discussed in the previous chapter, clothing is a visual signifier of the relationships between individuals and the state, and encapsulates social, political and economic dynamics in society. Rather than being merely a cover for the body, fashion expresses identity: individuality and segregation on the one hand, and belonging and identification with groups on the other.

Post-ostalgic remembrance of fashion culture in East Germany has recently aimed to normalise everyday life in East Germany by exposing stereotypes about the East as largely imagined. The trope of an East German lack of a sense of fashion, epitomised by the character of 'Zonen-Gaby' on a 1989 cover of the satirical magazine *Titanic*, has almost entirely vanished from visual culture or is being deconstructed through the means of irony or satire. Instead, many films explore the theme of consumerism pertaining to clothing in the East and portray a wide variety of relationships between people and fashion. These range from portrayals of East German capitalist consumerists with little regard for politics to conscious consumers who weigh the political and ethnical consequences of their economic choices. Through depictions of clothing, museums and films comment on related aspects of society in order to illustrate a normalised view of everyday life in the GDR. Portrayals of strict gender roles, narrow definitions of femininity and masculinity, as well as youth rebellion through dress, for instance, help to approximate cultural memory of the East to Western societal standards of the 1970s and 1980s.

As part of this effort to normalise East Germany in mediated memory of sartorial culture in the GDR, memory icons and narratives have shifted, so that some have increased in meaning, while others have decreased in importance. Specifically, jeans, *Dederon* smocks, punk clothing

and military uniforms have gained significance in filmic and museal representations of everyday life in the GDR, and engage critically with the issues of consumer culture, class, balance between work and leisure time, defiance and male coming-of-age. In broader terms, these items of clothing engage with the question of belonging to, and distancing oneself from, social groups. As they concern East German society, these themes broaden cultural memory of the GDR in comparison to the focus on the political and the economic in the 1990s and early 2000s. Other sartorial memory icons of the early post-*Wende* years that persist, however, tell more diversified narratives when analysed across visual memory media. Here, the comparative approach to museums and films is crucial to acknowledge this diversification, as it highlights the formation of cultural memory through various memory media.

As narratives around iconic objects diversify, a larger number of East Germans and their individual experience of socialism – rather than 'ostalgic' memory from below or hegemonic top-down narratives of the victors of the Cold War – are represented in visual media and consequently in cultural memory of the GDR. This plethora of narratives explores East German biographies beyond the simplified idea of apparent uniformity. Instead, some case studies emphasise how personal identity and individuality can develop and thrive despite the SED leadership's aim to enforce a common group identity onto its citizens by the means of uniform dress. The wearing of the pioneer uniform, which has been misread as a sign of loyalty, is exposed as a performative act and thus engages the viewer with the critical issue of how to cope with a dictatorship.

Many of these recent trends are slightly more prevalent in film rather than in museums. Agency is of paramount importance in this context, as different interests of museum and film directors result in different interpretations of everyday life in East Germany. The schism between 'ostalgic' and hegemonic representations of everyday life in the GDR continues in individual displays, most notably in the depiction of pioneer clothing in the privately-run museum in Pirna and the state-funded exhibition in Berlin. In general, the reading of the GDR in private museums largely depends on the personal experience of the museum directors, as the example of Perleberg shows. Its critical engagement with the former socialist state, and the youth organisations in particular, are a direct result of the director's persecution by the Stasi. The museum's mission states that addressing the characteristics of East German dictatorship in its exhibition shall contribute to fostering a sense of democracy in German society of today. In doing so, the museum employs a critical relationship to the past that helps to understand the present and pave the future in the sense of Svetlana Boym's definition of reflective nostalgia.

5 Grinding Gears: Memory of East German Transport in Museums and Films

The Socialist car was more than the metal, glass, upholstery, and plastic from which the Ladas, Dacias, Trabants, and other still extant and erstwhile models were fabricated; it also absorbed East Europeans' longings and compromises, their hopes and disappointments.[1]

Lewis Siegelbaum's quote about cars from the Eastern Bloc encapsulates their relevance as icons of a socialist utopia for those who lived there. It also summarises the way that the West has viewed these vehicles, concentrating on their technological and material outdatedness in comparison to capitalist models. In the case of the GDR, the infamous Trabant has embodied these opposing views of Eastern car culture. Jonathan Zatlin writes that although the Trabant represented ingenious socialist resourcefulness in the eyes of the SED leadership, it was a source of ridicule for the East German population, which reflected the ignorance of political leaders for their needs.[2] For its critics, both in the East and the West, the Trabant represented the negative stereotypes of inferiority and economic mismanagement, epitomised in the nickname 'Rennpappe' – a satiric reference to its comparatively low top speed and low quality chassis material. Low production numbers and long waiting times to obtain a car, however, made it a status symbol for economic privilege in the East.[3] Thus, for some former East Germans, as Tim Edensor writes, the Trabant was 'loaded with national significance' for the GDR.[4]

These opposing views of Eastern car culture persisted after the *Wende* and contributed to the disputes surrounding how best to remember the GDR in the 1990s. The 1991 film *Go Trabi Go* is a cinematographic monument to the most famous East German passenger car. As the newspaper *Die Zeit* posited at the time, this film was 'das erste und letzte gesamtdeutsche Roadmovie',[5] indicating the rapid decline of the Trabant in post-*Wende* Germany. Despite this

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[1] Lewis Siegelbaum, 'Introduction', in *The Socialist Car: Automobility in the Eastern Bloc*, ed. by Lewis Siegelbaum (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011), pp. 1–13 (p. 2).
[2] Jonathan Zatlin, 'The Vehicle of Desire: The Trabant, the Wartburg, and the End of the GDR', *German History*, 15.3 (1997), 358–80 (p. 359).
[3] Pucher, John, and Ralph Buehler, *Transport Policies in Central and Eastern Europe* (Victoria: Victoria Transport Policy Institute, 2005) <http://www.vtpi.org/PucherCentralEurope.pdf> [accessed 7 April 2015] (p.8)
[4] Edensor, Tim, 'Automobility and National Identity: Representation, Geography and Driving Practice', *Theory, Culture & Society,* 21.4/5 (2004), 101–20 (p. 101)
[5] Robin Detje, 'Supernationalstaurausch', *Zeit*, 5 April 1991, <http://www.zeit.de/1991/15/ supernationalstaurausch> [accessed 26 February 2018]

bleak forecast, the Trabant became one of the most iconic products and lasting remnants of the GDR in the course of the 1990s. Mainly due to the workings of 'ostalgic' counter-memory, the Trabant persisted in German cultural memory of the East. Even today, the car continues to play a pivotal role in contemporary memory tourism for the GDR. The 'Trabi Safari',[6] which provides guided tours in Berlin and Dresden where tourists can experience both the car and the city by driving a Trabant themselves, are a perfect example for the commodification of memory of the GDR. The tours capitalise on the fetish of both German and foreign tourists with the aesthetical misfortune that many have considered the car to be since its launch. As a 2016 episode of the Channel 4 programme *Travel Man: 48 hours in ...* with Richard Ayoade demonstrates,[7] the 'Trabi Safari' is perceived as an essential experience for international visitors to the German capital.

Reducing East German transport culture to the Trabant, as commodified memory tourism largely does, is however a misrepresentation of everyday life in the GDR in various ways. Firstly, recent depictions of East German streetscapes since 2005 take into account a more diverse distribution of car makes in the GDR, notably the Wartburg as the East German car of higher quality,[8] and the Soviet Lada Zhiguli, as the car of the Stasi. Secondly, the emphasis on cars in remembering everyday life in the GDR is not a realistic portrayal of East German transport culture but, in fact, informed by contemporary Western dependence on the passenger car that is retrospectively projected onto the GDR. Drawing this conclusion is possible by looking at statistic data from the GDR and comparing it to portrayals in films and museums. The American scholar John Pucher has processed traffic data from East Germany to create a modal split, i.e. the percentage of trips made by various means of transport. This index shows a much lower significance of cars for the entirety of urban and rural journeys made in the GDR than visual culture often suggests. Between 1972 and 1991, the percentage of trips made by car increased from 16.6% to 34.3% with a steep incline of 10% between 1987 and 1991.[9] While the car only accounted for a quarter of urban journeys in the GDR in 1987, walking made up almost 40%, public transport another quarter and cycling about 10% of trips.[10] These ratios varied depending on the size of city. In particular, in smaller towns with

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[6] Participants drive Trabants themselves in a caravan formation to explore the historical sights in eastern Berlin and Dresden. East Car Tours GmbH & Co. KG, *Touren* (Berlin: East Car Tours GmbH & Co. KG, 2017) <http://www.trabi-safari.de/berlin-xxl/?language=en> [accessed 11 July 2017]

[7] 'Berlin', *Travel Man: 48 hours in…*, Channel 4, 15 April 2016.

[8] Eli Rubin, 'The Trabant: Consumption, Eigen-Sinn, and Movement', *History Workshop Journal*, 68 (2009), 27–44 (p. 30).

[9] John Pucher, 'Modal shift in Eastern Germany', *Transportation*, 21 (1994), 1–22 (p. 5).

[10] Ibid.

less than 20,000 inhabitants, cycling was a much more important mode of transport with almost 30% of trips undertaken by bike. This data by John Pucher, however, is missing the motorcycle as an important means of transport. As Kurt Möser notes, motorcycles outnumbered cars in East Germany up until 1972 – a shift, which had already happened in West Germany in 1957.[11] Given the generally slower progress of transport in the GDR indicated by Pucher, the motorcycle very likely continued to be a significant mode of transport after 1972, an assumption that memory of motorcycles in the case studies confirms.

This chapter examines depictions of East German transportation in films and museums and shows that the case studies largely perpetuate the overrepresentation of the car in memory of everyday life in the East. When analysing transportation in the GDR, however, a sole concentration on cars may lead to a misunderstanding of everyday life there, as the data above suggest. Therefore, this analysis aims to embrace a broader spectrum of individual means of transport and their use by including walking, bicycles, and motorcycles in the discussion to show that representations of modes of transport are shaping memory. Motorcycles and scooters largely feature as a memory icon of youth culture or masculinity in the GDR and the bicycle is portrayed as the preferred mode of transport of women in some of the case study films, indicating that transportation, similar to food and clothing, is being remembered as a highly gendered realm of everyday life in the GDR.

Although Pucher's data is helpful to highlight the overrepresentation of cars and underrepresentation of other modes of transport in the GDR in visual culture today, it enables a quantitative rather than a qualitative analysis, as opposed to this thesis. Other scholars have provided discourses on the social meaning of transport, a context that is much more relevant for this study. Iain Borden, for example, writes that

> to understand the history of the car and its role in our culture and cities is not simply a question of the quantitative expansion of cars and journeys. Driving is more than the car and the road, [it is also about] […] people as drivers: the thoughts we have, the actions we make, the images we consume and imagine, the meanings we derive, the codes we observe and the regulations we encounter.[12]

This quote highlights the role of the driver in car travel that transcends the materiality of the vehicle itself and its main purpose to overcome spatial distances. Rather than considering the

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[11] Kurt Möser, 'Autobasteln: Modifying, Maintaining, and Repairing Private Cars in the GDR, 1970-1990', in *The Socialist Car: Automobility in the Eastern Bloc,* ed. by Lewis Siegelbaum (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011), pp. 157–69 (p. 158).
[12] Iain Borden, *Drive: Journeys through Film, Cities and Landscapes* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2013), p. 7.

car as a space only occupied by the driver, this thesis reads it as a space, where interactions take place not only between the driver and her passengers but also with other drivers and pedestrians. This adds a social dimension to the cultural meaning of the automobile, and indeed all means of transport. As an integral part of everyday life, cars and driving can give an insight into the quotidian habits of individuals and the significance of transportation within the cultural self-construction of a society.

With these ideas in mind, this chapter explores how representations of GDR transport culture in the museum and film case studies advance post-ostalgic remembrance of everyday life in East Germany. It employs a comparative approach to dominant narratives around East German transport of the first fifteen years since unification, of both hegemonic and 'ostalgic' nature, and recent depictions in films and exhibitions. Based on this comparison, this chapter argues that the previous reading of East German transport through the lens of the economic and the political has shifted towards framing it in the context of social and societal issues as well as identity politics. Consequently, this chapter follows four thematic strands to emphasise this transformation of memory pertaining to transportation in the GDR. Firstly, it analyses the ideas of space and place, arguing relationships between individuals are negotiated inside the car. Driving and thus exploring the space surrounding a vehicle are read as a debate with the concepts of home and belonging in the GDR. This leads to a discussion of visual and sonic aspects of means of transport and how to portray them in visual media. Here, the car is understood to be a metaphor for the GDR as a Panopticon. Looking at cars as status symbols highlights class distinction in East Germany and the emergence of memory icons. Lastly, reading transportation through the lens of gender politics reveals the process of post-ostalgic 'normalisation' of memory pertaining to the GDR.

5.1 Inside Out: Spatial Aspects of Depicting East German Automotive Culture

The aforementioned 'Trabi Safari' tours illustrate the trend to commodify memory of the GDR. On a more abstract level, they visualise the relationship between cars and both inside and outside space. Since tour participants sit in the driver and passenger seats, they inhabit the historical space of the Trabant in lieu of the historically missing person.[13] In contrast to the inanimate mannequins in the case study museums who represent the historically missing person in the context of pastness and absence, as argued in the previous chapter, tourist drivers in the

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[13] Sandberg, *Living Pictures, Missing Persons.*

Trabant vitalise memory of East German cars and former cityscapes. By populating the space inside the car, they also inhibit the historic space outside as they drive through former east Berlin. The tour reimagines the former division of the city as it leads drivers along Karl-Marx-Allee, the East Side gallery and into the former Western district of Kreuzberg. The motion of the Trabant frames the three-dimensional space through which they drive. The route through former East Berlin reimagines it as a distinct place; however, with its excursion into the West, the tour is also a reminder that German division is a historical concept rather than contemporary reality.

The idea of combining memory tourism with cars is also prominent in GDR-themed museums. The *DDR Museum* in Pirna is the only case study to offer the rental of a Wartburg 353. While visitors to the museum may look at a Wartburg on display, experiencing the car with all five senses costs an extra 39 Euros, which allows visitors to drive the vehicle for a maximum of two hours and forty kilometres. The offer is particularly striking as the capitalist business instinct behind this idea does not comply with the museum's rather positive depiction of equality in socialist society. For the experiential generations of the GDR, this hands-on exhibit offers a platform for what Marcel Proust called kinaesthetic memory. He argued that repeating specific movements that are tied to particular memories would revive these memories.[14] Since operating the Wartburg differs from driving modern cars – such as turning the manual petcock, pulling the choke valve before starting the engine or changing gears with the lever behind the steering wheel rather than adjacent to the driver's seat – this experience is likely to trigger GDR-specific recollections of driving. However, due to the steep price, target customers of the Wartburg rental likely include western German or foreign visitors who have not yet experienced a ride in a socialist car rather than former East Germans. For non-experiential generations, still, the novelty in operating the Wartburg compared to modern automobiles is a memorable experience that may create prosthetic memory of driving classic cars. This corporeal experience can lead to a bodily understanding of the historical background of driving a Wartburg in the GDR. The more complex and different movements compared to driving modern cars, therefore, foster prosthetic memories of the Wartburg, following Alison Landsburg's theory.[15]

The museum in Pirna and the city tour organisers, both providers of memory tourism, play with the concept of authenticity, suggesting that it is possible to reimagine the specific

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[14] Proust, *Time Regained*, location 2680.
[15] Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*, pp. 134–35

circumstances of driving in East Germany. Although the inside experience of the car is rather authentic, both in the case of the Wartburg rental in Pirna and the 'Trabi Safari' in Berlin and Dresden, the outside experience of the streets and landscapes is not. Modernised roads with high-quality surfaces and filled with cleaner and less noisy contemporary vehicles are not representative of historic East German streetscapes. Distinguishing between the mnemonic experience of the inside of the car and the outside therefore highlights the complexity of reimagining the past.

The car lends itself most prominently to the analysis of space, as it is the only means of individual transport that forms an enclosed room. Peter Merriman argues for the car as a space in which social relations between people come into play.[16] Jean Baudrillard has similarly compared the car with the home, noting that

> [t]he car rivals the house as an alternative zone of everyday life; the car, too, is an abode, but an exceptional one; it is a closed realm of intimacy, but one released from the constrains that usually apply to the intimacy of the home, once endowed with a formal freedom of great intensity.[17]

Like Baudrillard, John Urry underlines that the intimacy of the passenger cabin is similar to that of the home, and thus sets it apart from other means of transport.[18] The reason for this sense of privacy and intimacy is the often impaired view into the car from outside, as Mike Featherstone notes.[19] These scholars therefore emphasise the social and interpersonal meaning of the automobile that offers not only shelter but also a feeling of belonging. A number of case studies engage critically with this reading of the car as a private and safe space, and use it as a setting for private and sometimes uncomfortable conversations. The exhibition *Alltag in der DDR* in Berlin and the film *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie* mark this space as a substitute for the home, in the latter case because the privacy of the home is under threat from Stasi surveillance. The films *Westwind* und *Der Turm*, however, illustrate the sense of confinement and the heightened potential for invading the space inside the car, thus questioning the romanticised view of the car by Baudrillard, Urry and Merriman. Post-ostalgic remembrance in all four case studies not only comments on the social space inside the car but uses it as a metaphor to describe broader issues of everyday life in the GDR.

