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# **Adaptation and Resistance**

**The impact of German unification on the living  
and working conditions of visual artists in Saxony  
and their response to transformation**

by  
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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## Table of content

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Illustrations .....</b>   | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>Abbreviations .....</b>   | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Acknowledgments .....</b>   | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Abstract .....</b>  | <b>8</b>  |
| <br>   |           |
| <b>1 Introduction .....</b>  | <b>9</b>  |
| 1.1 THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION .....  | 9         |
| 1.2 THE ORIGINS OF THE PROJECT .....   | 16        |
| 1.3 THE AIMS OF THE STUDY .....  | 18        |
| 1.4 VISUAL ARTISTS AND CULTURAL POLICY .....   | 20        |
| 1.5 TERMS, DEFINITIONS, LOCATIONS AND RESOURCES .....  | 22        |
| 1.6 THE STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY .....   | 28        |
| 1.7 METHODOLOGY .....  | 31        |
| 1.7.1 <i>General remarks</i> .....   | 31        |
| 1.7.2 <i>Data collection and analysis</i> .....  | 31        |
| 1.7.3 <i>The development of a grounded theory</i> .....  | 33        |
| 1.7.4 <i>Interviews</i> .....  | 35        |
| 1.7.5 <i>Problems with this approach</i> .....   | 37        |
| 1.7.6 <i>About the sample</i> .....  | 39        |
| 1.7.7 <i>Using grounded theory in the coding of qualitative data</i> .....                         | 40        |
| 1.7.8 <i>Validation</i> .....  | 44        |
| 1.7.9 <i>Conclusion</i> .....  | 46        |
| <br>   |           |
| <b>2 Arts policy of the German Democratic Republic .....</b>                                       | <b>47</b> |
| 2.1 INTRODUCTION .....   | 47        |
| 2.2 STRUCTURES OF ARTS POLICY IN THE GDR .....   | 51        |
| 2.2.1 <i>The leading bodies – the SED and the GDR government</i> .....                             | 51        |
| 2.2.2 <i>The Association of Visual Artists</i> .....   | 53        |
| 2.3 AIM CULTURE .....  | 59        |
| 2.4 ARTS POLICY DEVELOPMENTS .....   | 63        |
| 2.4.1 <i>The hopeful beginning - re-direction and founding principles from 1946 to 1949</i> .....  | 63        |
| 2.4.2 <i>The early days of the German Democratic Republic - 1949 to 1954</i> .....                 | 71        |
| 2.4.3 <i>The manifestation of the hard-line policy - 1954 to 1970</i> .....                        | 78        |
| 2.4.4 <i>The 1970s: from the years of hope to the ice age policy and the artists' niches</i> ..... | 89        |
| 2.4.5 <i>From 1980 to 1989 - the time of policy exhaustion</i> .....                               | 103       |
| 2.5 CONCLUSION .....   | 110       |

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>3 State Visual Arts Policy in Saxony after German Unification .....</b>   | <b>112</b> |
| 3.1 INTRODUCTION .....   | 112        |
| 3.2 THE LEGAL PRINCIPLES OF ARTS POLICY IN SAXONY .....  | 116        |
| 3.2.1 <i>The significance of legal principles for arts policy developments .....</i>   | <i>116</i> |
| 3.2.2 <i>The constitutions of the Federal Republic and the GDR.....</i>  | <i>116</i> |
| 3.2.3 <i>The unification treaty.....</i>   | <i>118</i> |
| 3.2.4 <i>The constitution of Saxony.....</i>   | <i>120</i> |
| 3.3 ARTS POLICY AIMS AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE.....   | 123        |
| 3.3.1 <i>Responsibilities for visual arts policy at the federal government of<br/>Germany .....</i>  | <i>123</i> |
| 3.3.2 <i>Funding structure and policy aims for the arts in Saxony .....</i>  | <i>128</i> |
| 3.3.3 <i>Dresden's cultural funding structure as an example of local arts policy<br/>.....</i>   | <i>131</i> |
| 3.4 VISUAL ARTS POLICY PRACTICE.....   | 132        |
| 3.4.1 <i>Federal government funding practice .....</i>   | <i>132</i> |
| 3.4.2 <i>State Funding of Saxon visual arts - programmes, guidelines and<br/>practice .....</i>  | <i>135</i> |
| 3.4.2.1 <i>Funding programmes.....</i>   | <i>135</i> |
| 3.4.2.2 <i>Funding criteria.....</i>   | <i>142</i> |
| 3.4.2.3 <i>Funding practice .....</i>  | <i>148</i> |
| 3.5 CONCLUSION .....   | 158        |
| <br>   |            |
| <b>4 The unification shock – visual artists' career developments from 1989 to 1994 .....</b>   | <b>160</b> |
| 4.1 INTRODUCTION .....   | 160        |
| 4.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES IN THE 1980S.....  | 162        |
| 4.3 THE “WENDE” AND ITS IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON VISUAL ARTISTS .....   | 168        |
| 4.4 DISCOVERY AND CONSTRAINTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET.....   | 171        |
| 4.5 THE SELL-OUT OF GDR ART BEFORE MONETARY REFORM .....   | 175        |
| 4.6 THE ARTISTS' UNIFICATION AFTERMATH.....  | 179        |
| 4.6.1 <i>The collapse of living and working conditions.....</i>  | <i>179</i> |
| 4.6.2 <i>Government support for visual artists.....</i>  | <i>182</i> |
| 4.6.3 <i>Changing position - The dual career artists.....</i>  | <i>183</i> |
| 4.6.4 <i>The artists' struggle with information and time .....</i>   | <i>186</i> |
| 4.7 CONCLUSION .....   | 192        |
| <br>   |            |
| <b>5 Coming to terms with the past and living in the present – artists' careers and<br/>arts policy development from 1994 to 2000.....</b> | <b>195</b> |
| 5.1 INTRODUCTION .....   | 195        |
| 5.2 THE OPPORTUNITIES OPEN TO OLDER ARTISTS .....  | 199        |
| 5.2.1 <i>Environmental changes between 1994 and 2000.....</i>  | <i>199</i> |
| 5.2.2 <i>Age discrimination? The forgotten senior artists.....</i>   | <i>201</i> |
| 5.2.3 <i>Career re-start after unification.....</i>  | <i>205</i> |
| 5.2.4 <i>Governmental support continues.....</i>   | <i>208</i> |
| 5.2.5 <i>Grumbling and discontent amongst older artists.....</i>   | <i>210</i> |
| 5.2.6 <i>The Stasi debate and State artists' confrontation.....</i>  | <i>220</i> |
| 5.2.6.1 <i>Artists' involvement with the Stasi .....</i>   | <i>221</i> |