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[16] Peter Merriman, *Driving Spaces: A Cultural-Historical Geography of England's M1 Motorway* (Maldon, Oxford, and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), pp. 9–11.
[17] Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* (London: Verso, 1996), p. 67.
[18] John Urry, 'The 'System' of Automobility', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 21.4/5 (2004), 25–39 (p. 26).
[19] Mike Featherstone, 'Automobilities: An Introduction', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 21.4/5 (2004), 1–24 (p. 12).

In its display of a Trabant and its accompanying roof tent, the exhibition *Alltag in der DDR* in Berlin once more attempts to acknowledge East German achievements without offering grounds for 'ostalgic' reminiscence. Biographical memory of the inventor of the roof tent becomes the basis for more democratic remembering. By equipping the Trabant with a roof tent, the exhibition *Alltag in der DDR* offers a reading of the Trabant as a space of rest and shelter or, more specifically, holiday accommodation. The overall narrative of this display combines praise for individual innovativeness and craftsmanship, while at the same time criticising the GDR regime and its economic system. As in many of its exhibits, the museum focusses on the three narratives of scarcity, privilege, and inferiority in the accompanying text by commenting that the inventor struggled to meet the demand for his product, relied on 'good contacts' to find supplies, and did not manage to sustain business in the competitive capitalist environment of unified Germany. The documents and photographs in the two showcases, one on each side of the Trabant, concentrate on the inventor of the tent, camping in it, and the community of roof tent enthusiasts. Thus, on the textual level in this exhibit, the car becomes a mere foundation for the centre-staged tent as an East German innovation. In the visual composition, however, the bright-green Trabant and the orange and blue roof tent appear to build a symbiosis, in which both parts are equally vital for the display. By neglecting the car in the textual narrative, the museum appears to avoid fostering the concept of 'ostalgia', as the Trabant was one of its most prominent memory icons during the 1990s.[20] This approach to narrating everyday life in the GDR is a direct consequence of the Sabrow commission's guidelines to include the East German quotidian into state-funded museal representation of the GDR in order to counteract downplaying the dictatorship in general, and the phenomenon of 'ostalgia' in particular.[21] Failing to mention the car in the text, the exhibition acknowledges that the Trabant is deeply ingrained in collective memory of the GDR. Rather than repeating what visitors already know, the museum adds another detail to memory of the Trabant by presenting it as an alternative holiday accommodation.

The idea of the car as a shelter is lifted onto a more abstract level in the film *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie*, where a Wartburg becomes a sanctuary from Stasi observation. Protagonist Sara Bender discloses her plans to flee from the GDR to her fiancé Peter in his car. The outside weather conditions – a heavy summer thunderstorm with showers – intensify the sense of shelter and cosiness inside the car. John Urry compares this sensation with the feeling

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[20] Rubin, 'The Trabantt', p. 41.
[21] Deutscher Bundestag, *Fortschreibung*, p. 9.

of sitting in an armchair in one's living room, because of both the comfort of the car seats and the relative lack of kinaesthetic movement of the passengers.[22] For Sara, who knows that she is under Stasi surveillance after she found a bug in her apartment, the home no longer represents safety and security. In contrast, the confined space of the car creates a sense of being safe from observation, and the potential of mobility to move away from it. As Baudrillard writes, the car becomes a rival to the home in fulfilling both the bodily and emotional needs of people,[23] precisely as in Sara's case. Consequently, the vehicle is a safe space, unlike Sara's bugged apartment, in which she can inform Peter about her application for an exit visa. Later on, however, when Peter's involvement with the Stasi is revealed, the film illustrates the elusiveness of the concept of security within both the car and the GDR in general. This scene normalises the car in the GDR by framing it as a social space, yet it reminds the viewer of the infiltration of everyday life by the Stasi, as envisaged in the *Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption*.

The film *Westwind* engages critically with the concept of intimacy in the context of the car. While Jean Baudrillard argues that the car offers a freer form of intimacy as opposed to the constrained closeness that the home provides,[24] *Westwind* highlights that the inside of the automobile equally produces wanted and unwanted intimacy by juxtaposing two teenage couples in their vehicles. On the one hand, the image of the cuddled-up couple Doreen and Arne underpins Baudrillard's reading of the automobile as a free and intimate space and Urry's comparison of the interior of the car with a living room.[25] On the other hand, the privacy of the car appears somewhat claustrophobic for the second pair, Isabel and Nico. In contrast to the first couple, they use the car merely as a means of transport rather than a romantic refuge. When the car stops and thus has fulfilled its purpose, Nico and Isabel become aware of the intimacy of the space and lapse into an awkward silence before hastily bidding each other farewell and avoiding any physical contact. The film enhances the juxtaposition of the two car settings by cross-cutting between the couples. In the case of Doreen and Arne, the car offers a haven to discuss plans for the future, while the feeling of being trapped does not allow Isabel and Nico to speak about their lack of mutual feelings. While many films contrast the claustrophobic interior of the car with the wide space outside, an observation that Díóg O'Connell has made for Irish road movies,[26] the film *Westwind* emphasises that the meaning of the car cabin as

[22] Urry, 'The 'System' of Automobility', pp. 30–31.
[23] Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, p. 67.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Urry, 'The 'System' of Automobility', p. 30.
[26] Díóg O'Connell, *New Irish Storytellers: Narrative Strategies in Film* (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, 2010), p.

either intimate or cramped depends on the relationship between the individuals inside. As argued in section 3.2, the two couples, both consisting of an East and a West German teenager, are metaphors for possible relationships between easterners and westerners in united Germany, and highlight how stereotypes undermine them. These variations enable a more pluralised remembrance of the GDR, and provide a point of departure for discussions about the contemporary relationship between east and west Germans in the united Federal Republic.

In contrast to the ambivalent portrayal of intimacy inside the car in *Westwind*, the film *Der Turm* interprets the interior of the car as a trap and makeshift interrogation room when a Stasi officer questions Richard Hoffmann without his consent. Both the inside and outside space contribute to the sense of unwanted closeness and intrusion. After driving to a desolate spot outside of town, the Stasi officer takes a seat next to Richard on the rather cramped backseat of the dark blue Lada Zhiguli. Richard's body language – he holds his briefcase tight in front of his chest similar to a defensive shield – shows his fear and discomfort in this situation. This scene dismisses the idea of living room or armchair-like cosiness in favour of a more negative version of intimacy that the Stasi uses as a means of subversion. In conjunction with other subversive methods, including blackmail, general threats to ruin Richard's reputation and raising false hopes about his career progression, this strategy successfully pressures Richard into resuming his role as an unofficial informant. The scene emphasises the wide range of Stasi methods to subvert individuals, and the car is portrayed as an ideal space in which to apply them due to its confinement, privacy and mobility. Rather than marking the car in general as a potential detention space, the film utilises the dark blue Lada Zhiguli as a memory icon for Stasi surveillance and terror and thus as the car of the perpetrator, a point that I shall elaborate on in section 5.3. This scene engages critically with Stasi collaboration, as it challenges clear-cut distinctions between victim and perpetrator. Such a post-ostalgic depiction offers more nuanced readings of the GDR and those who worked for the Stasi. The viewer may feel empathy with the moral dilemma of Richard to choose between exposing his own failings or discrediting others, and thus, according to Landsberg's theory, develop prosthetic memory of various aspects of everyday life in East Germany.

While the museal and cinematographic exploration of the space inside the car mainly focusses on the concepts of security, intimacy and confinement, the depictions of space surrounding the car predominantly negotiate the ideas of home and belonging. As the car

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moves, it creates the space around it and the distance to its point of departure in what we call a journey.[27] The car has made distances easier to overcome, and thus according to Mike Featherstone, it has intensely contributed to compartmentalising the home from other places, such as work or recreation areas.[28] Driving in the Western world today largely serves the purpose of commuting according to John Urry.[29] As only 20% to 30% of urban journeys in the GDR were made by car,[30] the automobile did not play an important role for the daily commute to work for the majority of East Germans but mainly served for other types of journeys, such as leisure trips or holidays. Remembering the significance of the car in the case studies does not always represent the historical data of the modal split. A number of films, namely *Der Turm*, *Das Wunder von Berlin* and *Barbara*, however, depict automotive commuters as a normality in the East. André Reiser in *Barbara* appears to be the most credible of the commuters, as he resides in a rural area, where his journey to work is rather long and leads through a forest. The film also explains that the local bus service is not reliable, which makes the car a necessity for him. Commuters Richard Hoffmann in *Der Turm* and Marion Neumann in *Das Wunder von Berlin*, however, live in the urban areas of Dresden and Berlin respectively, both of which support a tight infrastructure of public transport. Thus, their depiction as car commuters seems to normalise retrospectively the GDR as a nation of car drivers similar to the united Federal Republic.

In contrast, most of the museums, namely the ones in Thale, Berlin, Malchow and Pirna, associate memory of car journeys in the GDR predominately with holidaymaking and leisure activities and thus represent a different image of the meaning of the car in everyday life in the GDR. When linking the automobile to going on holiday, however, the museums arguably contextualise the car with the ideas of home and belonging. Alon Confino has noted that '[t]he socialist Heimat was a pedagogical project aimed at impregnating the spirit of the GDR' during the 1960s, and that tourism was a particularly effective means to transport this idea.[31] Typical holiday destinations for East Germans were largely restricted either to domestic regions, such as the Baltic Sea or the Harz Mountains, or scenic spots in other socialist countries, for instance Lake Balaton in Hungary. Therefore, going on holiday by car was either an exploration of the East German home or sometimes the more abstract idea of the socialist home within the Eastern

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[27] Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1911), p. 248.
[28] Featherstone, 'Automobilities: An Introduction', p. 2.
[29] Urry, 'The System' of Automobility', p. 28.
[30] Pucher, 'Modal Shift in East Germany', p. 5.
[31] Alon Confino, *Germany as a Culture of Remembrance: Promises and Limits of Writing History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), pp. 108–09.

Bloc. In the museum in Malchow, for instance, the title of a newly installed display 'Mit dem Trabi in den Urlaub' suggests holidaymaking with the Trabant as a lieu de mémoire of East German belonging, a memory that most visitors share. Alon Confino underpins this by arguing that a 'poetic [reading] of the socialist Heimat', which emphasised nature and beauty, enabled a sense of belonging not only to space but also the idea of socialism.[32] At the museum in Malchow, holidaymaking becomes the dominant narrative through which to remember car culture in the GDR, especially considering that the museum text covers various aspects of driving, including first aid, tinkering, the history of Trabant models, traffic regulations, and holidaymaking in the GDR. In a similar fashion, the museum in Pirna reads the car as a means of leisure travel in its exhibit of a Trabant with suitcases in the basket on its rooftop, and the display of a camper in a room entirely dedicated to camping holidays. Although a car is missing from the latter exhibition space, the collapsible camper 'Campingtourist' indicates a journey by car. In contrast to the roof tent exhibited on top of a Trabant in Berlin, the camper in Pirna is closed and ready to be coupled to a car, thus not in a state to be used as accommodation. For this reason, the camper does not represent a space of rest on holiday but rather a vehicle that is taken on a recreational journey. All three museums, therefore, retrospectively romanticise car travel in the GDR, as they remember it predominantly in the context of overcoming distances for recreational purposes.

While these museums depict the car as a means to explore the homeland as a physical place, the films engage more critically with the abstract concepts of home and belonging. This approach differs significantly from the 1991 film *Go Trabi Go*, which was a story of East Germans discovering the new united German home by reimagining Goethe's *Italian Journey* in a Trabant 911 and returning to their native Bitterfeld.[33] In contrast, travel abroad in the recent films *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie* and *Go West* means abandoning the East German home and fleeing to the FRG. The escape of Sara Bender and her daughters Sabine and Silvia in *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie* is disguised as a holiday to Yugoslavia. Abandoning their Trabant at a railway station to continue their journey to Vienna by train means leaving behind the GDR as their home, which the car metaphorically embodies in this context. The home, and thus the car, is associated with both positive and negative emotions. While the youngest daughter regrets not being able to take the Trabant with them, the eldest daughter looks forward to a 'supertolles neues Auto' to substitute the 'alte Pappe'. Thus, for the eldest daughter, the

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[32] Confino, *Germany as a Culture of Remembrance*, pp. 109–10.
[33] *Go Trabi Go*, dir. by Peter Timm (Bavaria Film, 1991).

old life in the East is imaginatively replaced by a new and better life in the West. This idea is also at the heart of the film *Go West*, where the multi-modal odyssey of three teenagers through Eastern Europe aims to leave their GDR homeland for an allegedly brighter future in West Germany. In both films, the characters long for an unknown place of belonging, as the GDR – with its specific social, political and economic circumstances – cannot offer such a sense of belonging. The long journey through various socialist states does not raise any doubts about their plan to leave the GDR. Their escape is, therefore, also a rejection of the broader idea of the Eastern Bloc as a 'socialist home', which the museums discussed above have argued.

The film *Sushi in Suhl*, in contrast, illustrates a strong emotional connection to the geography of home, a recurring motif of the film, which is both rooted in a regional and national identity, and emerges through car journeys. Henri Bergson writes that in an abstract sense the movement of the car creates the spaces that surrounds it.[34] When the first generation Wartburg of HO county director Lothar Jäger cruises at slow pace through the woods, he and his passenger Rolf Anschütz inhabit the space that is their home. The camera captures the sensation of homeland with a panorama shot of the wintery landscape of the Thuringian Forest through which the Wartburg drives. The scene ridicules the inappropriateness of the car for the wintery weather conditions as Jäger persistently wipes the windscreen manually from the inside while the automated wipers on the outside produce a loud noise but little clear sight. Similar to the Thuringian landscapes outside, the car and its sound represent the idea of home in the film. Rather than trying to idealise the home as the genre of the West German *Heimatfilm* did,[35] or indeed the SED leadership did with its tourism programmes,[36] this depiction embraces its imperfections and is thus a form of reflective nostalgia.

In contrast to the protagonists in *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie* and *Go West*, Rolf Anschütz in *Sushi in Suhl* longs to return to the rural idyll of his home, the GDR, when he is confronted with the fast-paced lifestyle of Tokyo during a diplomatic visit to Japan. This narrative is, however, not an expression of 'ostalgic' reminiscence for the GDR, but, on the contrary, offers an explanation about the origins of 'ostalgia' as a response of some East Germans to the overwhelming experience of capitalism after unification. The re-evaluation of the GDR as a desirable place happens through temporal distance, in the case of former East Germans after the *Wende*, or through spatial distance, in the case of Rolf Anschütz in *Sushi in*

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[34] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, pp. 248–50.
[35] Peter Blickle, *Heimat: A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland* (Rochester and Woodbridge: Camden House, 2002), p. 134.
[36] Confino, *Germany as a Culture of Remembrance*, pp. 108–10.

Suhl. The film leaves no doubt that this sense of longing is not about East Germany itself but more generally for a simpler and decelerated life. It not only portrays the economic and political shortcomings of the state but also depicts the barren aesthetics of rural Thuringia in winter through the journey in a faulty first generation Wartburg. Therefore, the film concludes that the 'ostalgic' idea of the GDR as a purely desirable place is ultimately an illusion. Simultaneously, it recognises the complexities of emotional attachment to place and the GDR. This approach to critically engage with the past and memory thereof follows the principles of reflective nostalgia, and encourages viewers to renegotiate their memories of life in the East.

The journeys of the characters in *Go West*, *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie* and *Sushi in Suhl* represent their unequivocal relationship to the GDR as their home, which is either rejection or a sense of belonging. The film *Barbara*, in comparison, presents the GDR in less clear-cut terms. It juxtaposes the eponymous protagonist – and her intention to escape the GDR – with André Reiser who has adapted to the circumstances of living in East Germany. Their shared car journeys, in particular, visualise the complex relationship between the characters and the idea of home. The camera is situated in the back of the car, providing alternating medium close-up shots of André in the driver's seat and Barbara as the passenger. Despite the static camera and its dwelling on the actors, these shots from inside the car reveal the greenery of the surroundings dipped in summery sunlight. Even details, such as houses and parked cars, become visible despite the lack of focus and the speed of car. Driving through a rural countryside enables both Barbara's and André's personal negotiation with the concept of home, as they are both in diaspora in the northern provinces of East Germany. It is during their journeys together that André reveals his fondness for the place, explaining how he has adapted to working at a provincial hospital and asking Barbara in rather gleeful anticipation for her opinion of her new workplace. In doing so, André tries to show Barbara that it is possible for her to create a home for herself there. Barbara accepts André's invitation to embrace the GDR as her home at the end of film, when she cancels her escape plans to stay with him and to facilitate Stella's escape. Through this narrative, the film advocates the idea that the feeling of belonging is not necessarily tied to a place or a system. The process of coming to terms with the sentiment of belonging to a place or the longing for a place where one belongs is a recurring theme of Christian Petzold's films.[37] His 2014 film *Phoenix* is set in the immediate aftermath of World War II and engages, similar to *Barbara*, with the themes of home, belonging and

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[37]Abel, Marco, *The Counter-Cinema of the Berlin School* (Rochester and Woodbridge: Camden House, 2013), p. 70.

betrayal.[38] Thus, the historical context appears secondary to Petzold's plots; the GDR in *Barbara*, albeit facilitating the specific conditions for the plot to unfold, becomes the backdrop of the director's exploration of broader anthropological themes rather than the focus of the film itself. This approach to screening the GDR contributes to the 'normalisation' of remembering East Germany in the German memory canon. It challenges the idea of GDR citizens as the 'other' Germans, as it illustrates that East Germans engaged with the same wider societal issues, here belonging and trust, as West Germans did, albeit under the specific conditions of socialist society.