|          |  |            |
|----------|--|------------|
| 5.2.6.2  | The “State artists” debate .....   | 224        |
| 5.3      | THE ”IN BETWEEN” SITUATION OF THE MIDDLE GROUP OF ARTISTS .....  | 235        |
| 5.4      | THE FREEDOM OF THE YOUNGER GENERATION .....  | 242        |
| 5.5      | CONCLUSION .....   | 247        |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Practice and theory - the behaviour of Saxon visual artists and theories of change .....</b>            | <b>250</b> |
| 6.1      | INTRODUCTION .....   | 250        |
| 6.1.1    | <i>Change as a phenomenon in society</i> .....   | 252        |
| 6.1.2    | <i>Change as a rationale for unification</i> .....   | 254        |
| 6.2      | CHANGES ON THE MACRO LEVEL - THE THEORY OF COLLECTIVE CULTURAL SHOCK .....                                 | 257        |
| 6.2.1    | <i>Visual artists and cultural shock theory</i> .....  | 257        |
| 6.2.2    | <i>Visual artists and the theory of collective cultural shock</i> .....                                    | 261        |
| 6.2.2.1  | Visual artists and the phases of collective cultural shock .....   | 263        |
| 6.2.2.2  | Phases one and two.....  | 264        |
| 6.2.2.3  | Cultural shock symptoms .....  | 268        |
| 6.2.2.4  | Phase three – mastering the collective cultural shock and adaptation....                                   | 274        |
| 6.2.2.5  | Phases four and five: stabilisation and normalisation .....  | 276        |
| 6.3      | CHANGES AT THE MICRO LEVEL - THE HUMAN CHANGE ROLE MODEL (HCRM) .....                                      | 279        |
| 6.3.1    | <i>Visual artists and organisational development</i> .....   | 279        |
| 6.3.2    | <i>The Schein/Lewin Human Change Role Model</i> .....  | 282        |
| 6.3.2.1  | Unfreezing .....   | 283        |
| 6.3.2.2  | Change .....   | 288        |
| 6.3.2.3  | Refreezing.....  | 292        |
| 6.4      | CHANGE AT MACRO AND MICRO LEVEL - THE VISUAL ARTISTS ADAPTATION MODEL .....                                | 294        |
| 6.4.1    | <i>Differences and similarities of the collective cultural shock and the human change role model</i> ..... | 294        |
| 6.4.2    | <i>Visual Artists Adaptation Model</i> .....   | 294        |
| 6.4.3    | <i>Visual Artists Adaptation Model for the older group of visual artists</i> .....                         | 296        |
| 6.4.4    | <i>Visual Artists Adaptation Model for the middle group of visual artists</i> .....                        | 297        |
| 6.4.5    | <i>Application of the Visual Artists Adaptation Model to other areas</i> .....                             | 298        |
| 6.5      | CONCLUSION .....   | 300        |
| <b>7</b> | <b>Visual artists, values and ideology .....</b>   | <b>302</b> |
| 7.1      | INTRODUCTION .....   | 302        |
| 7.2      | VALUES, SOCIALISATION THEORY AND VISUAL ARTISTS.....   | 304        |
| 7.2.1    | <i>Values</i> .....  | 304        |
| 7.2.2    | <i>Socialisation theory</i> .....  | 307        |
| 7.3      | IDEOLOGY.....  | 312        |
| 7.3.1    | <i>Aim culture and socialisation</i> .....   | 312        |
| 7.3.2    | <i>Marxist-Leninist ideology</i> .....   | 315        |
| 7.3.3    | <i>Ideology, truth and power</i> .....   | 320        |
| 7.4      | CONCLUSION .....   | 323        |

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| <b>8 Conclusion .....</b>   | <b>325</b>     |
| 8.1 INTRODUCTION .....  | 325            |
| 8.2 HOW HAS THIS STUDY CONTRIBUTED TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF VISUAL ARTISTS' RESPONSES TO THE CHALLENGE OF GERMAN UNIFICATION? ..... | 328            |
| 8.3 DOES THIS STUDY CONTRIBUTE TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHY THE OLDER VISUAL ARTISTS REACTED AS THEY DID? .....                     | 331            |
| 8.4 WHAT HAS THE STUDY CONTRIBUTED TO A GENERAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE BEHAVIOUR OF HUMAN BEINGS IN THE PROCESS OF CHANGE?.....     | 332            |
| 8.5 WHAT NEXT? .....  | 334            |
| <br><b>Bibliography.....</b>  | <br><b>338</b> |
| <b>Appendix.....</b>  | <b>355</b>     |
| A. ARTS POLICY IN THE GDR – A SELECTION OF EVENTS .....   | 355            |
| B. THE PATH TO GERMAN UNITY – LIST OF SELECTED EVENTS FROM 1989 TO 2000....   | 359            |
| .....   |                |

# **Illustrations**

## **List of Figures**

Figure 1: Structure of administration of arts policy in the GDR

## **List of charts**

Chart 1: Changes in the division of expenditure on culture in Germany from 1992 to 1996

Chart 2: Distribution of visual arts funding in the cultural areas of Saxony.

Chart 3: Visual artists' average earnings after tax (DM) in Saxony and in Germany as a whole

## **List of graphs**

Graph 1: U Curve – cultural shock model

Graph 2: Collective cultural shock

Graph 3: Theory of collective cultural shock for group of older artists

Graph 4: Theory of collective cultural shock for middle group of visual artists

Graph 5: U curve for Visual Artists Adaptation Model

Graph 6: U curve of Visual Artists Adaptation Model for older visual artists

Graph 7: U curve of visual artists adaptation model for the middle group of artists

## **List of tables**

Table 1: Forms of data

Table 2: Example of linked categories of older visual artists

Table 3: Visual arts funding programmes in Saxony

Table 4: List of values that had either been lost or were of less importance today than they had been in the GDR, as identified in the interviews

## **List of boxes**

Box 1: Core issues discussed at interviews with visual artists

Box 2: Core issues discussed at interviews with administrators

## **List of maps**

Map 1: Germany with the Eastern German Länder highlighted

Map 2: Germany with Saxony highlighted

Map 2: Cultural areas in Saxony

## Abbreviations

|   |   |
|---|---|
| CCS   | Collective cultural shock   |
| CDU   | Christian Democratic Union  |
| CFS   | Cultural Foundation of Saxony   |
| CPDSU   | Communist Party of the Soviet Union   |
| DDRM ( <i>DDR Mark</i> )                                  | GDR currency  |
| DM  | German Marks – currency of FRG until 2001   |
| EC  | European Commission   |
| EU  | European Union  |
| FDGB ( <i>Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund</i> ):       | Free German Trade Union Federation  |
| FDJ ( <i>Freie Deutsche Jugend</i> )                      | Free German Youth Organisation  |
| FRG   | Federal Republic of Germany   |
| GDR ( <i>DDR- Deutsche Demokratische Republik</i> )       | German Democratic Republic  |
| HCRM  | Human Change Role Model   |
| IM ( <i>Informeller Mitarbeiter</i> )                     | Literally ‘informal collaborator’, a term for GDR citizens engaged by the Stasi to spy on their friends, colleagues and relatives |
| KSK ( <i>Künstlersozialkasse</i> )                        | Artists’ social insurance scheme  |
| KSVG ( <i>Künstlersozialversicherungsgesetz</i> )         | Law that regulates artists’ social insurance in Germany   |
| SBK ( <i>Schutzverband Bildender Kunst</i> )              | First Association of Visual Artists that belonged to the trade union before the founding of the VBK.                              |
| SED ( <i>Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands</i> ) | Socialist Unity Party of Germany  |
| SMAD  | Soviet Military Administration in Germany   |
| SMWA  | Saxon Ministry of Science and Art   |
| SPD   | Social Democratic Party   |
| Stasi ( <i>Staatssicherheitsdienst</i> )                  | Secret police of the GDR  |
| TQM   | Total Quality Management  |
| UCT   | U curve Theory of Adjustment  |
| VAAM  | Visual Artists Adaptation Model   |
| VBK   | Association of Visual Artists (Association of Fine Artists)   |



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## **Abstract**

This thesis analyses the changes in visual artists' living and working conditions and the ways in which visual artists reacted to these changes after German unification. It has sought to explore aspects of the interface between the state, the individual visual artists and the visual artists' community in a society of transformation and comments on the impact of change on the existence of such a relationship. The aims are twofold. First, to contribute to an understanding of visual artists' reactions to the dynamics of change created by changes of their working and living conditions after German unification. A second aim was to analyse the causes of the behaviour of the group of older visual artists.

This study of change employed an interdisciplinary approach and combined sociology, psychology, history and cultural policy studies in order to analyse visual artists' responses to the challenge of German unification. Exploration of these themes has been informed by a qualitative empirical study of how visual artists respond to change in the East German region of Saxony. A theoretical framework was developed using grounded theory, which was used to code the following datasets: interviews with 30 visual artists, 10 administrators and 3 group discussions. The theoretical perspective adopted drew on organisational change theory, on sociology of culture and on socialisation theory. In this way it contributes to the relocation of visual artists as key actors in cultural policy research.

The results of the research revealed that initial expectations of the swift adaptation of visual artists' to the new living and working conditions were not fulfilled and that visual artists moved between adaptation and resistance. Although the administrative transformation of the state was completed by 1998, the process of change is ongoing for the visual artists. Unification left the visual artists in a state of shock, a state they have been recovering from since 1990.