The human response to the actuality and abstract concepts of space and place is a central theme in the case studies' exploration of transport in the GDR. Distinguishing between the inside and outside space of the car has enabled a discussion of how depictions of car culture in the GDR are symbolic for the social circumstances of life under socialist rule. The car serves as a means to escape the GDR but, at the same time, the confinement of the passenger cabin is a reminder that it is almost impossible to escape the East German authorities, in particular the Stasi. Finding a home or even a temporary sense of belonging is, thus, a common quest in the case studies. Since belonging is a universal theme within any society, these depictions present a normalised image of the GDR and its citizens that fosters post-ostalgic remembrance.

5.2 Distorted Perceptions: Audio-visual Aspects around Depicting East German Transport Culture

A distinctive feature of cars, as opposed to clothing, is their sound. East German cars with their two-stroke engines, in particular, produce an iconic sound, that Will Self has referred to as 'roaring' in his BBC Radio 4 podcast series *Self Drives*.[39] While film can transport the sound of the car engine, an immobile car in a museum exhibition does not produce sound. The *DDR Museum* in Berlin has found a creative solution to issues that museums generally encounter when exhibiting sound with its display of a modified Trabant. It offers what the museum calls an 'entertaining virtual jaunt' that comes as close to the authentic experience of steering a Trabant through a Plattenbau residential area as possible.[40] The two features to achieve this

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[38] For *Phoenix*, Petzold employed the same leading couple with Nina Hoss and Roanld Zehrfeld. *Phoenix*, dir. by Christian Petzold (Schramm Film Koerner & Weber, 2014).
[39] *Self Drives: The Trabant*, BBC Radio 4, 28 November 2016.
[40] Melanie Alperstaedt, *Eine unterhaltsame virtuelle Spritztour: Die neue Trabi-Simulation im DDR Museum* (Berlin: DDR Museum Berlin GmbH, 2013) <https://www.ddr-museum.de/de/blog/archive/eine-unterhaltsame-virtuelle-spritztour-die-neue-trabi-simulation-im-ddr-museum> [accessed 1 August 2017]

self-proclaimed high level of authenticity are the sounds of the two-stroke engine and exhaust played from speakers and a video simulation projected onto the windscreen of the Trabant.[41] Paul Virilio argues that the view of a car passenger through the windscreen is comparable with looking at a movie screen.[42] He continues that the speed of moving images, both in film and while driving in a car, allow the viewers to detach from their everyday life, and create their own illusions based on the images on screen.[43] The exhibit draws on this theory, as it attempts to create a 'genuine hands-on driving experience' and 'genuine taste of everyday life in the GDR' according to the Fraunhofer Heinrich Hertz Institute, which developed the simulation.[44] In order to achieve this, visitors have to detach from their contemporary self and allow themselves to be absorbed by a mediated experience of driving through an East German streetscape. The recordings of original Trabant sounds playing in the background enhance this virtual reality. The combination of distinctive visual and sonic features of driving a Trabant is crucial for this display to recover personal memories of experiential generations. For non-experiential generations, this form of 'corporeal experience' offers precisely the conditions, which Alison Landsberg has envisaged for prosthetic memories to emerge at the museum.[45]

Following on from the discussion of space in the previous section, the distinction between inside and outside is also useful for analysing visual aspects of depicting cars in the GDR. The view from outside captures most commonly the outer shell of the vehicle – as looking into the car is difficult – an idea that will help the analysis of a car chase below. The view from the inside, in contrast, is designed to offer the occupants, in particular the driver, a clear sight of the outside to monitor the road and ensure safe driving. Given the 360º view of their surroundings that most cars offer not least thanks to technological aides, such as mirrors or more recently cameras, Featherstone compares the automobile with a Panopticon.[46] Michel Foucault has engaged with both the physical institution and the abstract concept of the Panopticon, with particular focus on the concept of surveillance. Astrid Schmidt-Burkhardt has

[41] Melanie Alperstaedt, *Was bedeutete das Jahr 2013 für das DDR Museum* (Berlin: DDR Museum Berlin GmbH, 2014) <http://www.ddr-museum.de/de/blog/museumsnews/was-bedeutete-das-jahr-2013-fuer-das-ddr-museum> [accessed 3 August 2015]
[42] Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance* (Paris: Semiotext(e), 1991), pp. 60–65.
[43] Ibid., pp. 65-66.
[44] Kathleen Schröter, *Interactive Trabant Tour in the DDR Museum* (Berlin: Fraunhofer Institute for Telecommunications, 2013) < https://www.hhi.fraunhofer.de/en/press-media/news/news-archive/2013/interactive-trabant-tour-in-the-ddr-museum.html> [accessed 1 August 2017]
[45] Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*, pp. 134–35.
[46] Featherstone, 'Automobilities: An Introduction', p. 10.

argued that vision is the most important sense of surveillance.[47] This idea also becomes apparent in Foucault's writings where he notes that

> [i]n the Panopticon each person, depending on his place, is watched by all or certain of the others. You have an apparatus of total and circulating mistrust, because there is no absolute point. The perfected form of surveillance consists in a summation of *malveillance*.[48]

This idea of total observation has, in the context of the GDR, clear connotations with the Stasi. GDR society as a whole can be considered a Panopticon, in which everyone is at risk of observation by everyone else. This gloomy dystopian vision leads to a deeply-rooted sense of mistrust within society, a recurring theme in many of the film case studies. Within this narrative in many films, the car takes up the role of an essential panoptic tool to watch Eastern citizens.

Michel Foucault has engaged with the Panopticon as a mechanism to maintain power.[49] The two filmic case studies *Liebe Mauer* and *Go West*, which visualise the act of observation in detail, explore the relationship between surveillance and power. Notably, the romantic comedy *Liebe Mauer* portrays the Stasi as relatively powerless by ridiculing its dilettantism, while the action thriller *Go West* draws an image of the Stasi as an overpowering control apparatus with extensive monitoring resources. Ultimately, the depiction of Stasi surveillance from cars in both films arguably serves the purpose of their respective genres – comedy and action thriller – more strongly than to depict a realistic and credible image of the past. These variations in portraying the Stasi highlight the post-ostalgic pluralisation of memory narratives about East Germany, which allows for more varied readings of the past beyond the black and white narratives of the 1990s and early 2000s.

Liebe Mauer interprets the car as a Panopticon in a rather analogue and practical way, where agents sit inside and observe with their own eyes with the window winded down. Their target is the West German student Franzi, who is in a relationship with East German border guard Sascha, and thus accused of spying for the BND. After a rendezvous with Sascha, two Stasi officers follow Franzi to the West German border in their beige Lada Zhiguli, the car that has become a memory icon for Stasi presence in film, as I will argue in section 5.3. Despite

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[47] Astrid Schmidt-Burkhardt, 'The All-Seer: God's Eye as Proto-Surveillance', in *CTRL [Space]: Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother*, ed. by Thomas Y. Levin, Fröhne, Ursula and Weibel, Peter (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002), pp. 17–31 (p. 18).

[48] Michel Foucault, 'The Eye of Power, in *Power/Knowledge,* ed. by Colin Gorden (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), pp. 146–65 (p. 159). Emphasis in original.

[49] Michel Foucault, 'Questions on Geography', in *Power/Knowledge,* ed. by Colin Gorden (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), pp. 63–77 (p. 71).

having a clear view at close range from their Lada, the officers do not realise that they have lost their target. Being aware of her followers due to their lack of discretion, Franzi has swapped her clothes, and ultimately her identity, with Sascha's friend Uschi in order to be able to stay overnight in the East. By using the trope of mistaken identity, the film draws on a well-established narrative around surveillance in comedic films.[50] Thus, the film satirises the Stasi's clumsy and ineffective observation methods, in particular when the officers fail to identify their target, despite their training in recognising individuals. In that way, the film downplays the power of the Stasi and its impact on the everyday lives of many East German citizens. With its satiric approach to depicting Stasi observation, *Liebe Mauer* joins the ranks of a number of existing comedic depictions of the GDR and its authorities,[51] such as the ABV in *Sonnenallee,* the NVA in the film *NVA*, the East German border control in *Bornholmer Straße*,[52] and the Stasi in *Helden wie wir*. The director of *Liebe Mauer*, Peter Timm, calls humour a 'weapon' and a 'contemporary form of resistance' against political forces like East German officials rather than an attempt to whitewash them as 'clowns or comedians'.[53] Films like *Sonnenallee* or *Das Leben der Anderen* and the domestic and international discourses around them paved the way for a more differentiated engagement with the Stasi as a means to work through the past. The relative lack of controversy around the film *Liebe Mauer* and its mockery of the Stasi emphasises that the increasing temporal distance from the GDR is accompanied by a decreasingly emotionally charged memory of East Germany. Due to the fact that this narrative is now very familiar in film, it is also becoming more accepted by viewers and critics alike.

In contrast to *Liebe Mauer*, the film *Go West* appears to exaggerate the scrutiny and efforts made by the secret police to capture a group of escapees. *Go West* adopts a more abstract reading of the concept of the Panopticon, as the car has little meaning in physical observation but serves as a control centre to coordinate the entire operation. In collaboration with the Czechoslovakian secret police *Státní bezpečnost* (StB), the Stasi places an East German Barkas as a surveillance van in front of a building in Prague where the fugitives hide. Thus, the film *Go West* presents the Stasi as part of an Eastern Bloc network of secret police forces who collaborate to fight fugitives, a narrative the film reuses in later scenes set in Budapest and Yugoslavia. In consequence, the omnipotence of the Stasi is depicted as overwhelming and

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[50] Catherine Zimmer, *Surveillance Cinema* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2015), p. 10.
[51] Cafferty, 'Sonnenallee', p. 258.
[52] *Bornholmer Straße*, dir. by Christian Schwochow (Degeto Film, 2014).
[53] Martin Große, *Liebe Mauer – Regisseur Peter Timm im Interview* (Halle: Kulturfalter Verlag, 2009) < http://www.kulturfalter.de/magazin/film/filmspezial-liebe-mauer/liebe-mauer-interview-mit-peter-timm/> [accessed 3 August 2017]

impossible to escape. The camera alternates between shots from the outside and the inside. This strategy of montaging the two points of view highlights how the chassis of the van protects the inside from outside view, as none of the many passers-by notice the urgency of the ongoing operation within the vehicle. Despite looking like a regular van from outside, the camera reveals that the vehicle is fully equipped with radio devices to navigate officers pursuing the targets on foot. Yuliya Komska calls these tools secondary visual technologies of surveillance,[54] highlighting the complexity of surveillance beyond observing with the naked eye. The set-up of the Barkas in *Go West* as a surveillance hub in an unmarked van reminds the viewer of the often-used trope in American action cinema,[55] which becomes a recurring theme in the film.

Changing the perspective from within the car to outside the vehicle in the film *Go West* helps to underline how the film normalises memory of the GDR through genre. With its prolonged car chase scene between fugitives and the Stasi, it borrows both the narratives and visual images of American action cinema.[56] Since Eastern Bloc cars are generally not associated with the great velocity necessary for fast-paced car action, the film relies on cinematographic artifice. In particular, the filmmakers of *Go West* use fast crosscutting and camera movements to dramatise the slow acceleration and low top speed of the Wartburg (50 PS) and the Lada Zhiguli (65 PS) involved in the scene. Shots alternate between the view of the Wartburg Tourist and Lada Zhiguli from the roadside and shots inside the teenagers' Wartburg. For the outside shots, the camera pans from right to left following the direction of the car movements, a typical method for creating the illusion of higher speed in film.[57] This method becomes even more evident in a later scene, when the teenagers first meet the trafficker and have to escape the Stasi by jumping into a Wartburg 312, with only 45 PS. As the car is parked and thus immobile, the camera pans back and forth to create movement, almost hose-piping between the closing doors of the Wartburg in a close-up shot of the upper half of the car. In both scenes, the film director Andreas Linke attempts to create a similar level of tension that viewers recognise from contemporary filmic car chases, and one, which is not impaired by the inertia and technical outdatedness of the vehicles from the Eastern Bloc. Thus, the film

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[54] Yuliya Komska, 'Surveillance and the Senses in a Documentary Portrait of Radio Free Europe', in *Secret Police Files from the Eastern Bloc: Between Surveillance and Life Writing*, ed. Alison Lewis, Petrescu, Corina and Glajar, Valentina (New York: Camden House, 2016), pp. 201–28 (p. 205).
[55] Zimmer, *Surveillance Cinema*, p. 10.
[56] Tico Romao, 'Gun and Gas: Investigating 1970s Car Chase Film', in *Action and Adventure Cinema*, ed. by Yvonne Tasker (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 130–52 (p. 130).
[57] Geoff King, *Spectacular Narratives: Hollywood in the Age of the Blockbuster* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 2000), p. 99.

offers a counter-narrative to the idea of technological inferiority of Eastern cars and instead normalises them in cultural memory of the GDR.

The camera inside the Wartburg predominantly shifts between medium close-up and big close-up shots of the faces of the three teenagers to show their emotions for dramatic effect. To heighten the tension even more and offer the viewer a sense of immersion in the action,[58] the camera adopts the driver's point of view twice: first, when Thomas steers the Wartburg into a group of Stasi officers who jump out of the car's path just in time, and once more when the car drives uncontrollably into the woods. In the latter shot, the view through the windscreen is blocked by branches and leaves, thus pointing to the dangerous journey with an unknown destination that lies ahead of the fugitives. By showing the inside of the teenagers' car and concentrating on their emotions rather than the Stasi officers, the film makes an ideological statement. Iain Borden notes that historical car chases in film have largely sided with state authorities and depicted the police as an 'epitome of responsible and systematic law enforcement'.[59] The car chase in *Go West*, in contrast, introduces the Stasi, and thus the state, as the enemy who employs ruthless methods to control its citizens. This depiction complies with the features of American action films, as it portrays a polarised image of good and evil. This portrayal highlights a common technique in contemporary memory of the GDR in order to distinguish between the evil of the state and the everyday lives of ordinary citizens, thus following the guidelines of the *Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption*.

In addition to visual effects, another factor that contributes to the action in car chase scenes is sound, as Iain Borden notes.[60] Consequently, the film *Go West* also draws on the distortion of sound to create the illusion of great velocity in Eastern cars. Because of the rather aggressive driving style during the car chase, the viewer would expect loud clattering from the two-stroke engine of the Wartburg, which is similar to the 'deafening' sound of a Trabant.[61] Instead, the film tunes down this distinctive sound in favour of the squealing noise of tires and a more generic acceleration sound of a four-stroke engine. In doing so, the director not only warps the sound but also distorts the Easternness of the cars by cutting out their distinct features, namely the sound of the two-stroke engine. In fact, the distortion of sound and vision go hand in hand in this scene, as the darkness of the night obfuscates the distinct shape of the

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[58] Borden, *Drive*, p. 187.
[59] Borden, *Drive*, p. 189.
[60] Ibid., p. 192.
[61] Will Self calls the sound of the Trabant's two-stroke engine 'deafening'. *Self Drives: The Trabant*, BBC Radio 4, 28 November 2016.

Wartburg and Lada chassis. The scene thus neutralises the historical and geographical background of the events on screen in an attempt to meet the expectations of the viewers of filmic car chases. Although the chase only arises from the political circumstances in the GDR, the execution of the chase resembles that of an American action film that is not necessarily set in former East Germany.

The idea of sound serving the genre of a film is also evident in *Barbara*, where more realistic sounds and images play an important role as symbols and narrative devices in the portrayal of car journeys. As a director associated with the Berlin School, Christian Petzold only utilises music, or sounds in general, that are essential for the narrative.[62] Thus, even sounds of everyday life, such as the engine of a car, become an integral part of Petzold's story. Overall, four scenes take place inside André Reiser's Wartburg 353 Tourist, and they are all dominated by conversations between André and Barbara. The sounds of the moving car complement the particularly soft voice of actor Ronald Zehrfeld (André Reiser) and the slightly throaty voice of Nina Hoss (Barbara Wolff) in these scenes. Acceleration and revving of the engine, shortly before changing into a higher gear, as well as bumps in the street are audible in between dialogues. Most striking, however, is the ticking noise of the indicator that André uses at least once during each of the four journeys. For a driver, this sound serves as a reminder that the indicator is flashing and thus signalling to other road users the path of one's car. While the ticking noise was a result of the mechanical workings of the relay in indicators in classic cars, such as the Wartburg, nowadays it is generated electronically. For Barbara, this particular sound becomes a sign of warning during their first journey together. Giving Barbara a lift home on her first day in work, André demonstrates his prior knowledge of Barbara's address when he indicates and turns the car without asking her for directions. This behaviour raises Barbara's suspicion of André, as it matches that of a Stasi collaborator.

Later on, the ticking not only instigates the physical turning of the car but also a turning in the conversation between André and Barbara, notably during their second journey together. When André picks Barbara up from home after she missed her shift – the Stasi had visited and body searched her the night before – he inquires about the incident, but Barbara is reluctant to talk. After André's attempt to nurture a friendship with Barbara by showing care fails, the turning of the car means a return to their relationship as mere work colleagues. The ticking of the relay in this scene implies a downgrading of Barbara's and André's relationship. During

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[62]Abel, *The Counter-Cinema of the Berlin School*, p. 69.

their last car journey, however, the indicator marks an upgrade of their relationship when André drives to his house after convincing Barbara to join him for a meal. This signals to the viewer that Barbara and André have established a common and suddenly very intimate path after somewhat aimlessly roaming the roads of an unspecified small provincial town in the north of East Germany throughout the film.

While the sound of the car, its engine, tyres and windscreen wipers, are used to support the different genres of the films above, the relative quietness of the bicycle becomes a plot device in the films *Barbara* and *Go West*. For protagonist Barbara Wolff, cycling equals independence as opposed to public transport, on which she relies at the beginning of the film. In her quest to keep a low profile under Stasi surveillance, the bicycle is a perfect mode of transport as it produces very little noise and no fumes. It allows her to make a journey at any time, for instance to meet her West German lover in the woods or arrange her escape at night. Similarly, the advantages of the bike over the car in terms of quietness and compactness are the main reasons for cycling in *Go West*. After receiving a call for help by her son Frank, who is on the run from the Stasi, Beate Korbach cycles through the night to find a telephone box and give Frank vital information to enable his escape. As both Beate and her husband Kurt work for the Stasi, she is aware of their surveillance methods, and is thus wary of the possibility that their home phone is tapped. In this dangerous situation, cycling also offers the anonymity – as bicycles are not registered under a licence number – that Beate seeks during her journey through the night.

Comparing the use of sounds effects in the films *Barbara* and *Go West* has highlighted the meaning of vehicle sounds as both a plot device and a genre-determining factor in film. In this context, the bike emerges as an antithesis to the car, or indeed any motorised vehicle, due to its quietness. It is portrayed to offer a low-profile means of transport for those under surveillance. The variety of genres of these films is a sign that post-ostalgic remembrance has framed the GDR as an attractive setting for a wide range of stories and narratives beyond nostalgic reminiscence, on the one hand, and universal condemnation of the dictatorship, on the other. Depictions of the car as a panoptic tool for the Stasi show the various degrees to which surveillance fulfilled its purpose to maintain the state's power over its citizens. With its panoptic features, the car has become a metaphor for the GDR as a whole. At the same time, the portrayal of the Stasi has diversified, demonstrating a spectrum from omnipresent and overwhelming power to amateurishness and dilettantism.

5.3 *Haste was, Biste* was: Reimagining Social Distinction in the GDR through Motorised Vehicles

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the Trabant has been a prominent memory icon of the GDR and object of fetishism with socialism. In popular culture, it also embodied the idea of standardised East German biographies, a narrative that shaped the image of the GDR in West Germany. As this chapter argues, recent depictions of East German streetscapes since 2005, however, take into account a more diverse distribution of car makes. In fact, in the latest filmic representations of transport in the GDR, the Wartburg as the East German car of higher quality,[63] and the Soviet Lada Zhiguli, as the car of the Stasi, have overtaken the Trabant in number of appearances. Four of the case study films give preference to the Wartburg as the car of main and supporting characters. This development is remarkable because of the Trabant's pre- and post-*Wende* meaning as an icon of the East German 'alternative modernity',[64] immortalised in the film *Go Trabi Go*. The car's recently declining mnemonic importance perhaps points to its overdetermination as an 'ostalgic' vehicle.

The perceived shift away from the Trabant to the Wartburg as the dominant car in film is accompanied by a rejection of the post-*Wende* image of homogeneous everyday lives in the GDR. The choice of car represents social distinction in East German society. In an early work, Pierre Bourdieu theorised the idea that material possessions embody the class of their owner by writing that 'the quality of goods [is] itself highly dependent on the quality of the consumer'.[65] In the film case studies, the drivers of Wartburgs are members of the intelligentsia, namely André Reiser in *Barbara*, have acquired higher positions within their professions, such as high-ranking Stasi officer Kurt Korbach in *Go West* and IT-specialist Peter Koch in *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie*, or represent the state, such as HO manager Lothar Jäger in *Sushi in Suhl*. For these middle-aged men with above-average incomes, the Wartburg appears to be what Eli Rubin calls the 'luxury socialist car',[66] and thus a material representation of their raised social status in the East. Consequently, members of lower social groups drive the Trabant, such as the teenage friend of Marco Kaiser in *Das Wunder von Berlin*, a retired man in *Barbara*, and Sara Bender in the film *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie*. The only museum case study

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[63] Rubin, 'The Trabant', p. 30.
[64] Sigelbaum, 'Introduction', p. 6.
[65] Quoted in Philippe Coulangeon, Yoann Demoli and Ivaylo D. Petev, 'Cultural Distinction and Material Consumption: The Case of Cars in Contemporary France', in *The Routledge Companion to Bourdieu's Distinction*, ed. by Philippe Coulangeon and Julien Duval (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 119–31 (p. 119).
[66] Rubin, 'The Trabant', p. 35.

engaging with the car as material evidence of social layering is the one in Malchow. The text accompanying the exhibit 'Mit dem Trabi in den Urlaub' addresses social differentiation by calling the Wartburg a 'Luxus' vehicle and rendering owners of imported cars as members of the 'Oberschicht'. In doing so, the eyewitness account in the museum confirms the fictional stories of the GDR's middle class affinity with the Wartburg. These filmic and museal depictions of the Wartburg not only contest the idea of social homogeneity in the GDR. They also emphasise that class was expressed through material culture and status symbols, such as cars. As this idea is deeply rooted in capitalist societies, the case studies illustrate similarities between the GDR and West Germany, thus normalising the socialist state in cultural memory.

While the films attempt to feature a more varied depiction of transportation in everyday life in East Germany, most museums appear to maintain the paradigm of the Trabant as the East German people's car. However, the choice of car to exhibit is more complex, as museums need to consider questions of space, monetary value and the acquisition of objects. The museums in Apolda and Pforzheim, for instance, struggle to fit any car into their cramped exhibition halls. Therefore, the decision to display a Trabant may be a result of practical considerations rather than curatorial ones. In contrast, the museum in Perleberg dedicates parts of a separate building to means of transport, where two Trabants feature in a space that allows for more variety. In these exhibitions, the cars are arguably the most valuable goods. Upon reaching the status of a classic car, the Trabant and Wartburg have become an object of investment for some collectors, as a 2017 article in the *Handelsblatt* illustrates.[67] This monetary re-evaluation of East German cars is accompanied by a non-material reappraisal of the Trabant. Tim Edensor writes that the Trabant is 'loaded with national significance' for East Germany,[68] an idea that some museums appear to rediscover with their displays of cars. The director of the *Olle DDR* in Apolda confirms this view during a tour through the exhibition by stating that her museum attempts to demonstrate pride in the material and technological achievements of East Germany. This reading of the Trabant represents an unequivocal shift in the cultural meaning of this object since the first decade of unified Germany rather than 'ostalgic' longing.

The idea of pride in East German cars is not only relevant in the German context but also in relation to other countries of the former CMEA. As Jonathan Zatlin notes, car production

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[67] Dpa, 'Auf dem Weg zur Weltanlage', *Handelsblatt*, 7 November 2017 < http://www.handelsblatt.com/auto/ nachrichten/der-trabi-wird-60-jahre-alt-auf-dem-weg-zur-wertanlage/20545740.html> [accessed 11 March 2018]
[68] Edensor, 'Automobility and National Identity', p. 104.

was a means to gain prestige for the GDR within the Eastern Bloc.[69] The relatively advanced car production in the GDR caused a high demand for exports into other states of the CMEA, with up to 50% of produced vehicles leaving the GDR during the 1970s and 1980s.[70] Although the GDR also imported cars, such as Soviet Ladas, Romanian Dacias and Czechoslovak Škodas, the East German car trade balance remained negative.[71] The filmic case studies portray this history with their representations of Eastern Bloc streetscapes. *Go West*, *Westwind* and *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie* depict Trabants and Wartburgs inhabiting Czechoslovak, Hungarian, Romanian and Yugoslav streets. These depictions highlight the significance of East German cars across the socialist Bloc. For many viewers, the sight of the Trabant and the Wartburg abroad creates a sense of familiarity and perhaps even pride in the desirability of East German cars in other countries.

The film *Go West* notably visualises a reappraisal not only of the Trabant and Wartburg but of socialist cars in general. In particular, a scene set in Prague transports the image of an Eastern auto-salon with a wide and colourful range of cars. Although the camera focusses on the protagonists sitting on a bench in the foreground, the viewers' attention wanders to the brightly coloured cars parked in the background. The colours of the bright-blue Soviet ZAZ 368 and a bright-green Romanian Dacia 1300 are symbolic in this scene, as they represent the hope of the fugitives to escape the Stasi with the help of a Russian counterfeiter, for whom they are waiting. When they wake up the next morning, the background has changed to a beige Soviet Lada Zhiguli and a black Soviet Moskvich, indicating the trouble lying ahead as the Stasi have become aware of the teenagers' whereabouts. This scene creates the image of internationalism in terms of car trade within the Eastern Bloc and a sense of technological and aesthetical achievement, as opposed to hegemonic narratives of the 1990s of East German automotive inferiority.

In contrast to this rather positive image of inter-Eastern Bloc car trade, the majority of case study films render the Soviet produced Lada Zhiguli as a memory icon for the Stasi. Six out of eight films use the Lada, mostly in dark blue paint as the vehicle of the MfS. The Lada 1200/Zhiguli was the result of a corporation between the Soviet Union and the Italian car manufacturer Fiat with export rates of up to 30%.[72] The GDR received special import quotas

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[69] Zatlin, 'The Vehicle of Desire', p. 368.
[70] Ibid., p. 364.
[71] Ibid., p. 361.
[72] Nordica Nettleton, 'Driving Towards Communist Consumerism AvtoVAZ', *Cahier du Monde russe*, Vol. 47.1/2 (Jan. - Jun. 2006), 131–51 (pp. 133–34).

for the Zhiguli, which, however, did not serve to meet citizens' demands for private cars but to equip the Stasi with higher quality automobiles.[73] The films mirror this historical background when they depict the car as a vehicle used by the state and its representatives rather than by ordinary East German citizens. One of the most common images, not least since *Helden wie wir*, is a close-up shot of two to three men sitting in the Lada Zhiguli observing their target, an image that I have previously discussed for the film *Liebe Mauer*. The films *Barbara* and *Go West* illustrate that the dark blue Lada has become a symbol of the Stasi, as they use long and medium shots of the car parked in front of a residential house as the sole narrative device to inform the viewer of the presence of the Stasi. Notably, *Barbara* omits the term 'Stasi' entirely, despite its integral part in the plot of the film. Instead, it uses the car, the peculiar clothing of the Stasi officers, as well as their unique methods of subversion and observation to mark the secret police as such. This depiction shows that the Lada has already become a symbol of state surveillance and oppression.

While these portrayals present the Lada Zhiguli as the working vehicle of the East German secret police, the films *Das Wunder von Berlin* and *Der Turm* show this car as the private motor of Stasi employees. Here, the choice of car serves the two functions of marking the driver as a member of the Stasi and to show their economic status in society. Similar to the Wartburg, the Zhiguli was, as some commentators such as Mariusz Jastrąb and Kurt Möser argue,[74] a status symbol for the upper class. In *Das Wunder von Berlin*, high-ranking Stasi officer Jürgen Kaiser has been provided with a personal chauffeur driving him to work, the shops or home in a dark blue Lada Zhiguli. This depiction heightens the prestige of the car with the addition of a personal driver, and thus renders Kaiser a member of the Stasi nomenclature. According to the film, the Stasi reserved such extraordinary privileges for its most decorated officers, such as Kaiser's lover Marion Niemann, who has only recently been promoted to a similar rank as Kaiser and drives her own beige Lada. Although she does not profit from a corporate car, the film labels her as a member of a higher social class through the Lada. Similarly, the film *Der Turm* equips protagonist Richard Hoffmann with a Lada Zhiguli estate. The choice of car appears to embody his societal position as the head of a surgical ward with

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[73] Udo Scheer, 'Stasi im Alltag der DDR', in *Was war die Stasi? Einblicke in das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit der DDR,* ed. by Karsten Dümmel and Melanie Piepenschneider, 5th edn (Sankt Augustin and Berlin: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung e.V., 2014), pp. 100–05 (pp. 104–05).

[74] Mariusz Jastrąb names the Lada as the car of choice of the upper class in Poland who regarded it a luxury car that represented their exquisite taste. Mariusz Jastrąb, 'Cars as Favors in People's Poland', in *The Socialist Car: Automobility in the Eastern Bloc*, ed. by Lewis Siegelbaum (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), pp. 30–46 (p. 40); Kurt Möser classifies the prestige of a Soviet Lada in the same ranks as imported cars from the West. Möser, '*Autobasteln*', p. 169.

the ambition to become CEO of the hospital. The Lada, thus, represents his privileged lifestyle and sets him apart from other social groups. Later on, however, the film reveals Richard's involvement with the Stasi as an unofficial informant during his time as a student. Thus, the Lada also symbolises this hidden connection with the secret police that Richard had tried to conceal. The cinematographic rise of the Lada Zhiguli observed in the case studies is a sign of diversification of memory icons and narratives as opposed to the image of the 1990s of the GDR as a one-car nation. East German car culture is thus being normalised in German culture memory. On the other hand, with its meaning as a surveillance car and thus an epitome of state terror, the Zhiguli embodies the memory narrative of the Stasi's infiltration of everyday life, which follows the guidelines of the *Fortschreibung* to portray the systematic political penentration of the quotidian in East Germany.[75]

While the Wartburg and the Lada represent elevated social groups in the GDR in the case study films and museums, the Western Mercedes W123 appears to denote a particular type of arrogant West German. Although the West German car industry comprised five major makes and the globalised capitalist economy enabled imports from across the world, the variety of Western cars is very limited in four of the six case study films that feature them. *Liebe Mauer* and *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie* are partly set in West Germany and therefore illustrate a more varied image of Western streetscapes. The other four films are entirely set in the Eastern Bloc and only portray Western cars that have crossed the border to the East for various reasons. These cars provide a stark aesthetic contrast to the local automotive culture. The Mercedes Benz W123, as one of the most prestigious Western makes, symbolises Western economic prowess and reinforces the idea of an inherent economic disparity between the socialist and capitalist systems. Consequently, the drivers of this car represent a West German middle class with a distinct sense of superiority to East Germans, epitomised in the post-*Wende* stereotype of the 'arrogant and self-assured' *Wessi*.[76]

The three films *Sushi in Suhl*, *Barbara* and *Westwind* critically engage with this idea in their depictions of Mercedes W123 drivers. *Sushi in Suhl*, for instance, ridicules the rather shallow and ignorant Bavarian politician, and right-hand man to Franz Josef Strauß, Ernst Kaltenhauser. His character encompasses the *imaginary West*, as he drives through the Thuringian forest in his Mercedes, complaining about the abominable condition of the roads

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[75] Deutscher Bundestag, *Unterrichtung: Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption des Bundes* (Berlin: Bundesanzeiger Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2008), p. 9.

[76] Daphne Berdahl, *Where the World Ended: Re-Unification and Identity in the German Borderland* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1999), p. 168.

and the remoteness of Suhl. Kaltenhauser's verdict of the East German infrastructure certainly conveys the image of the bourgeois West with his feeling of superiority over the East. Yet, the locals admire the Bavarian politician, his car and his manners since he embodies their constructed image of the West,[77] and not least because they financially depend on his benevolence. Kaltenhauser overhauls his verdict of Eastern inferiority, however, when he meets the East German waitress Giesela and falls in love with her immediately. This plot twist highlights the hypocrisy of Eastern and Western stereotypes. Kaltenhauser's heavy upper Bavarian dialect satirises the idea of his superiority, and instead highlights similarities between him and the Thuringian Rolf Anschütz, as they are both deeply rooted in their home regions.