The findings lead to development of the Visual Artists Adaptation Model, which as a unique approach combines the collective cultural shock model and human change role model with the responses of visual artists to German unification. It analyses the process of change experienced by visual artists in five stages (1. euphoria, 2. shock and disconfirmation, 3 adaptation, 4. stabilisation, 5. normalisation). In an ideal case scenario, the result of adaptation should be a career re-start, which can be achieved once visual artists manage to overcome cultural shock. I argue that adaptation is delayed when learning anxiety conflicts with survival anxiety and when a psychologically safe situation fails to be provided. This proved to be the case for the group of older visual artists.

It is concluded that values, developed as part of a socialist socialisation, acted as key obstacles to adaptation to the capitalist system. These values and norms evolved in different ways over years due to successful indoctrination with Marxist-Leninist ideology.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 The process of transformation

In a short time after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, the unification of Germany was formally achieved in 1990, to the joy and relief of much of its population. The breach of the wall marked a key turning point in the process of transformation in East Germany, which had begun in the 1980s and was still in progress at the start of 2000. This process was to change significantly the structure, character and nature of society in the region, as the collapse of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) made way for the establishment of West German democracy and a united Germany. The shift from a socialist to a capitalist society incorporated economic, social, legal, political and cultural change to a degree that no East German had ever imagined he or she would experience in a lifetime and, as one artist remarked, “it turned everything upside down” (VA5)<sup>1</sup>. The effects of transformation were not only felt publicly, but also disrupted the private lives of most citizens of the former GDR.

Although individuals were affected in different ways and in varying degrees, there were also collective experiences of change. East Germans may well look back on compulsory participation in state-organised demonstrations to help celebrate international workers’ day in the GDR, in contrast to voluntary participation in the autumn 1989 demonstrations that contributed to the fall of the Republic, or the change from party controlled newspapers to the celebrity-dominated tabloid press. Ten years on from unification, however, it is the ambivalence of the results of change that is

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<sup>1</sup> “VA” is a reference to the relevant interview. “VA” stands for visual artist, “VAD” for visual artist discussion group and “A” for administrator. The number following the letter(s) specifies the interview further. The name of the interviewee is not mentioned to preserve anonymity.

remembered. People had tended to criticise the limited choice of education, training, employment, and housing in the GDR but, after unification, on experiencing the uncertainties of the market economy, they realised that those limitations had also provided a sense of order and security. Such collective memories illustrate the complexity, the depth and to some extent the banality of changes experienced personally by many East Germans over the past 12 years and give an impression of what transformation meant for the average East German. Biedenkopf (1998), the Minister President of Saxony, summarised the meaning of transformation as follows:

“...Mentalities had to be changed, the life rhythm had to be changed. Practically everything, not only the working place, everything was involved. And one of the most difficult aspects of the transformation process is this aspect of changing the whole structure of your individual life and of group life. The need arises to organise other forms of association, social networks and contacts. And this through a population that after 45 years of socialist domination had very little experience in developing the kinds of responsibilities, of initiatives in the creation of these processes.”

Although the scale of both the economic and the social transformation is hard to imagine, some statistics may serve to illustrate it. By the end of 1991, output in the manufacturing and energy sectors in eastern Germany stood at only 60% of its pre-unification level (Flockton and Kolinsky, 1998: 5). Over the period 1991-9 Saxony's gross domestic product (GDP) had doubled to DM 141 billion (Statistisches Landesamt Freistaat Sachsen, 2001: 24). However, Schröder (2000: 131) points out that the number of people in employment in Eastern Germany decreased from 9.7million in 1989 to 6.7million in 1992 and that the unemployment rate increased from 10.3% in 1991 to 15% in 1992 and to 19% in 1999. The unemployment rate in eastern Germany in 1999 was therefore nearly twice as high as that in West Germany (9.9%). Many relocated to seek work elsewhere and the population of Saxony declined by 570,000 (or 11.3%) between 1989 and 1999. The birth rate fell sharply, with the number of births in 1993 at only 40% of the 1989 level. The number of marriages likewise plummeted to 38% of the pre-unification level (Flockton and Kolinsky, 1998: 5). In Saxony the

number of marriages declined from 6.2 per 1000 people in 1990 to 3.8 per 1000 in 1999. However, the transformation also produced some positive results. There was an increase in the levels of average income; in Saxony this figure had increased by 51% between 1991 and 1999 (Statistisches Landesamt Freistaat Sachsen: 7 and 17). During this time East German households experienced a rise in living standards so that, for example, they had, within five years of unification, reached West German levels of car ownership and telecommunications equipment. Such swift advance was made possible only with the help of generous subsidies from the federal government. For example, from 1991 to 1999, the transfer of financial support from West to East has been estimated at DM 80,000 per person (Schröder, 2000: 140).

The situation of visual artists was similarly varied. They gained artistic freedom and the opportunity to travel, which they had longed for in the GDR, but the transformation proved to be long and arduous. Visual artists had to deal with threats to their artistic careers and struggled to adapt to changing living and working conditions. Prior to monetary reform the sale of art had increased but once the DM had replaced the DDRMark a dramatic collapse in the arts market followed. Increasing living and working costs forced visual artists to relocate studios and find additional sources of income in art-related professions. However, such transformation cannot be measured only in material terms, it also involves emotions, feelings, values and the norms that inform behaviour and these less obvious aspects of transformation played an important part both in public and in private.

When East Germans voted with their feet for unification in the 1989/90 demonstrations, the West German Chancellor Kohl saw an opportunity of taking forward the idea of

German unification, which had been expressed by ex-chancellor Brandt (1989) in his now famous quote: “what belongs together should grow together”.

However, it soon became obvious that the process of transformation would entail the rapid adoption by East Germany of West Germany’s social, economic and political conditions. The speed of the process itself would allow few amendments to the successful and proven system of West German democracy. It was believed that a unified Germany would follow once West German democracy had been successfully installed in eastern Germany. In this sense, change was pre-defined as adaptation and successful change conditional on successful adaptation.

By the late 1990s, the public, particularly in eastern Germany, had become uneasy about the consequences of unification. Many commentators suggested that the process of transformation had come to a halt and some argued that it had failed altogether, while others felt that the process had been completed successfully. Schröder (2000: 9) argues that such judgements often rely on preconception rather than fact and that, taken out of context, they are then misinterpreted.

Interpretation is often influenced by the conflict between East and West, which resulted from the policy of adaptation. While the West Germans had the advantage of analysing transformation without the experience of living in the East, the East Germans struggled to come to terms with their past. The West Germans tended to regard their neighbours as poor relations, unfamiliar with their democratic system and in need of help, while the East Germans considered West Germans to be arrogant and patronising, behaving like colonial masters. This underlying conflict between East and West continues, even in

academic work. Despite the objectivity claimed by researchers, it may be hard to escape one's own background. Schröder suggests that any analysis should take this into account, together with experiences and expectations developed throughout the process of transformation. In addition, I argue that the personal history and experience of the researcher/author should also be taken into account in order to develop an awareness of any inherent conflict and to minimise its influence on the research.

Since unification, documentation and analysis of the transformation process has increased steadily and has produced a large body of literature, with new books, articles, essays and conference papers being added every week. For example, between 1990 and 1995, 3,000 German publications were produced about social change in Eastern Germany alone (Reissig, 1998: 302). Unification and its outcome have been investigated from a number of different perspectives. Economists (Schröder, 2000, Hickel and Priewe, 1994), psychologists (Berth and Brähler, 2000), sociologists (Rehberg, 1999, Kupferberg 1999, Vester/Hofmann/Zierke 1995, Geissler, 2000, Pollack 2000), political scientists (Dennis 1993, Glaessner, 2000, Hettlage and Lenz, 1995, Glaser 1994, 1997), politicians (Merkel, 2000, Diepgen, 2000, Tierse, 2000, Gorbachov, 1999), historians (Kocka, 1998, Grosser, 1998, Müller 2000, Fulbrook 1997, Groschopp 1993, Mühlberg 1993) and novelists (Zuckermann, 1999, Simon, 2000) are taking stock and drawing up a balance sheet of the changes resulting from German unification. Several German universities have developed specialist research programmes to analyse the process of German transformation.

However, research focused on changes in the arts due to unification is rare. In literature (Owen, 2000) and film (Costabile-Heming, 2001) single studies have been published but little has been forthcoming on visual artists, with whom I am particularly concerned

here. This lack of literature is not surprising because the prevailing ideology of art is based on the notions of uniqueness, irreplaceability and incomparability (Moulin, 1987: 4). The majority of the German literature in this area therefore focuses on the content of the works of art or on biographical aspects of individual artists (e.g. DeVilder (1991) Seele (1998), Lang (1990) Schmidt (2001)), rather than on the reactions of groups of artists to adaptation. As a result, the situation of visual artists and their reaction to change following unification has neither been at the heart of studies of change nor has it been addressed widely in research analysing post-unification German art. Inoue (1998) presents a brief overview of the situation of visual artists in the eastern German Länder using sociological quantitative analysis, but the results are based on limited qualitative data. The research presented here therefore aims to redress such an imbalance and attempts to stress the need for inter-disciplinary research in this area, which can inform future developments in cultural policy and can contribute to an understanding of the process of transformation from a specific point of view.

Considering the ambivalence of the available literature, I consulted a variety of studies that focused on different areas, divided here into three groups, beginning with studies focusing on the process of social transformation and change in East Germany (Flockton and Kolinsky, 1998, Reissig, 1998, Häder, 1998, Gordon, 1999, Sydow, 1995, Geulen, 1999, Trommsdorff, 1994) and on the economic and political changes following unification. These provided general background information about the process and the extent of transformation. The second group focused on organisational learning, cultural shock theory and socialisation theory as well as on philosophical, historical and political aspects of change. This material applied current theories to the research findings and thus put them into a broader perspective. Thirdly, the available literature



on visual artists in different academic disciplines, such as cultural policy, sociology of art, social policy, anthropology, cultural studies, philosophy, public policy and contemporary visual art, was considered with a particular focus on the behaviour and conditions of visual artists in situations of transformation. The majority of the literature consulted will be discussed at greater length in the following chapters.

## 1.2 The origins of the project

In 1990 I was approached by Professor Müller-Rolli, then Visiting Professor at the Educational Polytechnic in Dresden (Pädagogische Hochschule Dresden, today Technical University of Dresden) and asked to participate in a research project analysing structural change in Dresden's cultural organisations before and after unification. With this in mind, data for different cultural areas including the visual arts (galleries and local funding bodies) was collected in interviews with administrators and policy decision makers in 1991. Because of staff shortages in 1991, only data in the area of "multicultural" institutions<sup>2</sup> was analysed (Müller-Rolli, Hannefoth, Wesner, 1992). The remaining data was archived without further analysis.

The findings described circumstances at the original starting point of institutional change. While it had been assumed that an immediate radical break with the old structures was likely, it was found that little change had been implemented by 1991. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, it transpired that West Germans had false expectations of eastern German cultural work and the introduction of structural change had therefore been delayed until our research project had ended. Secondly, the East Germans were clinging to the familiar to retain a sense of security, when confronted by West German life styles.

The original approach - to investigate change and reactions to change in the arts after German unification - was taken up again in a project entitled, "Continuity and Change - Dresden's galleries in 1989 and 1995" (Wesner 1995). I was interested in furthering my

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<sup>2</sup> In 1990 multicultural institutions were defined as organisations offering a cultural programme combining all cultural fields, for example clubs, community houses, arts centres.

understanding of the dynamics of change in the visual arts following unification. In this study, data on the visual arts sector from the 1991 research project was analysed and compared with data collected in 1995 from art galleries in Dresden. It was argued that change may be defined as adaptation and continuity as resistance to the new developments in eastern Germany.

The current research project follows on from the two projects carried out in 1991 and 1995. Change and its interpretation as adaptation remain at the centre of the study. While in 1991 structural and organisational change in visual arts organisations and visual arts policy had been the focus, here the analysis is based on visual artists and their reaction to and relationship with post-unification change.

### **1.3 The aims of the study**

It is a basic tenet of the approach adopted here that a transformation from a socialist to a capitalist society will include major change in all areas of society. It is assumed that peoples' lives will be affected and that the process itself will help us to understand the reaction to change. Within this context, this study has two main objectives. First, it aims to contribute to an understanding of the reactions of visual artists to the dynamics of change created by unification. It will analyse the response of visual artists as a group to external change in their working and living conditions, brought about mainly by the state administration at federal, regional and local levels, and by market forces. It considers how a more or less loosely defined group of professionals might react to, and attempt to mitigate, the consequences of challenges to their reputation and power. Within these parameters it aims to explore aspects of the interface between state, individual artists and their community. It is argued that, with unification, the ideological pressure that had dominated visual artists' concerns in the GDR was eliminated but was exchanged for the threat posed by the collapse of their living and working conditions. Since 1990 visual artists have struggled to adapt to new conditions while at the same time endeavouring to re-establish their careers under the new circumstances.

In the course of the research it became clear that the level of adaptation varied within the community of visual artists and that, in particular, the older visual artists failed to some extent to respond successfully. As a result, a second objective, focusing on the reactions of this group, was added to the original theme of the research. The study therefore aims to analyse the causes of the behaviour of the older visual artists. It considers visual artists' experiences of the GDR and relates their artistic background

before unification to their behaviour after 1990. On the basis of the analysis presented in the following chapters, it is argued that values developed as part of a socialist work ethic became key obstacles to adapting to a capitalist system. These values will therefore be analysed in relation to the cultural system in which they occur.

#### **1.4 Visual artists and cultural policy**

The visual arts have been of continuing interest to cultural policy researchers. However, cultural policy research focuses mainly on the measures adopted by government or public sector authorities to support or regulate the different elements of this sector (Bennett 1995: 18). Visual artists, as producers of art, have been of interest mainly in relation to the central questions of cultural policy research, summarised by Bennett as, “what is being produced, by whom, for whom, and why?”, within the process of production, distribution and consumption of works of art. In this way, the focus of research is likely to be on the relationship between visual artists, their products and society, rather than on the visual artists themselves.

In this study the remit of cultural policy research has been expanded. Visual artists are seen not only as recipients of cultural policy decisions but also as messengers, carriers and developers of cultural policies as they inform and participate in the policymaking process in democratic countries. The relationship between visual artists and cultural policy is based on a constant interchange of information. Cultural policy research analyses the character, form and nature of this relationship expressed, for example, in the behaviour and actions of visual artists.

The cultural policy implications of research on the behaviour of visual artists and their working and living conditions are threefold. First, the needs and concerns of visual artists may be used to inform future policy developments in the visual arts. Second, a better understanding of the opinions and values of visual artists may improve communication between the artists themselves, administrators and politicians and put to flight common myths of starving artists and autocratic administrators. This, in turn,

would help to improve efficiency and effectiveness in working relationships. Third, analysis of visual artists' behaviour and opinions may reveal how cultural policy might change during the transformation from a socialist to a capitalist society. In this sense, this study may be able to inform future cultural policy decisions, especially in eastern Germany.

The use of the expression "cultural policy" is rare in the following chapters, while the term "arts policy" or "visual arts policy" dominates the discussion. The term cultural policy implies a broader definition of culture as a way of life, while arts policy refers to the arts, focusing only on artistic activities. Here the term 'arts policy' is used for three practical reasons. First, the research is conducted purely in the area of the visual arts - a specific arts discipline - and visual artists, by the nature of their profession, attach great importance to the arts and rather less to culture. Second, in official public policy documents a clear distinction is made between the visual arts, other artistic disciplines and culture. Third, the acceleration of cultural industries, which may challenge any traditional understanding of the arts, has been excluded from this research because it is a development, which has only recently begun to materialize in eastern Germany.

However, the study has incorporated a cultural policy approach, as described above, while focusing on visual artists, their conditions and behaviour. Cultural policy thus remains at the core of this thesis despite the use of the term 'arts policy', which is, in the end, part of cultural policy research.