The film *Barbara* engages in particular with the element of Eastern admiration for Western technological progress and aesthetics during an encounter between an East German pensioner and two West German businessmen. When the Trabant-driving pensioner spots the Mercedes W123, he stops to admire the car and inquiries about some of its technical developments, including high speed, cushioning of the seats and the heated steering wheel. The Western driver's responses to these questions are rather reticent, and he complains verbosely about the ignorance of East Germans when back in the car with his fellow Western business partner. Ironically, he exposes himself as rather ignorant when he imitates the pensioner with a Saxon dialect that he does not have as a Northerner. With this generalisation of all East Germans, the driver recreates what the *imaginary East* looked like to most West Germans both before and after the *Wende*. German media widely used the Saxon dialect as a distinctive mark of eastern Germans in 1990s. The film *Go Trabi Go*, for instance, places the Struutz family in Saxony, although their hometown Bitterfeld is in Saxony-Anhalt. This idea of Saxons representing all East Germans, can occasionally be found on German television to this day. The news satire *heute show* on state broadcaster ZDF depicts a stereotypical character as the spokesperson for the party *Die Linke*.[78] Mandy Hausten has adopted the 'Zonen-Gaby' look with a 1980s perm and jeans outfit, as well as a Saxon dialect, despite being from Brandenburg. While the satire programme uses the image of stereotypical East-Germanness for cheap laughs, the film *Barbara* exposes the topos as a creation of Western imagination of how the East looked. This particular automotive encounter between East and West, thus, offers more evidence of the existence not only of an *imaginary West* but also of an *imaginary East.* It also criticises Western attitudes towards the East, not only during division but also in united

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[77] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, pp. 168–69.
[78] ZDF, *Mandy aus Pranndenburg* (Mainz: Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen, 2015) <http://www.heute-show.de/zdf/themen/index.html?tags=Mandy%20Hausten> [accessed 10 August 2017]

Germany, thus underpinning the stereotype of the *Besserwessi*.

While the Mercedes materialises West-Germanness in the films *Sushi in Suhl* and *Barbara* with their clichéd depictions of West German drivers, the car defines individuals in *Westwind*, which offers a more diverse reading of driving personalities. In fact, it establishes a relationship between personal character and choice of car by juxtaposing the rather modest and locally rooted Arne, who drives a Volkswagen Beetle, and the slightly arrogant Mercedes W123 driver Nico. Although Nico shares a number of traits with the Western drivers in *Barbara* and *Sushi in Suhl*, he also displays care for Isabel and worry about the safety of his friend Arne and his East German girlfriend Doreen during her illegal border crossing. The film, thus, depicts a variety of Western characters and abandons the idea of generalisation when portraying both East and West Germans.

The fact that all three West German motorists drive the same type of Mercedes, the iconic late 1970s W123 is peculiar considering the much greater number of options that drivers in West Germany had in comparison to the East. Choosing Mercedes in general and this type in particular is an expression of class distinction. The high-ranking Bavarian politician Kaltenhauser, the West German business man, and the affluent teenager Nico represent the (upper) middle class in West Germany in a similar way that the Wartburg drivers Kurt Korbach, Richard Hoffmann and André Reiser represent the middle class in the GDR. These visible social layers in the GDR, materialised by cars amongst other things, are another step towards 'normalisation' of the memory of the GDR. However, as the comparison with depictions of middle class drivers from West Germany and their cars demonstrates, the 'normalisation' of memory is, in fact, a westernisation of memory that reimagines the social relations within the GDR as very similar to the West.

5.4 Gender Trouble: Transport Culture and the Construction of Femininity and Masculinity in the GDR

In her 2017 monograph *Frauen in der DDR*, Anna Kaminsky aims to answer the question 'Wer war sie, "die" ostdeutsche Frau?'.[79] In the entire book, cars are mentioned twice and only as a leisure activity or chore for men.[80] Although Kaminsky's description of the relationship between men, women and cars is perhaps too simplistic and based on gendered stereotypes

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[79] Kaminsky, *Frauen in der DDR*, p. 21.
[80] Ibid., pp. 120–22.

rather than data, the almost complete absence of female car drivers from her book is symptomatic for both the historical and contemporary marginalisation of women drivers.[81] In contrast, the 2017 TV production *Der gleiche Himmel* normalises female motorists in the GDR, for instance with its portrayal of Gita Weber who regularly drives her daughter to swimming practice.[82] This narrative of the mother as a chauffeur for her children is borrowed from American culture[83] – and indeed from contemporary culture in Western Europe – and therefore equally fails to reflect the statistical data of car culture in the GDR. Both examples illustrate that our reconstruction of the past is heavily informed by our norms of the present, and how gender is constructed through everyday habits.

Similar to other Eastern Bloc countries, gender equality was high on the GDR's ideological agenda, a fact that the political propaganda used to distinguish itself from the much more socially conservative West Germany.[84] As Corinna Kuhr-Korolev has noted for the Soviet Union, however, in many aspects of domestic life, including in the realm of cars, old-fashioned gender roles persisted.[85] She argues that despite the low numbers of female drivers, women's roles as co-owners and passengers were significant and are worth considering. Kuhr-Korolev is convinced that traditional gender roles persisted to a greater extent in Soviet society than in other socialist countries,[86] although there is little data to underpin her claim. The *Statistisches Jahrbuch der DDR*, for instance, does not distinguish car users according to their gender, which impedes conclusions about female motorists. Considering the fact that equal access for women to the workplace did not automatically lead to equality in other areas of everyday life, notably the distribution of household work,[87] it appears questionable whether statutory gender equality meant equal use of cars in the GDR. Exploring the ways in which museums and films reimagine transport culture helps us to understand memory of gender construction through vehicles and

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[81] Driving motorised vehicles has been perceived as a male domain ever since these means of transportation entered public streets, despite the fact that the first long-distance driver was Bertha Benz, the wife of Carl Benz. A widely shared stereotype at the beginning of the 20th century in western countries was that women lacked the concentration levels and stability of temperament that car driving required, and were thus considered responsible for the majority of road accidents. Deborah Clarke, *Driving Women: Fiction and Automobile Culture in Twentieth Century America* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2007), pp. 10,14

[82] *Der gleiche Himmel*, dir. by Oliver Hirschbiegel (UFA Fiction GmbH, 2017).

[83] Sarah S. Lochlann Jain, 'Urban Errands: The means of mobility', *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 2.3 (2002), 385–404 (p. 389).

[84] Myra Marx Ferree, 'After the Wall: Explaining the Status of Women in the Former GDR', *Sociological Focus*, 28.1 (1995), 9–22 (p. 15).

[85] Corinna Kuhr-Korolev, 'Women and Cars in Soviet and Russian Society', in *The Socialist Car: Automobility in the Eastern Bloc,* ed. by Lewis Siegelbaum (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011), pp. 186–203 (pp. 187–88).

[86] Kuhr-Korolev, 'Women and Cars in Soviet and Russian Society', p. 187.

[87] Marx Ferree, 'After the Wall', pp. 15–16.

the role of the woman in East German society.

In terms of gender construction, the case studies engage with the bicycle as a female means of transport and driving as a form of female empowerment, while tinkering is portrayed as a pronounced male activity and the motorcycle as a male vehicle. Both museums and films portray the male motorist as the social norm while women are largely passengers or use other means of transport. Out of eight films, only three depict female drivers. *Das Wunder von Berlin*, for instance, emphasises Stasi Lieutenant Marion Niemann's independence through her car. The Lada Zhiguli embodies her status as an MfS employee as argued in the previous section. In terms of colour, the champagne-beige shade of the car appears to reflect her womanhood and imply Stasi-light, in contrast to the dark blue Ladas used to represent the Stasi in the majority of case studies. On the contrary, however, Niemann's actions are ruthless and career-driven, for instance when she denounces her lover to save her own career. The car is, thus, a status symbol for a woman who is not complying with the social norm, being unmarried and childfree in her late 20s or early 30s.[88] In fact, she is more independent than her lover Jürgen Kaiser, a married man whose career prospects are threatened by his family members' deviant behaviours. He lacks the freedom of his own car, as he depends on the corporate vehicle and its driver. Thus, the chauffeur service, which first appears to be a luxury and privilege, is, in fact, a hindrance and control mechanism for the Stasi to monitor Kaiser's movements. This shows the downsides of perceived privilege and depicts the powers of the Stasi expanding to their own employees.

The concept of the freedom of driving is at the heart of the depiction of Sara Bender as a female motorist in *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie*. Being a single mother of two daughters who is about to enter her second marriage with a work colleague, she is in many respects a much more mainstream example of a woman in East German society than Marion Niemann. The 1973 GDR film *Paul und Paula* portrays a single mother of two and thus renders this lifestyle not only as socially acceptable but normalises the status of a divorced mother as common in the GDR of the 1970s.[89] Thus, the family status of Sara Bender appears a lot more typical for an East German woman than that of Marion Niemann. Similar to Niemann, however, the car represents freedom and independence for Sara Bender.[90] The film contests gender norms

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[88] The average age to marry for women in the GDR was between 21 and 23 throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Kaminsky, *Frauen in der DDR*, p. 146.
[89] *Paul und Paula*, dir. by Heiner Carow (DEFA, 1973).
[90] Mimi Sheller, 'Automotive Emotions: Feeling the Car', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 21.4/5 (2004), 221–42 (p. 221).

around car culture when the Trabant becomes a 'means of escape' for Sara, an attribute usually associated with the relationship between men and cars according to Lochlann Jain.[91] Upon learning that East German authorities deny Sara permission to visit her ill father in the FRG, she drives the car through the night to reflect on her situation in the East and control her emotions. In doing so, she displays a coping strategy that involves solitude and driving away from problems rather facing them. Meanwhile, her fiancé looks after Sara's daughters and awaits her return home. This particular scene, thus, reverses gender clichés as Sara and Peter swap stereotypical parental roles.

Sara not only tries to escape everyday problems when driving her car but also the oppressive socialist state as a whole. She embarks on a journey of 1,200 kilometres from Erfurt to Yugoslavia to cross the border to Austria and thus drive into freedom. This trip is an expression of her independence and nonconformity to both traditional norms of womanhood and the reality of being a woman in the GDR. Her well-paid position as a group leader of the IT department of a company has enabled her to be financially independent. Such a career is extraordinary, given Anna Kaminsky's criticism of gender equality in the GDR. She notes that despite the socialist endeavour to empower women, female workers achieved much less frequently leading roles in the workplace and if they did, faced scepticism by their male colleagues.[92] Sara Bender challenges female norms both at work and in the car. Displaying rather male behaviour not only helps her to progress her career but also her escape. She bribes a suspicious Romanian border guard, a behaviour that Kuhr-Korolev's research on female drivers and passengers in the Soviet Union associates with 'uncultured' male drivers.[93] Thus, Sara is portrayed as a strong woman by casting off stereotypically passive female attitudes towards the car and driving, and instead adopting more aggressive behaviours, often associated with masculinity.

The museal case studies largely confirm the marginalisation of female motorists in the GDR in films. As museums juxtapose the covers of East German automotive magazines with exhibits of cars, they illustrate the discrepancy between the ideology of gender equality in socialist countries and the way former East Germans remember gender roles around motorised vehicles in the GDR. While commercial images of cars in Pirna and Thale show female and male drivers equally, mannequins placed next to motorised vehicles in Pirna, Apolda and

[91] Lochlann Jain, 'Urban Errands', p. 398.
[92] Kaminsky, *Frauen in der DDR*, pp. 83–84.
[93] Kuhr-Korolev, 'Women and Cars in Soviet and Russian Society', p. 195.

Perleberg are exclusively male. The museum in Pirna features several copies of the transport magazine *Der deutsche Straßenverkehr*, which regularly depicted female motorists, for instance a young woman sitting on a scooter. Here, we see the socialist ideal of equality promoted to some extent, although arguably a scooter is a less highly regarded vehicle than a motorcycle or a car. On another cover of the same magazine displayed here, a family is packing their Trabant to go on holiday. It is not clear from the picture who is going to drive but in the process of packing, the man is in charge of fitting items in the boot that the woman is handing him. Thus, men are portrayed as having the spatial awareness and planning abilities while women can merely assist. This image establishes a clear hierarchy that renders the man the decision-maker and is, thus, further evidence of the limitations of gender equality in the GDR.

The differences between socialist countries in their perception of gender roles becomes clearer when comparing the East German magazine covers from Pirna with Czechoslovak advertisements in the museum in Thale. The flyers for the Škoda 110 L, built between 1969 and 1976, depict a woman behind the wheel with two male adult passengers. This image is quite remarkable considering Kuhr-Korolev's observation that the Soviet automotive magazine *Za rulem* rarely depicted female motorists, thus confirming women's more passive role in Soviet car culture.[94] This particular leaflet in Thale also seems to promote female car ownership, indicated by a second picture of a woman standing next to a parked Škoda 100 and placing her hands on the boot of the car. Since the flyer with information in French and English was exhibited at the international Leipzig fair, its iconography served the purpose of advertising not only the high standard of Czechoslovak engineering to both Eastern and Western visitors but also the high level of gender equality that embraced all aspects of everyday life in the Eastern Bloc.

The largely propagandistic quality of such imagery becomes clear when juxtaposing them with car-related museum exhibits by former East Germans. The museum in Pirna, for instance, marks various areas of everyday life as gendered. It considers the kitchen as a female space, as argued in section 4.3, while the realm of cars and motorcycles is male. This exhibition scheme supports Anna Kaminsky's claim that women were responsible for looking after household and children while men engaged with football and cars.[95] For the museum director of the Pirna exhibition who grew up in East Germany, distinct male and female roles in everyday life existed despite the GDR's socialist doctrine of gender equality. The continued

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[94] Kuhr-Korolev, 'Women and Cars in Soviet and Russian Society', p. 189.
[95] Kaminsky, *Frauen in der DDR*, p. 122.

gender division in the display also demonstrates that high employment rates of women did not automatically lead to contesting and renegotiating deeply ingrained domestic gender roles.[96]

These constructions of gender through strict division of labour become particularly problematic when one gender is defined by degrading another. This becomes visible in the museum *Olle DDR* in Apolda, as it defines masculinity not only through affinity to cars but also through sexist behaviour. In its detailed reimagining of a private garage, [97] the museum places a Trabant with a male mannequin behind the steering wheel to aspire to a high level of authenticity. The museum further marks this space as distinctly heterosexually male with the help of four photographs of nude women on the side of the shelf that faces visitors. By drawing on the trope of female nude pictures in male dominated workspaces,[98] the museum creates the garage as a space of both work and withdrawal for men, thus blurring the boundaries between work and leisure. Women, on the other hand, are marginalised in the context of car culture and their bodies are reduced to a decorative element in a space dedicated exclusively to male use. This view of women in the context of car culture is being normalised by the museum since the display as a whole aims to offer a realistic image of a garage.

The narrative of the garage as a space of refuge for men in East Germany is also prevalent in secondary literature. Kurt Möser, for instance, interprets tinkering as a form of male bonding both with other men and with the vehicles that they work on.[99] As opposed to the often-described passive role of women, men can therefore establish different forms of active relationships to cars, both as drivers or mechanics. The case study films and museums frequently depict repair in the context of car culture. The museum in Perleberg displays a Trabant with a lifted bonnet opposite of a small shelf containing books on how to repair a car. Although there is no comment on gender within this particular exhibit, a male mannequin accompanies motorcycles in the same room. Thus, rather than portraying car repair as a non-gendered activity, the museum interprets motorised travel as a male realm in general.

Similar to the pronounced female pastime of sewing, which I have discussed in the previous chapter, car repair is portrayed not only as a facilitator of gendered bonding but also

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[96] Marx Ferree, 'After the Wall', p. 15.
[97] The garage is equipped with a Trabant, three bicycles, a Simson motorcycle, two lawnmowers, and a shelf full of repair material, and decorated with maps and licence plates.
[98] German media, including newspapers *Der Spiegel*, normalise the presence of nude images of women, and call them legally unproblematic in male-only workplaces such as a car repair shop. Matthias Kaufmann, 'Sexuelle Belästigung: Mal wieder "zufällig" am Po berührt', *Spiegel*, 24 January 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/karriere/sexuelle-belaestigung-wo-verlaeuft-die-grenze-a-879553.html> [accessed 16 August 2017]
[99] Möser, 'Autobasteln', p. 158.

as a gender-specific everyday chore. Although mending cars is a common image in the filmic case studies, it often happens in the background of the main action in order to give the scenery a more realistic touch, notably in *Der Turm* and *Was Wunder von Berlin*.[100] The film *Liebe Mauer,* however, visualises car repair to emphasise the differences in everyday life between the GDR and the FRG. When West German student Franzi crosses the border to East Berlin for the first time, a group of three men frantically repairing a Trabant is one her first glimpses of this unknown country. The aerial view of the repair scene highlights the novelty and adventurous nature of Franzi's trip to the East. She reveals her Western origin and disgruntles the Eastern mechanics by stopping to observe the scene closely. As Franzi's behaviour almost mimics the methods of an ethnographer watching an indigenous tribe, the film also projects differences in class onto this particular depiction of the East-West divide. The scene does not portray the romanticism of male bonding as described by Kurt Möser, but depicts mending as an unavoidable everyday chore for East German men that appears alien to West Germans. Kurt Möser argues that Eastern and Western car culture required different levels of driver engagement with the mechanics of the car. While drivers in the GDR were expected to mend their vehicles themselves, which was encouraged by self-help books and magazines, drivers in the FRG were progressively freed from such tasks as cars became more technically advanced and a broad infrastructure of repair services was available.[101]

The only case study hinting at male bonding through car culture is the film *Go West.* Tinkering also takes place in the background of the main action and is presented as an act of care equal to cleaning a car by hand. Set in a residential area of high-rise apartment buildings in Gera, the scene shows residents on a typical Saturday morning busy pursuing their chores. In the background, the camera captures two men repairing the engine of a light-blue Lada Zhiguli, while the two men next to them clean a brown car of the same make, a depiction that draws on the idea of tinkering as a niche for male friendship. In contrast to the repair scene in *Liebe Mauer*, the situation is calm and relaxed. As two of the men wash the car to ensure both its functioning and appealing aesthetics, they demonstrate a kind of attachment to the car that Roland Barthes has likened to romantic love.[102] This bond between vehicle and owner can also adopt the qualities of the relationship between family members, as Mimi Sheller writes,[103] a

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[100] In *Der Turm*, tinkering appears in the very first scene when Christian Hoffmann returns home and greets a neighbour who repairs his car late in the evening. In *Das Wunder von Berlin*, tinkering becomes visible by looking through Anja's window in her room in halls. In neither case, it is part of the plot or narrative.
[101] Möser, 'Autobasteln', p. 163.
[102] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (St. Albans: Paladin, 1973), p. 90.
[103] Sheller, 'Automotive Emotions', p. 233.

theme that the film *Go Trabi Go* explored in detail. By naming his Trabant 'Schorsch' and displaying a great amount of care towards it, protagonist Udo Struutz displays almost fatherly feelings for his car.