## **1.5 Terms, definitions, locations and resources**

**“The privileged classes anointed artists and, to the extent that they established values recognised by society as a whole, gave the artists a social role. This mood of social integration is no longer available. The dominant group no longer accords social recognition, as it did in a hierarchical society of orders: instead, money now plays a key part, offering proof of success and social prestige.” (Moulin, 1987: 107)**

**While Moulin refers, in this statement, to the changes in France from before the 1789 Revolution to the modern day, this quote also provides an apt description of the changes which followed German unification. Visual artists lost their role in society and, with it, reputation and status. In this sense, before unification, the GDR regime had preserved the dominant role in society, comparable to the role of the French aristocracy or the kings in the German principalities of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. After unification, in the new capitalist society, social prestige became related to money, a concept that eastern German visual artists found highly suspicious, as I will argue in the following chapters. In addition, not only were the living and working conditions of visual artists transformed, but a number of questions were raised concerning their identity and definition.**

**Frey and Pommerehne (1993) have identified eight factors that might identify and define an artist. These are the amount of time spent on artistic work; the amount of income derived from artistic activities; the artist’s reputation among the general public; recognition in the artists’ community; quality of artistic work produced; membership of a professional artists’ association; a professional qualification in the arts and the subjective self-evaluation of being an artist. In the GDR most of these criteria applied to visual artists as part of the social arrangements provided by the state. Although, in the united Germany, the majority organised their work around these criteria, only very few would fulfil all or even most of the eight factors. As mentioned in the next chapter, a visual artist in the GDR spent the majority of his/her time producing artistic work,**



which generated income. He/she was a member of the Association of Fine Artists and received his/her artistic education and training at one of the art academies in the GDR. His/her reputation was dependent on the level of involvement in the “aim culture”, the guiding doctrine of GDR cultural policy. Artists were recognised as such by the artists’ community if they followed perceived artistic developments and defined themselves as artists. Therefore, in the GDR, the eight factors could be used to answer explicitly the question of an artist’s identity.

After unification it became more difficult to define an artist using Frey and Pommerehne’s factors. The amount of time spent on artistic output varied, depending on the artist’s ability to sell his/her work or to raise money, and as a result the income from artistic work was less secure than it had been before unification. In the words of Wassall and Alper (1995): “It is unusual to find an occupation in which so many people want to make a living but so few are capable of doing so.” Membership of an arts association is not compulsory and artists tend to be reluctant to join organisations within the normal boundaries of the arts community (Jeffri, 2001). Furthermore, a professional education in the arts was no longer a condition for becoming a practising artist. As mentioned above, an artist’s public reputation is hard to gauge in a democracy because the general public has little knowledge of contemporary visual arts beyond big art events such as the *Documenta* or the Turner Prize. Quality is a subjective notion and because of the nature of the practice there is no consensus or formula among visual artists as to what constitutes quality, good art or even good artists (O’ Brien, 1998: 3). Hence, defining visual artists using Frey and Pommerehne’s factors remains problematic for Western societies, as several studies have argued (Wassall and Alper,

1995, Mitchell and Karttunen, 1992, Karttunen, 1998 2001, Jeffri and Throsby 1994, Jeffri, 1998, 2001).

Despite the difficulties of definition, only those visual artists who met Pommerehne and Frey's criteria prior to unification and who subsequently attempted to maintain this occupational status were interviewed for this study. None of the artists in the group questioned their professional status but they noted the differences between the life of an artist in the GDR and that of an artist in the unified Germany. These differences were the result of dramatic changes to their working and living conditions.

The term 'working and living conditions' used here is based on a combination of both. The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions defines working and living conditions separately, because the majority of the workforce in the European Union is employed and therefore working conditions are defined as the practical conditions under which people work in a specific technical and organisational environment. The definition focuses on employment conditions that denote the rules under which people are employed and their status, training, provision and pay (Paoli and Merllie 2001).

However, the majority of visual artists are self-employed and, in their interviews, rarely separated their living conditions from their working conditions. This study therefore combines working and living conditions in a definition that encompasses all the elements that may have an effect on the life and work of a visual artist. In broad terms, this includes the organisation of their work, the social, psychosocial and physical environment of their work, skills, training, income, attitudes, health and safety and

access to work as well as the transition from work to life outside it. Since an analysis of all these criteria would go beyond the remit of this study, I have selected the following factors for investigation: on the economic side I include self-management, income and acquisition of work, while on the social side I focus on reputation, status, state benefits and the law, as well as on rules on training and promotion.

So far, artists have been categorized as a unified community, but the structure of this community is diverse and includes many different characters striving for individual recognition. Bourdieu (1984) argues that the artistic field is a “universe in which to exist is to differ”. Even though visual artists clearly prefer an individual approach, for the purpose of this study they are grouped together by characteristics, attitudes and behavioural patterns. This should by no means negate the individual character of an artist’s being.

This study brings together findings from interviews and group discussions with visual artists and arts administrators and from participant observations. A total of 40 face-to-face interviews were conducted in the artists’ community from 1997 to 2000 in German. They were tape-recorded and transcribed and translated by the author to give the quotations cited here. Most interviews were of two to three hours duration.

Anonymity has been preserved, as agreed with the interviewees. In addition to these interviews, group discussions and observations, original documents and archive materials from various sources were analysed, including documentation produced by funding bodies and other art-related organisations and parliamentary reports from both before and after unification. Furthermore, handbooks, pamphlets, journal articles, books and conference papers were consulted.

The selection of material and data also depended on their availability for this study. While the availability of materials from the former GDR has improved with the release of archive material, the problem of the reliability of the data remains. Official GDR documents, and to a certain extent also internal SED and state administration material, often contained numbers and statistics which had been manipulated in an attempt to create an optimistic picture of GDR socialism. Therefore, the accuracy of pre-unification figures, data and material is questionable. In this study, the use of such materials has been avoided and, as a result, a comparative analysis of pre and post unification statistics has been impossible.

There were additional problems with the comparability of available data. The study was carried out in the 1990s, parallel with changes in the state administration at all levels and, while a selection of statistical data (such as some financial figures) gradually became available, other data proved not to be available at all because it had not been collected in the early years of transformation. This is due partly to the change in administrative responsibilities in German state administration that came into practice after unification. While in the GDR all regions and districts had been administered by the central government, after unification, and with the introduction of the federal structure, the territory of the former GDR was re-divided into 5 *Länder*, each with its own administration. This study focuses on Saxony, one of these five new *Länder*, because this region in particular had sustained a rich cultural tradition over the centuries and the author was able to use personal in-depth knowledge of the visual artists' community gained before and after unification. However, since territorial administrative changes (see also maps 1 and 2 in chapter 3) have compounded the

difficulties of comparing data and materials, comparative statistics pre and post unification are generally avoided here. Exceptions have been made when figures were available covering the same territory.

## **1.6 The structure of the study**

This study has eight chapters. The first chapter introduces the main objectives of the study, the origins of the project and key terms and definitions. The last section of the introduction explains the methodology and methods adopted.

Following this introduction, the second chapter reviews the arts policy of the German Democratic Republic with special reference to visual artists' concerns. It provides background information on the structure of arts policy-making and on the developments in arts policy before unification as well as analysing the role and response of visual artists to these developments. It is argued that, between 1945 and 1990, arts policy oscillated between liberalisation and reactionary crackdown and that the lasting impact of GDR arts policy on visual artists has been significant, despite their own efforts to distance themselves from official state policy.

Chapter Three charts the development of visual arts policy in Saxony after German unification. It focuses on an analysis of public visual arts funding policy, comparing legal principles and policy aims with funding practice. The chapter highlights the efforts of the regional administration to meet both policy aims and visual artists' needs and concerns. It argues that most funding programmes are designed to ensure the implementation of policy. Although they meet the legal requirements, funding criteria and guidelines caused problems in funding practice. The chapter concludes that ten years after unification a visual arts policy was in place and the process of large-scale change in visual arts administration seemed to have come to an end.

Chapters Four and Five present the findings of the case study. Chapter Four provides an analysis of the main features of change to the conditions of visual artists in the first five years following German unification. It focuses on the artists' perspective of the changes in the political, societal and economic transformation process and compares individual opinions with the outcomes of visual arts policy before and after German unification. It is argued that visual artists were in cultural shock at the collapse in their living and working conditions and that, for a time, a feeling of chaos and disorientation prevailed.

Chapter Five continues the analysis of the changes in the years from 1994 to 2000. It explores the reactions of visual artists to the long-term changes introduced in this second stage of the transformation process. It is argued that within their community differences in public awareness and perception developed and deepened as public life settled into an organised routine. Visual artists were therefore categorized by age into a young, a middle and an older group. Chapter Five discusses the different reactions to change and argues that the ability of visual artists to cope with change effectively depended on their original starting and reference points. It concludes that the more of their artistic background was spent in the "old" GDR system, the less they were able to adapt to the new artistic environment.

Chapters Six and Seven provide a discussion of the findings. Chapter Six relates them to the theory of collective cultural shock on the macro level and to the Human Change Role Model on the micro level of society. Both theories are used as academic reference points to explore how visual artists reacted to change. It is argued that the two frameworks complement each other when related to the findings of the study. As a result, findings are synthesised in a new theoretical approach, the Visual Artists

Adaptation Model, which provides answers as to how change occurred, how it was understood by visual artists and suggests possible scenarios for the future development of the behaviour of visual artists. Chapter Seven focuses on the situation of the older visual artists and analyses the causes of their behaviour. It is argued that continuous use of values and norms developed in the GDR both delayed and obstructed adaptation and that in many cases life in the GDR had a permanent effect on the viewpoint and expectations of the older visual artists. The second section of the chapter discusses the relationship between artistic socialisation in the GDR and Marxist-Leninist ideology. It argues that the basic ideas of Marxism-Leninism and its attendant conflicts, together with the system of value judgements, are the main obstacles to successful adaptation by older visual artists. Ideology is therefore interpreted as destiny in the career development of older visual artists in Saxony.

The final chapter reflects on the data and its analysis. Early expectations that visual artists would adapt swiftly to their new working and living conditions were unfulfilled and their personal situations varied from adaptation to resistance. In conclusion, it is argued that the process of transformation continues for visual artists and that adaptation might not be complete until they come to terms with their past. The research reveals the limitations and obstacles inherent in adapting to an unfamiliar culture.



## **1.7 Methodology**

### ***1.7.1 General remarks***

The primary aim of the research on which this study is based was to assess the impact of change on visual artists and to explore the ways in which they understood change and how they reacted to changes in their living and working conditions after German unification. This objective informed the methodology adopted here and this section describes the link between the research questions posed above and the method of data collection and analysis.

The approach involved the adoption of qualitative methods and was conducted between 1996 and 2000. As a preliminary, interviews conducted in 1992 and 1995 on similar topics with visual artists and administrators in Saxony were analysed and to some extent informed the research questions used here. The greater part of the work uses in-depth semi-structured interviews and group discussions with visual artists, arts administrators and policy decision makers. I seek to highlight the dilemmas and problems experienced in designing research instruments and conducting and analysing the data collected through interviews and group discussion.

### ***1.7.2 Data collection and analysis***

Data were collected from three main sources (see Table 1): face-to-face in-depth semi structured interviews with visual artists, arts administrators and policy decision makers, group discussions with visual artists and observation of arts events such as regional art fairs. In addition, statistical material was used for the time after 1989, as far as it was available, to back up the data collected. Mainly qualitative methods were employed in an attempt to provide an overview of arts policy activities in Saxony and a more in-

depth understanding of visual artists' behaviour with respect to changes in their living and working conditions. Pilot interviews were carried out in 1996 to finalise the research questions. They allowed some testing of the interview method and provided an opportunity to identify new topics worth exploring in the later interviews.

Table 1: Forms of data

| Type of data   | Size |
|--|------|
| Face to face interviews with visual artists                            | 30   |
| Face to face interviews with administrators and policy decision makers | 10   |
| Group discussions with artists   | 3    |
| Participant observations   | 12   |

Guba and Lincoln (1994) argued that the success of a chosen method can often depend on the skills and expertise of the researcher. I have had some experience of qualitative methods – for example, face-to-face in-depth interviews and group interviews – which enabled me to address the research questions posed.

My preference was for in-depth interviews and a qualitative approach. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, I was conscious from other studies I had conducted and reviewed that the concerns and attitudes of visual artists may well be affected by their artistic speciality and their self-imposed status within the artistic community. Visual artists usually prefer to be interviewed in their studios or in a familiar environment rather than filling in questionnaires, and also welcomed the opportunity to gather in groups to discuss policy and social issues as they had done before unification. Most artists and administrators contacted were willing to cooperate and responded openly and with interest. However, some artists (10% of those approached) remained unwilling to be interviewed at all because they felt their works of art already expressed what they had to say. Secondly, compared with a quantitative approach, qualitative research is regarded as better able to produce information on interactional processes and on

participants' perspectives (Hammersley, 1996). The interviews provided a more in-depth understanding of particular cases and showed how causal relationships and interactional processes operated in natural settings. This was an essential part of the grounded approach to the data analysis, described more fully below. In-depth semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity for participants to talk at length about their experience of transformation, a situation one would expect to have been highly charged emotionally.

### *1.7.3 The development of a grounded theory*

A key aim of the research was to attempt to understand how visual artists reacted to change and why they reacted as they did. In exploring these issues the research aimed to develop a theory, which was mainly grounded in the data (Strauss<sup>ss</sup> and Corbin, 1990, Glaser and Strauss<sup>ss</sup>, 1967). 'Grounded theory' is the term developed by Glaser and Strauss (1965 and 1967) to describe an interactive process involving the generation of theory through continual sampling and analysis of qualitative data gathered from real settings. Research which adopts this approach develops a theoretical formulation of the reality under investigation rather than consisting of a set of numbers or a group of loosely related themes (Strauss<sup>ss</sup> and Corbin, 1990). The theory emerged as a reaction to the perceived neglect of issues relating to qualitative methodology by academics. Glaser and Strauss<sup>ss</sup> (1965) were also concerned at the developing tendency for the process of collecting and analysing data to be sterilised by overly rigid methodological prescriptions.

This approach was chosen over others because of its potential for generating theory and its sensitivity to the interactive and interpretative nature of qualitative data and the

narratives produced in conversation. Pidgeon *et al.* (1996) claim that grounded theory is particularly well suited to the study of meanings and the social context in which they occur. Essentially, the approach leads to a model of analysis, which is flexible, is carried out in everyday contexts and has as its goals the construction of participants' symbolic worlds and social realities.

As a result, the design of the study, the size and the characteristics of the sample were influenced by grounded theory. The adoption of a purposive sampling strategy is recommended as emerging theories are developed. Participants are selected on the basis of what they can reveal about emerging ideas or concepts identified during on-going data collection. While, for example, in hypothesis testing a fixed research design is drawn at the beginning of the research and data analysis takes place after all data is collected, a key characteristic of grounded theory is the ongoing nature of project design and data analysis. For this reason, data analysis was not viewed as a discrete activity which took place after all the data had been collected, but was continuous and informed changes made in the process of data collection.

In line with this approach project design was on-going and flexible. It was estimated that about 1200 visual artists were working and living in Saxony in 1997. The number was based on the members of the artists' social insurance (*KSK - Künstlersozialkasse*), which had 1070 visual artists as members in Saxony in 1997 (Meyer, 1997). The number of insured visual artists at the KSK has been growing steadily from 827 in 1994 to 1292 in 2000. It has also been estimated that an additional number of perhaps 130

visual artists would not be members of this organisation.<sup>3</sup> The initial approach was to select a sample of these by reference to their speciality (mainly painters and sculptors), gender and workplace, so that there was a representative spread across the region. Yet the majority of visual artists lived in the three main cities of Dresden, Leipzig and Chemnitz and therefore the majority of visual artists interviewed lived in one of these three main cities.