Throughout the case study films and museums, tinkering appears as a strictly male pastime. Although women are not often portrayed in the roles of drivers or mechanics, we see them involved in car culture as passengers. For Corinna Kuhr-Korolev, the place in the passenger seat gives women always a passive role as opposed to the active role of men as drivers.[104] An examination of the filmic case study representations of female passengers, however, reveals that Kuhr-Korolev's conclusion is perhaps too simplistic. In the film case studies, female passengers show varying degrees of activeness. The rather passive Maria Steiner in *Go West* listens silently to the flirtatious attempts of Frank Korbach, while sitting next to her father in their first generation Wartburg. Although she does not reciprocate Frank's romantic interest, she does not speak up and instead remains passive. In *Westwind*, the passiveness of the twin sisters as passengers can be explained by political rather than gender-related reasons. Sitting in the backseats of a VW Beetle with two West German teenagers in the front, Isabel and Doreen realise the danger of their close contact with the ideological enemy. While Doreen becomes chattier during the course of the journey, thus indicating her romantic interest, Isabel stays quiet. Her passiveness is an expression of cultural and political suspicion towards the West Germans rather than the fact that she is a woman in the back seat of a car with a male driver. This is underpinned by Isabel's more open and outgoing interactions with the East German males at the sports camp.

The most involved female passenger in the filmic case studies is Barbara Wolff in *Barbara*. In contrast to the uninvolved conversation making and cautious body language of Maria Steiner and Isabel, Barbara takes a much more active role in the car, for instance by instructing driver André Reiser to immediately stop the car, when he reveals information about Barbara that only a Stasi collaborator can have. As her relationship to André becomes closer over the course of the film, Barbara becomes an even more active passenger. During their last journey together, the only one that Barbara has instigated herself, she starts a conversation immediately, asking why André would help the dying wife of Stasi officer Schütz.[105] As opposed to the first scene, when Barbara escapes both the conversation and the car after suspecting André's connection to the Stasi, she asks him directly about this topic, thus showing

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[104] Kuhr-Korolev, 'Women and Cars in Soviet and Russian Society', pp. 188–89.
[105] A more detailed discussion of the scene can be found in section 3.2.

her confidence. The fact that the passenger does not steer the car herself does not automatically lead to passiveness during a car journey. As Barbara shows, the interactions between driver and passenger are an important part of the driving experience.[106] Here, the passenger can adopt a very active role by giving the driver instructions and leading the conversations, which empowers her in both her role passenger and woman.

The filmic and museal depictions of transport in the GDR not only construct gender through their relationship to the car but also by their choice of other means of transport. While women use public transport or cycle, men prefer motorcycles. Marco Kaiser in *Das Wunder von Berlin* is the most interesting motorcyclist in these films. The motorcycle represents attributes such as 'rebelliousness, freedom, independence from social expectations and conventions', as Elizabeth Hirschman has noted in particular for the Harley-Davidson.[107] Although Marco's *MZ ETZ 125* – a motorcycle with 125cm^3 and 10.2 PS – does not have the cultural status of the infamous American motorbike, it embodies both the opposition to his father Jürgen Kaiser and his masculinity. He takes his new girlfriend Anja for a ride on the MZ, which shows his masculine qualities, a display that proves successful, as the couple first have sex with each other at the end of the date.

Gender politics around motorcycles is also a prevailing theme in the *DDR Museum im Kino* in Malchow. Here, mastering a motorcycle is depicted as a sign of male superiority over women and the museum uses six eyewitness accounts to support this. While the five quotations written by men emphasise the excitement of motorcycling, the only story by a female highlights how dangerous it is and how naïve she and her husband were as young parents for riding the motorbike with their toddler but without helmets. Although this account merely hints at the link between danger and daring behaviour and masculinity, some of the other memories are more explicit about it. The eyewitnesses define masculinity as an inherent understanding of technology that women generally lack. One father blames his daughter for not knowing how to accelerate a *Schwalbe* moderately, which resulted in her falling off the scooter while the father was teaching her how to drive. Another male commentator complains about his wife's behaviour as a passenger after he lost control of the motorcycle because she turned around in a bend: 'Dabei weiß doch jeder, dass man sich nicht umzudrehen hat und sich in den Kurven

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[106] Robert Mather, 'Social Cognitive Human Factors of Automobile Driving', in *Road Traffic: Safety, Modeling, and Impacts*, ed. by Sophie Paterson and Lucy Allan (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2009), pp. 385–401 (p. 387).
[107] Elizabeth Hirschman, *Branding Masculinity: Tracing the Cultural Foundations of Brand Meaning* (New York and London: Routledge, 2016), p. 41.

mit dem Fahrer reinlegt'. In both cases, the male drivers use the failings of the females to confirm their status both as motorcyclists and a man in general.[108] This attitude shows similarities with the perception of the relationship between gender and motorcycling in western cultures.[109] Therefore, these accounts help to establish common narratives between East and West in order to normalise memory of transport in the GDR according to the Western standard.

While the film *Das Wunder von Berlin* and the museum in Malchow portray the motorcycle as a means of transport preferred by men, specifically male teenagers, young females, such as Reina Kossmann in *Der Turm* or Giesela in *Sushi in Suhl*, show a preference for cycling. Both of them use the bicycle on an everyday basis, as we see them cycle to work in the case of Giesela or university in the case of Reina. This affinity with the bike is not an expression of environmentalism in what Rachel Aldred calls 'cycling citizenship',[110] but rather a consequence both of gendered use of different modes of transport and the economic situation in the GDR. Since the number of cars made available to the population remained low throughout the history of the GDR,[111] large groups of citizens had to find alternatives to car travel. With its vision of the model socialist city, which guaranteed short distances to amenities and work, the GDR leadership also attempted to abolish the need for cars almost altogether.[112] John Pucher's statistics on the modal split in differently sized cities shows that, in particular, in rural areas and small towns, this led to an increased use with up to 29% of journeys made by bike.[113] However, both films and museums slightly underrepresent cycling. Only the three museums in Pirna, Apolda and Perleberg feature at least one model for men and women each. In contrast to cars, there is little issue with sufficient exhibition space when displaying bicycles. As Jonathan Bach argues, private museums of everyday life in the GDR have a distinct material focus.[114] Considering the status of cars during socialist times as a luxury good,[115] and their newly gained status as classic vehicles, the museums' focus on motorised vehicles, in particular cars, appears to reflect a continued sense of high status around them. Both the higher monetary and ideational value of cars makes them, thus, more popular exhibition choices than bicycles.

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[108] Ulf Mellström, 'Machines and Masculine Subjectivity: Technology as an Integral Part of Men's Life Experiences', *Men and Masculinities*, 6.4 (2004), pp. 368-82 (p. 379).
[109] Hirschman, *Branding Masculinity*, p. 43.
[110] Rachel Aldred, ''On the outside': constructing cycling citizenship', *Social and Cultural Geography*, 11.1 (2010), 35–52 (p. 35).
[111] Zatlin, 'The Vehicle of Desire', p. 364.
[112] Eli Rubin, 'Understanding a Car in the Context of a System: Trabants, Marzahn, and East German Socialism', in *The Socialist Car: Automobility in the Eastern Bloc,* ed. by Lewis Siegelbaum (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011), pp. 124–40 (p. 137).
[113] Pucher, 'Modal shift in Eastern Germany', p. 8.
[114] Bach, 'Collecting Communism', p. 142.
[115] Pucher and Buehler, *Transport Policies in Central and Eastern Europe*, p. 35.

The museum in Pirna is a slight exception here, as the number of cars, motorbikes and bicycles is almost equal. This retrospective bias for cars is also present in the literature with the vast majority of scholarly interest in car culture.[116]

While economic factors and urban infrastructure in the GDR explain the popularity of cycling in the GDR in general, they do not provide reasons for female bike use in the case study films. Looking at the history of cycling, Ellen Gruber Garvey notes that the bike 'offered [women] freer movement in new spheres, outside the family and home'.[117] Although this observation is from the 1890s, the bike's legacy as embodying female freedom persisted. Barbara Wolff in *Barbara* and Beate Korbach in *Go West* represent this idea, as the bike is a tool for them to gain independence, as previously discussed in section 5.2. Beate Korbach, in particular, lacks assertiveness and appears as a rather obedient wife, however, the bike enables her to follow her own agenda and hide her actions from her husband. In doing so, she stands up both against her patriarchal husband and the Stasi, for which she works. Her character is thus very much in contrast to most of the men who work for the Stasi and drive a Zhiguli. Although Barbara Wolff is not married, using the bicycle enhances her independence and is an expression of her autonomy.

The depiction of male cyclists, who are all notorious motorists, in the filmic case studies, on the other hand, portrays them as rather unexperienced bike users. In *Go West,* Kurt Korbach, Stasi officer and husband of Beate, mounts his bicycle after he has been called for an emergency and his Wartburg Tourist has disappeared from the garage. As this was the family car, he has no other option than to take the bike. Only through the absence of the car, the bicycle becomes meaningful to Korbach, whose rather unskilful cycling indicates that he is not a regular cyclist. Similarly, in *Barbara*, the passionate motorist André only cycles on one occasion when he tries to impress Barbara. In his quest to gain Barbara's trust, and ultimately her heart, André cycles home from work together with her. In order to bond with Barbara on a more personal level rather than just professionally, he invites her to a trip to the coast. Barbara declines, however, as she is suspicious of André's intentions; he has suggested cycling to the very spot where she has hidden the money for her escape agent. Consequently, her initial positive response to André's romantic gesture turns into fear. The image of André on a bike

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[116] These scholars include Jonathan Zatlin, Eli Rubin and Kurt Möser.
[117] Ellen Gruber Garvey, 'Reframing the Bicycle: Advertising-Supported Magazines and Scorching Women', *American Quarterly*, 47.1 (1995), 66–101 (p. 72).

reveals his lack of real enthusiasm for cycling, as he struggles to keep his balance.[118]

Interestingly, the films that depict female cyclists and their liberation through the bike question male skilfulness in cycling. The narrative here is a reversal of that concerning the male motorcycle enthusiast, who complains that women lack the understanding to drive such a vehicle. Through the use of negative and positive gender bias in the portrayal of certain means of transport, traffic is being remembered in visual culture as an area of everyday life in the GDR that was heavily structured by gender roles. The car, in contrast, is portrayed as a mode of transport for both sexes, despite the greater number of male drivers. East German female car culture in general has recently gained more attention from visual culture, in particular films. The character of Barbara, in particular, shows that the solely passive role, which Kuhr-Korolev has observed for Soviet female passengers,[119] is not how female passenger in the GDR are remembered in German visual media. For women drivers, driving cars becomes an expression of independence, as they negotiate the concept of womanhood and their status in East German society. Occasionally, however, attempts to normalise women drivers in film are symptomatic of a trend towards shaping our image of the past according to contemporary societal standards. In this context, the marginalisation of women in museal depictions of car culture and mending in the GDR, equally illustrates the continued division between perceived female and male realms of everyday life. They further highlight that socialist ideology of gender equality is remembered as propaganda rather than reality.

5.5 Conclusion

Analysing depictions of transport in the museal and filmic case studies has revealed the way in which post-ostalgic remembrance reimagines this realm to depict a more pluralistic image of everyday life in East Germany. The most prolific memory icon in the realm of transport throughout the 1990s and early 2000s has been the Trabant. Visual culture has recently reframed this meaning of the Trabant through the means of post-ostalgic remembrance, as films and exhibitions portray a wider range of cars and, indeed, other means of transport available in the East. In most of the filmic case studies, the Trabant has moved from the foreground, i.e. the car of the protagonists, into the background as the car of supporting characters or as part of the mise-en-scène. Instead, the East German Wartburg and the Soviet Lada Zhiguli have become

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[118] Debbie Pinfold has noted that Ronald Zehrfeld, the actor playing André Reiser, has a 'teddy bear like' appearance, which helped to embody the character of Reiser. Pinfold, 'The end of the fairy-tale'.
[119] Kuhr-Korolev, 'Women and Cars in Soviet and Russian Society', p. 190.

memory icons for the GDR. Their presence is accompanied by particular narratives; the Wartburg is presented as the car of the middle or upper classes in the East, therefore embodying social distinction within East Germany society. Since many of the films discussed here centre-stage the intellectual, economic and political elite of the GDR as their main characters, their privileged position within East German society is expressed through their car. The Lada Zhiguli, in contrast, has entered cultural memory of the GDR as the car of the Stasi, culminating in depictions such as in *Barbara*, where the mere image of this car expresses the presence of the Stasi. Other narratives around the Zhiguli, such as that of a luxury vehicle, are rare in the case studies as the car carries the stigma of the secret police.

This chapter has also found that depictions of transport drive forward a 'normalisation' of the GDR in German cultural memory in various ways. The case study films and museums engage critically with the question of a distinct East German identity and mostly reject this idea by exploring broader issues of belonging and home. Journeys through the GDR or the Eastern Bloc are depicted as renegotiations of home, which is either accepted or rejected, left behind for West Germany or idealised in diaspora. This latter narrative is a metaphor for 'ostalgic' longing and a criticism of the illusory image that 'ostalgia' has created of the GDR. This highlights the decline of identity-establishing 'ostalgia', while reflective 'ostalgia' persists. 'Normalisation' also means, as this chapter has illustrated, that transport in the East is portrayed as similar to that in the West. The case studies reimagine transport as a highly gendered area of everyday life, where women prefer non-motorised modes of transport, while men opt for cars and motorcycles as an expression of their masculinity. Travelling and car culture are narrative devices for female liberation and empowerment within East German society. For men, the make of car is representative of their economic and professional status in the GDR. These narratives underpin a normalised view of East German transport culture, as they draw on Western understandings of gender and class. The dominant role of contemporary car culture in united Germany has equally informed cultural memory of the GDR in visual culture.

Westernisation of memory of the GDR is also evident in the depiction of the distribution of various modes of transport in the case studies. Although films and museums have started to incorporate a broader variety of both public and private means of transport, they largely keep their focus on the car. While most of the museums physically display cars, bicycles, and motorbikes, the accompanying texts and documents demonstrate a bias towards the car, which is largely a result of a materialistic way of thinking that favours the car over other means of transport due to its monetary value, status, and size. The bias towards cars in films, however,

represents a retrospectively distorted view of East German transport culture that is influenced by contemporary western car culture in the Federal Republic and the United States. Thus, 'normalisation' of everyday life in the GDR in the German memory canon is, at least in parts, an assimilation of narratives of contemporary living standards in united Germany into memory of the former East.

This chapter has found that representations of transport in films and museums serve as a mirror of intra-societal relationships between East Germans and the GDR state, as well as inter-societal relationships between East and West Germans. By exploring these relationships, the case studies aim to distinguish between the oppressive East German state and the ways in which GDR citizens responded to the political and economic circumstances in their everyday lives. This approach to remembering the GDR follows the recommendations of the *Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption*. The depictions of relationships between East and West Germans during division appear to be informed by contemporary efforts to promote a united German national identity instead of retrospectively imagined East and West German identities.