#### *1.7.4 Interviews*

Once the preliminary analysis had been undertaken, arrangements were set in place to begin the second stage of data collection. The aim had been for the design of this second phase to be informed by the preliminary data collection as well as by findings from former research projects. This influenced the interview phase in two particular ways. Firstly, it suggested that false expectations could influence the flow of the interview. Many artists expressed an interest in the interview because they interpreted it as an opportunity to show their work to an outsider. They expected to show and talk about their work rather than letting an outsider know about their working and living conditions. For this reason the purpose of the interview was emphasised in the preliminary pre-interview telephone conversation and was repeated in the introduction to the interview itself. Even so, at the conclusion of most of the interviews, the artists presented their work and in some cases the visit to the studio was extended by this presentation for one or two hours. Secondly, previous interviews had suggested that some visual artists felt strongly about changes in their working and living conditions and tended to blame or praise third parties with great intensity. For example, the loss of

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<sup>3</sup> It is estimated that the majority of the visual artists in Saxony are members of the KSK because members benefit from low health-insurance rates. However the insurance would only take on visual

studio space as a result of unification had been one cause of emotional distress and could bring forth strong emotional reactions during the interview. Awareness of this was therefore taken into consideration in advance of the interviews and psychological advice sought on how to react in these circumstances. In retrospect, this was especially helpful in the case of one artist who expressed distress over the loss of a close relative as an immediate result of unification.

The interview approach adopted was relaxed in style. It is crucial to this method that the researcher does not direct the research participants by guiding or probing but allows the subject to talk freely and as spontaneously as possible. No interview can be totally unstructured but attempts were made to encourage an informal atmosphere and to model interaction on a conversation. Viewed in this way, the interview may be seen as a social event and as such had its own set of interactional rules (Holland and Ramazanogly, 1994) such as “turn-taking” (Wilson, 1994). A semi-structured set of issues was developed over time, which listed key issues to be discussed. Those covered are listed in Box 1 and 2. In many interviews respondents spontaneously addressed these issues without being prompted or asked. The process of modification and refinement carried on well into the data collection stage. This re-alignment of issues and sample is a common feature of studies which aim to ground theory in accounts.

As early interviews were completed they were transcribed and studied. Attempts were made to identify categories, their properties, frequency and the context in which they occurred. In a number of cases, these revealed unanticipated issues which had emerged at the instigation of the interviewees. As these seemed important to the subject of

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artists who would earn more than DM 6000 p.a.

research, I actively encouraged their discussion in subsequent interviews. An example of this type of issue was that of the artists' general political judgments. Thus, the design of the study did not evolve as a discrete stage of the project which pre-dated data collection. Design and analysis are much more accurately seen as symbiotic, with one constantly informing the other.

**Box 1: Core issues discussed at interviews with visual artists**

- the visual artists' personal experience of being artists in the GDR and after unification (career development and working and living conditions)
- the visual artists' personal accounts and experience of change concerning their living and working conditions and of their environment
- the impact of changes and the artists' coping mechanisms
- their views of the causes of the changes
- coping with change and the relationship between visual artists and administrators in coping with changes
- the extent to which changes are discussed in the artists' community and whether news of changes is transmitted through "gossip" networks
- the features of visual artists' specialisation and their relationship to change

**Box 2 : Core issues discussed at interviews with administrators**

- the administrators' personal experiences and accounts of the arts funding structure of the GDR
- the administrators' personal experiences and accounts of coping with changes in the arts funding structure after unification
- the role played by visual artists in coping with changes in their working and living conditions
- the incidence of conflict and co-operation between visual artists, administrators and between the different funding bodies in managing changes in the arts funding structure
- the numbers of and procedures for allocation of funding to visual artists
- the impact of structural changes on staff and funding body

***1.7.5 Problems with this approach***

The adoption of a relaxed approach meant that many extraneous variables, which might change the information being collected, were possible. For example, the interviews were held in the participants' workplaces, which meant that they were more likely to be

seen as everyday and “situational” events (Wilson, 1994). However, it also meant that interviews were subject to interruption.

An additional constraint on this approach was that the interviews were being undertaken mostly with individuals aware of social status. Sisson’s (1970) work on the different responses given to an interviewer depending on whether he or she adopted a middle or working-class dress code, demeanour and accent, has demonstrated that status clearly does have an impact on the data collected.

The issue of the status-conscious participants required me also to be particularly sensitive to the need to establish my credibility as a competent and interested researcher and as knowledgeable in the visual arts. Several artists asked about my own background in the visual arts and where I had received my arts education.

Administrators were much more likely to ask questions about what the research would be used for.

Use of open-ended questions allowed respondents the maximum opportunity to elaborate on their problems and concerns. At the beginning of each interview I introduced changes in living and working conditions as the main topic of research. I then asked the respondent to speak, in chronological order, about his or her career development. Most respondents compared the different stages (before and after unification) of their careers as a result. The phrasing of prepared questions was altered according to the issue already touched upon by the respondent. Supplementary questions were put according to the replies received so that they did not interfere with the flow of the conversation. Interviewees were encouraged to raise alternative or



tangential issues and stress was placed on hearing their interpretations of events. In this sense, the interviews were exploratory or “free” (Wilson, 1994) although I was clearly aware that they were not as free as an everyday conversation since the discussion was being recorded. But, in this way, it was hoped that research participants would have an input into the setting of the research agenda. This was particularly important in developing grounded theory.

### *1.7.6 About the sample*

The 1200 visual artists resident in Saxony provided a large pool of possible interviews. Most (1070) were insured in the “*Künstlersozialkasse*”, the artists’ social insurance scheme, and 740 were members of the visual artists’ association of Saxony. Both organisations provided data and the Visual Artists’ Association suggested names of visual artists who would best suit the required criteria. As a result, an initial interview sample of ten visual artists (painters, sculptors, installation artists) was selected on the basis of willingness to be interviewed, age, district and gender. After that a further twenty interviews were conducted. “Saturation” point in terms of explanatory categories and ideas (Pigeon and Henwood, 1996) was reached at the end of 30 interviews. As a result, no further interviews were conducted.

In addition to the individual interviews, three group interviews with seven, ten and eight visual artists from the wider region of Dresden were conducted. In these discussions visual artists were asked to present and discuss developments in their living and working conditions after unification. All discussions were moderated by myself and recorded on video. While the discussions did not reach the same depth as the individual interviews, they highlighted key issues and pinpointed major concerns and

needs of visual artists. These discussions produced a second set of data that was used in the analysis and in comparison with the individual interviews.

In order to explore further the impact of change on the working and living conditions of artists and on art policy in Saxony I conducted ten interviews with administrators and policy decision makers responsible for visual artists across the different visual arts local and regional funding bodies. Use was made of naturalistic interview techniques of the kind already discussed above. This generated a third dataset that allowed me to explore the “other” side of arts policy reality, i.e., an account that sometimes conflicted with that of the visual artists.

### ***1.7.7 Using grounded theory in the coding of qualitative data***

A key component in developing grounded theory is creativity. The researcher is encouraged to break through assumptions and create new order out of the old (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Despite the weight given to the flexibility of the process, two key exercises are essential to the approach: constant comparison and theoretical sampling. Constant comparison involves continual shifting and comparing of cases, categories and theoretical propositions, throughout the lifetime of the project. This exercise aims to sensitise the researcher to both similarities and differences. Emergent categories and theories developed during data collection are then used to guide subsequent collection.

Grounded theorists do not approach data analysis with strong views about which theory will best “fit” the data collected. Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed an open-ended indexing system whereby the researcher works through the data generating codes which refer to low-level concepts as well as abstract categories and themes. The researcher is

encouraged to be as flexible and open as possible, the only requirements being that there should be a direct link between the data and the explanatory concept generated.

It became clear after eight interviews that there was a link between age, career development and artists' behaviour after unification; for example the older respondents who were well established before unification and had undergone formal training in the GDR expected the new visual artists' association to continue to exist as a resource for contract work, while the younger visual artists who had begun their education after unification would not approach the association with such requests. This caused me to reflect on this correlation and as a result I divided the respondents into three age groups:

1. Visual artists between 20 and 30 years of age at the time of interview (artists' academic education had started after unification; at the time of the interview artists in this group were either in formal training or had just started to build a professional artistic career.)
2. Visual artists between 30 and 40 years of age (artists' academic education had started before and finished shortly after unification, in 1998/99/2000 artists were established and/or had worked on their artistic career for several years).
3. Visual artists over 40 years of age (artists' academic education took place in the GDR, artists were well-established full-time professionals before unification, at the time of the interview they were able to reflect on more than 15 years of work experience.