6 Conclusion

After more than twenty-five years since the *Wende* and German unification, memory of East Germany has entered an era of post-ostalgia. More democratised, pluralistic and normalised readings of everyday life in the GDR are gradually replacing black and white binary narratives in German cultural memory. The dominating frameworks of *Stasiland* and *Ostalgie* of the 1990s and early 2000s have largely been dismantled over the past decade. Current political upheavals in German society throw a new light on the legacy of the GDR today. In particular, the European refugee crisis and the influx of vast numbers of asylum seekers have exacerbated political discontent in the former East. Many political commentators, including the *Ost-Beauftragte* of the third Merkel cabinet, Iris Gleicke, and *Spiegel Online* journalist Stefan Berg, have sought to explain the often xenophobic and partly violent responses of some east Germans to the refugee crisis through their sense of displacement in the Federal Republic.[1] German media have linked the attacks on asylum seekers in Bautzen, Potsdam, Freital, Heidenau and Chemnitz, among other cities, between 2015 and 2017 to the racist aggressions of 1991 in Hoyerswerda and 1992 in Rostock-Lichtenhagen to suggest that the mentality of the early *Wende* period was still prevalent in the former east. Hence, the public debate about these incidents has quickly turned to the question of how well former East Germans have integrated into the democratic system of united Germany. Complicating the process of integration is the issue of a distinct East German identity and the question whether it ultimately exists. As the regular recurrence of this debate around the anniversaries of the Peaceful Revolution demonstrates, memory politics surrounding the GDR are a highly contested public field in contemporary Germany.

The 2008 *Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption des Bundes* has marked a watershed in the official stance on remembrance of the GDR. After years of neglecting everyday life in the East, the *Fortschreibung* incorporated the realm of the quotidian into state efforts to remember East Germany. Moving beyond the false assumption that the everyday was a vessel for politically unwanted nostalgia,[2] this revised state approach to GDR remembrance now considers the realm of the quotidian to offer a space in which to negotiate the identification

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[1] Antje Sirleschtov, '"Die Wahrheit ist bitter, aber muss ausgesprochen werden"', *Tagesspiegel*, 18 October 2016, <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/fremdenfeindlichkeit-in-ostdeutschland-die-wahrheit-ist-bitter-aber-muss-ausgesprochen-werden/14701898.html> [accessed 31 October 2017]; Stefan Berg, 'Das Erbe der DDR', *Spiegel*, 3 October 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/hass-auf-fluechtlinge-das-erbe-der-ddr-a-1114910.html> [accessed 31 October 2017]

[2] Arnold-de Simine, 'The Spirit of an Epoch', p. 100.

with and cultural memory of East Germany. Due to the significance of the *Fortschreibung*, the years around its publication in 2008 have served as a starting point for the selection of case studies in this thesis.

Reimagined representations in popular culture have played a pivotal role in the process of negotiating German cultural memory of the GDR and incorporating everyday life into public remembrance of East Germany, and displayed an understanding of the GDR that goes beyond the hegemonic concept of *Stasiland* and the counter-mnemonic *Ostalgie*. The heated public and academic debates concerning the portrayal of the GDR in the blockbuster films *Sonnenallee*, *Good Bye, Lenin!* and, most notably, *Das Leben der Anderen* have illustrated the scrutiny, which the German public applies to mediated memory of the East. In the academic sphere, recent publications on the subject, such as Kerstin Langwagen's 2016 volume on museal representations and Yvonne Weihrauch's 2015 monograph on filmic portrayals of the GDR, confirm the lasting academic interest in the GDR and its memory.[3] Contrary to Stefan Heym's assessment of the GDR as a footnote of history, this ongoing negotiation of how to remember the former East highlights its continued relevance for the self-understanding of the unified Federal Republic in its effort to work through its difficult twentieth century past.

Following the reappraisal of everyday life in the GDR, museums and films have more recently used the quotidian in order to explore particular aspects of East German society, its inherent social, political and economic hierarchies and power struggles. They have offered a point of departure for discussions about how the dictatorship infiltrated every aspect of its citizens' lives, and thus affected people on an everyday basis, as politics and everyday life were closely intertwined. Previously, many scholars looked at reimagined spaces of everyday life in the GDR, in particular in private museums, as expressions of folklore or 'Requisiten des Heimischen'.[4] Rereading these spaces in films and museums, however, as microcosms of East German society, has highlighted their mnemonic meaning beyond nostalgia. The portrayal of everyday life in the GDR in museums and films explores the relationships between individuals as well as the relationship between the state and its citizens. The three dominant narratives in this area are state control, and deviance or adaptation as typical responses of citizens.

This thesis has explored the continuous process of negotiating the significance and perception of the GDR in German cultural memory. In contrast to many scholars, including Langwagen and Weihrauch, who have concentrated on one type of memory medium, this study

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[3] Langwagen, *Die DDR im Vitrinenformat*.
[4] Ibid., p. 114.

has adopted Christoph Vatter's approach to consider cultural memory as a result of various mediated representations and cultural productions. Therefore, a central concern of this project has been to apply a comparative approach to remembrance of the GDR in museums and films to identify and connect shifts in our understanding of the socialist past and memory thereof. The thesis has drawn on the writings of international, notably British and American, scholars on East Germany that offer an outside and, arguably, less emotionally-charged view of German history and memory. For a deeper understanding of the role of the museum and film case studies in shaping memory, examining the relationship between remembering and forgetting and the visible and invisible has proved crucial. It highlights how we use images to remember by reading them as mnemonic texts. The everyday has become a framework for the depiction of wider themes and issues concerning socialist society. These depictions have introduced new memory narratives and icons, and renegotiated established ones to foster a more balanced image of the GDR in German cultural memory. The mnemonic processes contributing to a more diversified German memory landscape in this context are part of a broader development that this study has named post-ostalgia.

6.1 Visibility and Invisibility – Remembering and Forgetting in Visual Culture

Reading films and museums as stagings of objects that tell narratives about the past has enabled a comparative approach to these two types of visual media and the way in which they portray former East Germany. Bringing museums and films together has connected various theories around visual culture and memory. Scholars have deemed visibility crucial for remembering, whereas a lack of visibility promotes processes of forgetting, an idea that Aleida Assmann has framed through the concepts of canon and archive – or functional and storage memory. However, the analysis of museum and film case studies has found that the relationship between visibility and remembering is more complex than Assmann suggests. In the painstakingly reimagined living spaces and exhibition shelves that we see in films and museums, a great number of objects are at least partially hidden or sometimes entirely obscured. This impaired visibility complicates Assmann's distinction between functional and storage memory. Therefore, this thesis has argued that despite being on camera or in an exhibition, some objects are more hybrid, as they fall between functional and storage memory. They blend into a mise-en-scène, serving as a decorative element in the background of a display or film setting. In this way, they enhance the historical image of the reimagined quotidian space rather than acting as meaningful individual objects with individual narratives, i.e. memory icons. The case studies

have shown this most prominently in the area of cars, where the Trabant has moved to the background in favour of the Wartburg. Depending on their experiential knowledge, film viewers and museumgoers may overlook these artefacts, impeding remembering and fostering forgetting. In contrast, objects positioned in the foreground or filmed in focus can fully serve the purpose of functional memory, as they catch the attention of spectators and can be recognised and appreciated as stand-alone artefacts.

Visual culture enhances processes of remembering and forgetting of individual artefacts and narratives not only through their position in the foreground and background, but also via the frequency of being visible. A change in how often an object is on display or on camera can indicate the mechanisms of remembrance. In Jan Assmann's terms of 'hot' and 'cold' memory, objects and narratives can warm up from being passively remembered to being actively remembered if they are visible more often. This is evident in the case studies and their depiction of items of clothing, such as military uniforms or punk attire. Similarly, artefacts and stories can cool down if they are less frequently visible, which this analysis has shown is the case for former East German food brands. Both factors of frequency and positioning of objects in a mise-en-scène have been crucial in recent processes to diversify and shift memory icons and narratives of everyday life in East Germany in order to normalise cultural memory of the former GDR in a post-ostalgic direction.

The comparative approach to museum exhibitions and films has revealed fundamental differences pertaining to the way in which they enable us to view objects. Films make visible what the museum cannot; with the help of moving images, they are able to portray objects in motion and thus not only illustrate the context in which an object is used but also re-enact it. When actors handle objects within a mise-en-scène, they re-enact specific memory narratives and populate both the reimagined space and time. In the case studies, we can see this most significantly in the area of modes of transport precisely because of their purpose to move. Although films can show artefacts in action, the angle in which the action is shot determines the view of the spectator. This leaves little room for viewers to imagine the past more individually beyond these mediated memories. Accompanied by emotive stories, re-enactment of the past in film can visualise emotions. This may lead viewers to engage more emotionally with the past and thus prosthetic memories can emerge, potentially overwriting the personal memories of experiential generations and creating memory of the GDR for non-experiential generations. The filmic case studies draw vastly on emotive engagement with the past by emphasising the moral and ethical dilemmas of East Germans caused by the Stasi and other

state authorities. This reminds viewers of the complexities of victimhood and perpetration, and thus offers a starting point for reflections on ways of coping with the dictatorship.

An object on display in an exhibition, by contrast, is static and the visitor may have to imagine its movement. The visitor is, however, able to change the angle in which she looks at an object and thus decides on the direction and the speed of her gaze within the limitations of an exhibition. Similar to film, objects in museums are portrayed within a particular context, however, the reimagined space and time is uninhabited. Although re-enactment is a familiar tool in the museum sphere, in particular in folk museums, none of the museal case studies uses this form of mediated remembrance. Instead, they use mannequins to occupy their displays. Mark Sandberg's exploration of the effect of mannequins on remembering in the museum have found that, despite their physical presence that populates reimagined spaces, they are a reminder of the historical absence of those who inhabited the space in the past. This thesis finds that the *missing-person-effect* reminds the visitors of GDR museums that the past has gone and will not return. Where museums leave out mannequins, they invite visitors to mentally inhabit the space and fill it with their own memories or imagination, leaving room for individual remembering for experiential generations. Although museums equally enable prosthetic memories according to Landsberg, the case study exhibitions rarely offer the 'experiential' elements – where visitor have a bodily experience of the exhibition –, which Landsberg deemed crucial for prosthetic remembering at the museum. Therefore, an emotive connection to the past through static objects of anonymous former owners is unlikely to occur. The museal case studies, instead, utilise the potential of biographical memories to link objects to the life stories of individuals, which, this thesis has argued, enables visitors to connect in a more personal way to the past and thus allows for prosthetic remembrance.

This thesis has found that despite the conceptual differences between films and museums in the way that they visualise their readings of the past, they enable both remembering and forgetting. Contrary to Marcel Proust's assertion that images cannot trigger 'genuine' remembering, this study draws the conclusion that films and museum exhibitions not only allow for individual remembering; they also provide a space where cultural memory unfolds and is shaped.

6.2 *Post-ostalgic* Remembrance of East Germany in Visual Culture

As this thesis has shown, three general trends characterise post-ostalgia, namely a democratisation of agency in the formation of cultural memory of the GDR, a pluralisation of memory narratives and icons, as well as a 'normalisation' of the East in comparison to the West. Post-ostalgia enables a more democratic remembering of the GDR through three main developments. Firstly, it incorporates an ever-increasing number of biographical memories that challenge the dominant idea of the 1990s of standardised East German biographies. Biographic memory has become a fruitful source for filmic engagement with East Germany, as the four case studies *Sushi in Suhl*, *Das Wunder von Berlin*, *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie* and *Westwind* demonstrate. Although highly dramatised, they represent different experiences of everyday life in the GDR, which vary from adaptation – or deviation from – the socialist system, the urge to leave and/or return to the GDR, either for political reasons or for love. Similarly, in the museum sphere, the exhibitions *Alltag in der DDR* in Berlin and *DDR-Museum im Kino* in Malchow include biographical memories in conjunction with objects. The Berlin exhibition, in particular, highlights the memory politics at play when biographic stories are mediated. As biographic memory in visual media has been filtered through a selection process, they serve a specific mnemonic agenda, such as an affirmative function for established cultural narratives of the GDR. This recent investment in individual biographies and memories in the museums and films renders them valuable within the German memory canon. By including biographical stories, films and museums also fulfil the important function of collecting eyewitness stories while the experiential generations are still alive. When these individual accounts of life in the GDR, which rely on oral narration to avoid oblivion, become accessible to a public audience through films and museum exhibitions, the boundaries between communicative and cultural memory blur. These biographic memories become hybrids, as they adopt features of both forms: a shared characteristic with communicative memory is that these biographic memories concern the everyday, whereas their symbolic meaning for broader issues of GDR memory and visibility in exhibitions and films as public platforms mark elements of cultural memory.

Secondly, looking at non-blockbuster films and localised museums has shown their meaning as crucial platforms to negotiate cultural memory of the GDR. Museums and films at the margins appear to have greater freedom to interpret the past due to fewer societal and political control mechanisms. The privately run museums receive little or no state funding if their representation of the GDR does not comply with the politically desired memory narratives

of the GDR. Instead, these museums aim to attract visitors as they rely on entrance fees to remain afloat. Half of the case study films are small cinema releases with a maximum of 100,000 viewers, allowing them greater artistic freedom in the portrayal of the GDR. The TV productions, which form part of the process of 'eventisation' of German history in film,[5] have a greater scope for interpreting the GDR past, as 'breaking taboos' about the German past has been an important feature of the success of such eventisised films

Both museums and films have pushed forward regional diversity. While the films *Sonnenallee* and *Good Bye, Lenin!* were set in East-Berlin, thus limiting the GDR to its capital, the eight filmic case studies in this thesis include settings in Dresden, Suhl, Erfurt, the coastal region in the north of the former GDR, the Lake Balaton region, Brandenburg/Havel and Berlin for only two of the films. This geographical diversification has allowed plots to go beyond the thematisation of the inner-German border, and instead explore issues of everyday life in non-urban spaces, the periphery and other borders between the Eastern Bloc and the West. Particularly the films *Sushi in Suhl*, *Barbara* and *Go West* highlight the complexities of rural life, including issues with the supply of goods, pressure to adapt to a certain clothing style and problems with transport. Since the majority of East Germans lived outside the capital, these depictions represent the everyday lives of a much larger group of former East Germans and are thus a point of potential identification for them. This is likely to prevent discontent with the way in which the GDR is being remembered in visual culture.

The vast majority of museum case studies are located in peripheral locations. They have found different ways of connecting their exhibitions to the region in which they are situated. The *DDR Museum* in Pirna, for instance, dedicates a portion of its space to the theme of agriculture because of the region's former importance in producing harvesting machinery. The *Geschichtsmuseum* Perleberg hosts monthly public debates, in which local and regional issues pertaining to remembrance of the GDR are discussed. The *Olle DDR* in Apolda features the reimagined office of the former local SED official. Since these museums are run by locals who have started with their own collections, local reference is clearly present in these institutions, although not always explicit. Recognising these themes helps to de-homogenise the group of privately-run museums and instead highlight their individual readings of East Germany. Regionalisation will become more important for the private museums in future, as Frank Müller from the museum in Thale has realised. Situated in a hotspot for hikers and recreational tourists,

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[5] Cooke, 'Reconfiguring the National Community Transnationally', p. 550.

the *DDR Museum* in Thale has the potential to cater for those visitors who are more interested in the history of the town and the region than the GDR, according to Müller. In light of the growing importance of tourism in the post-*Wende* deindustrialised regions where the majority of museum case studies are situated, they have become important not only for remembering East Germany but also to serve their regions in attracting both German and international tourists. As the phenomenon of GDR tourism persists, the museum directors are aware of the necessity to provide a unique selling point that sets their institutions apart from others.

A more differentiated engagement with the 'Alltagsmuseen' highlights a third area in which post-ostalgia democratises cultural memory of the former East. These exhibitions have been initiatives from below, which offer deeply personalised understandings of both division and unification. This thesis has found that looking at these institutions as a homogenous group is too simplistic. With its comparative approach to six such museums, this project showed that they are not as easily exchangeable as scholars, such as Kerstin Langwagen or Irmgard Zündorf, suggest. On the contrary, this analysis concludes that the exhibition strategy and overall mission of the individual museums largely depend on the personal experiences of the museum directors in the GDR, their integration into society of unified Germany and their personal motives. Persecution in the GDR led the directors of the museum in Perleberg, for instance, to their rather critical interpretation of the GDR. In this institution, as well as at *Lernort Demokratie* in Pforzheim, educating non-experiential generations, in particular teenagers, is the dominant aim of their exhibitions. In other museums, commercial considerations play an equally important role. The directors of the museums in Apolda, Malchow and Thale mentioned during informal talks that tourism not only helped their museums to endure but was also one of the reasons for founding the institutions in the first place. The *DDR Museum* in Thale, in particular, embodies what Roberta Bartoletti calls 'memory tourism and the commodification of nostalgia',[6] as the exhibition helps to promote the town of Thale with tourists as well as the furniture store of the director, conveniently situated in the same building as the museum. This comparison demonstrates that private museums pertaining to the GDR by no means follow the 'Prinzip Wiederholung' as Kerstin Langwagen claims,[7] but are the result of individual actors of memory, here the museum directors, and their personal agendas. A close reading of privately-run museums also highlights both the thematic freedom and financial complexities of private museums. Although funding

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[6] Bartoletti, 'Memory Tourism', p. 23.
[7] Langwagen, *Die DDR im Vitrinenformat*, p. 111.

is available from the Federal government following the *Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption*, it depends on presenting everyday life in the GDR in the context of the dictatorship. By imposing this particular angle onto exhibitions in order to grant financial help, cultural politicians ensure a specific ideological agenda in remembering the GDR. For most private museums, including Apolda, Pirna and Thale, this is unacceptable, and consequently, they rely entirely on entrance fees, shop sales and – in the case of Pirna – Wartburg rentals to achieve financial sustainability. In resisting the pressure to present a specific reading of the GDR in exchange for funds, these museums highlight the importance of bottom-up remembering and thus contribute to a more democratic remembrance of the former East.

As a direct result of democratised efforts to remember the GDR, memory icons and narratives of everyday life in the socialist state have largely pluralised. Emerging memory icons and the re-contextualisation of established ones have brought memory narratives to the fore that have previously been in storage. At the same time, some memory narratives and icons appear to have moved into the background, which may instigate a process of forgetting. Concentrating on the three areas of food, clothing and transport has been particularly useful for examining individual artefacts and the mnemonic themes, which they transport. Since all three chosen areas relate to the body in some form – food enters the body, clothing covers the body and means of transportation move the body – they offer insights to the relationships between people and their environment. They also show how the everyday was shaped by politics, as exploring depictions of food, fashion and transport illustrates how the state intervened in these three concrete areas of everyday life and affected the social relationships between citizens in the GDR.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, East German food brands received much attention, epitomised by the film *Good Bye, Lenin!*. Recent films have ceased to explore the relationship between East Germans and their domestic food brands. Although most case study exhibitions continue to feature typical East German food brands, these have adopted a more passive mnemonic role within displays of over-stacked grocery stores. Rather than offering a point of departure for nostalgia for the material culture of the GDR, these displays engage with East German society and the themes of scarcity, bartering and privilege. Instead, depictions of commensality show the relationships between individuals, in particular within a family and between women and men. The theme of scarcity of certain food items highlights how the state's actions, here economic policies, directly affected its citizens. Scarce food and privileged access

to it, is subsequently depicted as a catalyst for social hierarchies and the class system in the GDR. Films, such as *Der Turm*, *Barbara*, *Das Wunder von Berlin*, *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie* and *Go West*, tell the stories of members of middle and upper classes in the GDR, who are economically, politically and academically privileged. In doing so, they deconstruct the idea of the GDR as an egalitarian classless society. They emphasise the corrupt nature of state socialism that embraced the capitalist idea of privilege for its elites. Films portray the authoritarian political system as well as the planned socialist economy as causes of and influencing factors for the class system in the GDR. Some of the museums, notably the ones in Pirna and Perleberg, illustrate the privileged access to scarce goods for well-connected East Germans.

Looking at the realm of fashion has illustrated clothing's function to express belonging to or deviation from socialist society. In particular, the Eastern longing for Western fashion highlights citizens' power as consumers while the state fails in its role as the provider of desirable goods. A number of case studies thus engage with consumer culture and behaviour in the GDR. The films *Liebe Mauer* and *Der Turm*, in particular, explore the economic desires of East Germans in terms of clothing and food. Rather than merely perpetuating stereotypes of Eastern materialistic hunger for everything western, they use humour to challenge this notion or juxtapose different attitudes towards consumerism. Recently emerged memory icons include the *Dederon* smock, punk outfits and jeans, as they appear more frequently in reimaginings of everyday life than in the first fifteen years after unification. The *Dederon* smock, for instance, epitomises the elusive boundaries between the private and the public, as well as work and leisure, to illustrate the double burden of paid and unpaid labour for working class women in the GDR and the ways in which the state intervened in the quotidian of citizens. Punk clothing and jeans can tell the stories of how young people in the East managed the balancing act between adaption to socialist norms and individuality. In contrast to these newly emerging memory icons, the already established pioneer uniform has recently embodied a more differentiated reading of the pioneer organisations. While hegemonic remembrance of the 1990s unequivocally considered this item of clothing a symbol of forced socialist egalitarianism, the film and museum case studies interpret it in diverse ways. These include the pioneer uniform as a sign of numerous different values: community and socialist friendship (Pirna), militarised education (Perleberg), adaption to socialist norms in order to avoid disadvantages (Pforzheim), false sense of community (*Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie*) and a mere performative act to avoid career disadvantages (*Der Turm*). Using a comparative

approach to museums and films in this case highlights the process of diversification of narratives and the more pluralistic nature of post-ostalgic cultural memory of the GDR.

In the realm of transport, the case studies explore the car as a social space of intimacy and privacy in juxtaposition with the motorcycle and bicycle as more individualistic modes of transport. State power over its citizens is represented through surveillance and cars feature as facilitators of observation in the case studies. In these portrayals, the everyday reflects the effects of the dictatorship on the private lives of East German citizens, and their various coping strategies ranging from adjustment to rebellion. Recent portrayals of transport in the GDR have started to incorporate a broader range of vehicles, in particular the bicycle and motorcycle as highly gendered means of transport. This reflects historical data of the modal split in East Germany much more than the previous focus on the car, specifically the Trabant. This iconic object has gradually moved from the foreground into the background of depictions of East German transport culture, which epitomises its decreasing importance as a memory icon. In a parallel development, both the East German Wartburg and the Soviet Lada Zhiguli have gained importance as vehicles in the GDR. The Lada has become an epitome of the Stasi and a visual sign of the organisation's presence. With the increased visibility of the Wartburg as a more advanced car, visual culture challenges the top-down memory culture of the 1990s that fetishised the Trabant as a symbol of East German technological and economic inferiority compared to the West, and thus promotes more balanced and nuanced readings of transport in the GDR. This emergence of new memory icons shows how visual culture contributes to pluralising cultural memory, as it places previously archived objects on display. However, it also fosters the archiving of objects from the canon. Therefore, post-ostalgia not only describes a partial diversification of memory but also a partial replacement of memory icons.

The trend to pluralise memory of the GDR with more nuanced and diverse memory narrative serves an overall 'normalisation' of East Germany within German cultural memory. By showing that East Germans maintained certain social standards similar to the West, some case studies attempt to convince audiences of the common ground between East and West Germans. In the three areas of food, clothing and transport, the case studies portray clear-cut gender roles in both private and public life that largely comply with those in the FRG. Women cook most of the food while men prepare the meat, men drive and mend cars while women prefer the bicycle, and women sew clothes while the military uniform expresses masculinity. Gendered mannequins mark spaces of everyday life, and thus the typical chores performed therein, as female or male in the museal case studies in Thale, Pirna and Apolda. Films, such

Das Wunder von Berlin or *Der Turm* not only illustrate this gendered division of labour; they also incorporate tested narratives of male infidelity and the fight between wife and mistress for the man's love. Thus, these representations depict the GDR's self-proclaimed gender equality as a myth, and emphasise society's similarities to the FRG in terms of cultural gender constructions. The East German consumer is represented as similar to her Western counterpart when the case studies over-represent car use and emphasise the material desires of GDR citizens for fashion and cars from the FRG. Lastly, generational and family conflicts, such as the defiance of teenagers against their parents rather than the state, provide a common trope for both east and west German audiences.

These attempts to highlight similarities between the social standards of East and West, suggest a trend towards 'normalisation' of the GDR in contemporary German cultural memory through 'westernisation'. Following Mary Fulbrook's general discussion of the concept of 'normalisation', the current reappraisal of memory of everyday life in the GDR is largely an approximation to the social and cultural norms of the West and mainly the FRG. Narratives in films and museums reimagine everyday life in the GDR based on western living standards. Thus, they highlight how present social norms and standards infiltrate memory and shape our understanding of the past. These depictions approximate the GDR to what is considered 'normal' today. This reading has moved away from the idea of East Germans as the 'other' Germans, while continuing to consider the GDR as the other Germany in terms of politics and the economy. This view represents the political agreement manifested in the *Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzept* that remembrance of the GDR should acknowledge the life achievements of East Germans even when criticising the GDR as a state. It allows for more nuanced reflections of individual biographies in the East and the broader engagement with the concepts of victimhood and perpetration.

When it comes to expectations, stereotypes and prejudices about the East and the West, Alexei Yurchak's concept of the *Imaginary West* has offered a conceptual framework for exploring an ideology-driven view of the other. It explains depictions of East Germans who aspire to the economic achievements of the West but at the same time reject the ideological stance of the FRG. Rather than merely reiterating the stereotypical perception of the FRG by East Germans, post-ostalgic remembrance in the case studies emphasises that West Germans equally encountered the East with prejudices that arose from Cold War indoctrination. The thesis has found that the concept of the *Imaginary West* is complemented by the *Imaginary East*, i.e. a set of stereotypical features imposed on the GDR by West Germans without

experiential knowledge of the East. During division, these helped to imagine the East as a constituting antithesis to and a means of legitimisation of the FRG. In the early post-*Wende* years, the binary images of the *Jammerossi* and the *Besserwessi* embodied and prolonged the opposing stereotypes. By juxtaposing these stereotypes in an often comical manner, the case studies expose their rootedness within the ideological framework of the Cold War and thus question their relevance for the contemporary German memory canon, and indeed the ongoing process of German integration.

The question of a distinct East German identity, which was widely debated in the 1990s and flares up annually around the anniversaries of the fall of the Wall and unification, is a key theme in post-ostalgic remembrance. Based on the idea of everyday objects as markers of national identity,[8] *Ostalgie* has been viewed as an attempt to construct an East German identity retrospectively, in which the material culture of the GDR becomes the dominant anchor for identification. More than a decade and a half after Patricia Hogwood predicted the temporary significance of *Ostalgie* and east German identity, her prognosis has proved correct. In 2016, Kerstin Langwagen spoke of an East German 'Nicht-Identität', which was based on the search for the collective self and its subsequent invention rather than an intrinsic sense of belonging to the GDR as a nation-state. This definition of the East German 'non-identity' confirms Hogwood's argument, as it refers to East Germany as an 'imagined community'. Instead, Langwagen continues, many former East Germans today identify through Western living standards and the FRG rather than the GDR.[9] Considering that identity is constituted both through the past as a source of self-assurance and through alterity to other cultures,[10] Langwagen's observation illustrates that the sentiment of alterity to western culture is missing from east Germans today. In the case studies, in particular the films, the idea of defining the East in relation to the West is a recurring narrative. Romantic relationships between partners from both sides of the Iron Curtain provide a vehicle for cultural comparison of East and West in the films *Westwind*, *Liebe Mauer*, *Barbara* and to a certain extent *Sushi in Suhl*. Rather than confirming stereotypes of the superior West and inferior East, these films use narrative means, such as irony or humour, to challenge them and in some cases reverse them. As they question

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[8] Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, p. 103.
[9] Langwagen, pp. 154–57.
[10] Vittoria Borsò, 'Einleitung', in *Medialität und Gedächtnis: Interdisziplinäre Beiträge zur kulturellen Verarbeitung europäischer Krisen*, ed. by Vittoria Borsò, Gerd Krumeich and Bernd Witte (Stuttgart and Weimar: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2001), pp. 9–20 (p. 19).

the alterity of East and West German identity, these films deconstruct the notion of a distinct East German identity, both in the past and the present.

Post-ostalgic remembrance and its democratised, pluralised and normalised view on everyday life in the GDR offers a more balanced understanding of life in the GDR for experiential and non-experiential generations alike. The case study analysis has shown that post-ostalgia marks neither the end of 'ostalgic' remembering nor an attempt to 'return to normality'.[11] It is less driven by the Cold War ideological divide than remembrance in the first decade after unification, in which the political and academic elite superimposed top-down memory of oppression onto unified German cultural memory of the East. In contrast, more democratic efforts that include bottom-up memory help to decolonise cultural memory East Germany. For former East Germans, in particular, this is a chance for atonement with public memory of the GDR and identification with the unified Federal Republic. Depicting a wider spectrum of possible experiences of life in the GDR through post-ostalgic remembering means that the personal memories of a larger group of former East Germans are represented in visual media. This recognition of their lives and memory thereof is something that many East Germans were missing from the top-down *Stasiland* and *Unrechtsstaat* doctrine propagated in the 1990s,[12] and which consequently fuelled an eastern *Trotzidentität* in some people.[13] Post-ostalgia in visual culture may thus help to inhibit the counter-mnemonic *Trotzidentität* and instead enable a better integration into united Germany society.

6.3 The Future of Remembering the GDR in Films and Museums

Amid the passing of the two milestone anniversaries of 25 years of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 2014 and 25 years of unification in 2015, engagement with the GDR in visual culture continues to thrive. 2017 saw the TV series *Der gleiche Himmel* – a spy drama across the border in Berlin that featured international stars such as Sofia Helin – and *Honigfrauen* – the story of two sisters travelling to lake Balaton where a family secret unfolds – as well as the cinema release of *In Zeiten des abnehmenden Lichts*[14] – a literary adaptation of the eponymous novel by Eugen Ruge. Two new GDR-themed museums have opened since 2016 to much journalistic

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[11] Mary Fulbrook, 'The Concept of ''normalisation'' and the GDR in Comparative Perspective', in *Power and Society in the GDR 1961-1979: The ''normalisation' of Rule'?*, ed. by Mary Fulbrook (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), pp. 1–30 (p. 14).
[12] Ahbe, 'Competing Master Narratives', p. 242.
[13] Maaz, 'Distanz, Enttäuschung, Haß', p. 36.
[14] *In Zeiten des abnehmenden Lichts*, dir. by Matti Geschonneck (MOOVIE the art of entertainment GmbH, 2017).

attention: the *N'Ostalgie Museum* in Leipzig,[15] and *Die Welt der DDR* in Dresden.[16] The latter notably offers an intriguing case study as it is based on the collection of the recently closed *DDR-Museum Zeitreise* in Radebeul, near Dresden. This new museum fuels debates about the commodification of memory, as it is run by Bavarian supermarket franchise owner Peter Simmel rather than an east German eyewitness. These examples highlight that memory of the GDR continues to be marketable, in particular with the added value of internationalisation, and new players still enter the mnemonic arena.

Established actors in the German memory scene, on the other hand, face the question of whether their reading of everyday life in the GDR is up-to-date with cultural and societal developments, as the museal case study *Lernort Demokratie* in Pforzheim exemplifies with its complete overhaul of its permanent exhibition in 2015. The *Zeitgeschichtliches Forum* in Leipzig, a branch of the *Haus der Geschichte* in Bonn, is currently revising its permanent exhibition that relied heavily on the narrative of juxtaposing the totalitarian and economically inferior East with the democratic and industrially advanced West. In order to emphasise the relevance of the history of division today, the permanent exhibition in Leipzig – currently concluding with unification – will in future include stories about 'Brüche in den Nachwendeerfahrungen' of East Germans.[17] Incorporating this new theme will raise awareness of the struggles of former East Germans after unification to adapt to the political and economic circumstances and offer a common narrative for unified Germany that links the past to the present.[18] This approach to understanding the GDR as part of German history rather than a separate thread that ran parallel to the West as the main strand is essential to a more nuanced future remembrance of the GDR.

In light of the filmic internationalisation of the GDR, with settings in other former Eastern Bloc countries or the FRG, an integration of the GDR into the wider memory of the Cold War is possible and desirable. While Hollywood recently discovered East Berlin as a fruitful setting of Cold War drama, for instance in *Bridge of Spies* (2015) or *Atomic Blonde* (2017), the majority of German museums continue to consider the GDR primarily as a domestic issue. In the international museum sphere, however, the GDR's legacy as a CMEA member

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[15] Andreas Tappert, ‚Ausstellung in Leipzig: Schöner, als die DDR jemals war', *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 18 July 2016, < http://www.lvz.de/Leipzig/Lokales/Ausstellung-in-Leipzig-Schoener-als-die-DDR-jemals-war> [accessed 4 September 20017]

[16] Sarah Grundmann, 'Das ist Simmels DDR-Welt', *Sächsische Zeitung*, 27 January 2017, < http://www.sz-online.de/nachrichten/das-ist-simmels-ddr-welt-3598693.html> [accessed 4 September 2017]

[17] Tobias Prüwer, 'An die Gegenwart heranrücken', *Kreuzer – Das Leipzig Magazin*, 1 April 2017, p. 18.

[18] Ibid., p. 19.

state has been remembered, notably at the *Wende Museum and Archive of the Cold War* in Culver City, California. This institution, which started with a collection of quotidian goods from East Germany, broadened its scope to the entire Eastern Bloc more than a decade ago, and has since actively collected items from across the CMEA.[19] Through political processes, such as European integration on the one hand, and disagreements between the European Union and its eastern European member states over issues such as the refugee crisis on the other hand, remembering the Cold War as a European and global conflict is vital. In future, more German films and museums, such as the *Spy Museum* Berlin, may engage with the GDR in the broader context of the Cold War.

Post-ostalgia is a complex yet versatile concept that has identified and linked three main processes in mediated cultural memory of the GDR beyond nostalgia for socialist Germany. Although it encompasses major developments of the past decade, it is also useful to describe future trends in remembering East Germany. As it promotes a comparative approach to various memory media, it is also open to literary texts or memorials to confirm and recognise trends in German cultural memory of the GDR. To remember is as much a negotiation of the present as it is a negotiation of the past. The current trend of normalising East Germany in visual media illustrates the desire for greater German-German integration in the present and future.

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[19] The Wende Museum and Archive of the Cold War, *History* (Culver City: The Wende Museum and Archive of the Cold War, 2017) https://www.wendemuseum.org/about-us/history [accessed 4 September 2017]

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