The interview sample was consequently adapted to these conditions and the focus shifted towards the older and middle-aged group of visual artists, representing the majority of interviews with 40% each. The emphasis on the middle and older groups of artists reflected the actual age distribution of artists in Germany (Inoue, 1998: 46).

Ideas, even if they did not appear directly relevant to the research were noted. Interview transcripts were all typed up. They were read closely while data collection continued.

Predictably, the process was time-consuming but continued until a saturation point of new ideas occurred (Pigeon and Henwood, 1996).

The development of a grounded theory is not without its problems. Pidgeon *et al.* (1996) argue that it ignores tensions which arise from a simultaneous commitment both to objectively reflecting the participants' accounts and perspectives, and to recognition of the multiple perspectives and subjectivities inherent in symbolic interaction and the researcher's interpretative work. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that the balance between creativity and science can be encouraged in three ways: by periodic distancing from the data, by maintaining a sceptical attitude, and by alternating between collecting and analysing data so as to challenge any earlier assumptions.

However, critics have reacted to Glaser and Strauss' (1967) assumption that data is there to be "discovered" and that researchers can directly access their participants' actual experience. Other concerns have been raised about what grounds grounded theory? Feldmann (1995) argues that the difficulties of interpreting qualitative data lie not in learning how to make interpretations but in learning how to get away from pre-established interpretations (Feldmann, 1995: 64). Recent methodologies have attempted to resolve this problem by recognising that what appears to be the discovery or emergence of theory is in reality the result of a constant interplay between data and the researchers' experience and theoretical learning (Pidgeon *et al.*, 1996; Charmaz, 1990).

The review of literature presented earlier, as well as experience in the current field, led to the creation of certain types of categories, which might emerge from data. At the early stages of the research particular attention was paid to work undertaken on the

working and living conditions of professional artists by authors such as Jeffri (1991 and 1998), Throsby and Towse (1994) Peacock (1993, 1994), Heikinen (1995), Karttunen (1998) and Kroetsch (1993). Later, the focus of the literature shifted towards cultural sociology and social change approaches presented by Becker (1982), Plattner (1996), Zolberg (1997), Halle (1993), Rehberg (1999), Bourdieu (1984), Mannheim (1952), Schein (1995), Feistinger and Fink (1998) and Erickson (1996).

However, the test of these approaches in developing a grounded theory arose in trying to create a balance between an open-minded approach and a combination of rigour and exploration. At first, I looked for patterns as well as for exceptions, which might challenge such ordering. This constitutes the “open coding” stage during which the text is broken down into information units such as events, ideas, explanations, process description and examples of identity-building work. There was a constant reconsideration of such categories and sub-categories and comparison of what was classified in each. As Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggested, questions of who, when, what, how, how much and why were posed in order to avoid standard ways of thinking about categories. This technique helped to better define the key characteristics of the categories.

Labels were created that reflected descriptive categories, abstract accounts and theoretical reference points for emergent categories and the transcripts were marked up with these labels (using letters and numbers).

Attention was also paid to the context in which each category was embedded and the consequences of what was discussed. In this way, the categories became linked in what

Strauss and Corbin (1990) call a paradigm model. Table 1 gives an example of how this paradigm was used in the case of one emergent category.

Table 2: Example of linked categories of older visual artists (after Strauss and Corbin, 1990)

| Causal condition  | Phenomenon | Context                    | Intervening conditions  | Action/inaction  | Consequences   |
|---|------------|----------------------------|---|--|--|
| Being accused of having served as "state artist" in the GDR | Anger      | Change in political system | Time: speed of events, no solidarity among the artists' community | Adjusting CV, pretending accusations are untrue, forgetting (can not remember) | Feeling of being misunderstood, and neglected by new society, low morale, inefficient adaptation |

In the next step, the paradigm model was extended and the chronological time frame was adjusted to the categories that marked conditions before, during and after unification. Those categories that were linked by time were arranged in a matrix that served the task of identifying the main storylines. The construction of a storyline is encouraged by grounded theorists as a way of identifying a dominant account of experience, which emerges from data. The technique reflects the commitment of grounded theory to naturalistic and discovery-based methodology. A storyline is produced that reflects common ways of explaining phenomena. It facilitates the identification of data which fit and data which do not fit with the theoretical paradigm under construction.

### **1.7.8 Validation**

Once the main themes of the storyline had been identified, they were validated in a drawn out process by which all the data were revisited in order to test whether these themes really did dominate the interview data. Labels and storylines were discussed in

meetings with another grounded theorist. These were used as a “credibility check” on preliminary analyses of dominant themes.

This process of fine-tuning on themes generated a significant number of sub-categories, which moved in and out of major categories. Once the labelling process was completed, data assigned to the same categories were compared (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Analysis proceeded from data collection to outcomes in a slow and loosely linear line.

Most of the research findings were discussed informally with small groups of visual artists and administrators whenever possible at gallery openings, in studio visits and other social events such as the sculptor symposium of the Saxon Association of Art in 2000. The findings have so far not been presented at conference or to an audience outside the arts world of Saxony.

The writing up of the data involved transforming the themes suggested by the data into headings and sub-headings in chapters four and five. The transcripts were trawled for striking examples of categories used and quotations lifted in order better to illustrate responses. A certain amount of counting of instances within categories was implicit in the text, which was written using terms such as “the majority”, “to a great extent” and “dominant” to denote the strength of a category.

As mentioned earlier, grounded theorists generate theory through continual sampling and analysis and the theory emerges from the data while being constantly compared with other sources of information. This becomes apparent in the course of chapter six in which, with the “Visual Artists Adaptation Model (VAAM)”, a unique theoretical

approach is developed. Despite the fact that theoretical sampling of data grounded VAAM, further analysis revealed that the model adopted two related theoretical approaches (the Collective Cultural Shock Model and the Human Change Role Model). Furthermore, in chapter seven, concepts of social behaviour by Inglehart (1997) and Bourdieu (1984) were consulted to explain why visual artists reacted as they did to change. These three “outsider” approaches informed theoretical sampling at the final stages of the project, were integrated as an additional part and are reflected in the writing. This goes beyond the merit and principles of grounded theory. Yet, Strauss (1987) argues that methods, after all, are developed and changed in response to the changing work context, which was considered as the most suitable option for this thesis.

### ***1.7.9 Conclusion***

This section has outlined the various methodological concerns underlying data collection and analysis. It has described the origin of the project. The rationale for adoption of a qualitative methodological approach has been explained, as well as the choice of the various methods. The data were framed by a grounded approach to collection and analysis. This methodological approach was deemed most appropriate in a study that had an exploratory dimension. It was felt that the production and analysis of naturalistic narrative was the most appropriate way to tackle the issues of change in visual artists’ working and living conditions and their behaviour.

The purpose of this section has been to provide a link between the aims of the study and the empirical investigation undertaken. It has sought to assure the reader that data collection and analysis has been reflective and rigorous. Chapters four, five, six and seven describe the data collected and present an analysis of it.



## 2 Arts policy of the German Democratic Republic

### 2.1 Introduction

Since 1990 the process of transformation has focused on the integration of the new German Länder into the united Germany. The GDR has fast become history and the memories of its citizens have led attempts to come to terms with the past. By 2000 collective memory of life in the GDR encompassed a range of personal experiences. On the one hand people remember the repression, the subordination, the surveillance, the inadequacies of the economy and the poor provision of consumer goods, the countless restrictions on freedoms, the SED propaganda and the education system designed to elicit strict obedience, from Kindergarten to University. On the other hand, people look back on job security, clear professional prospects, individual welfare provision, crèche places guaranteed by the state, low rents and the minimal cost of a loaf of bread (Mitter and Wolle 1993: 7) with a feeling of “*Ostalgie*”, an expression coined especially to convey eastern Germans’ feeling of nostalgia for certain aspects of GDR life.

However, as peoples’ impressions of the past have begun to fade, the academic community has become interested in the GDR as a research object, as the archives of the SED, the Stasi and the Academy of Art have become accessible. As a result, the academic literature published since 1990 reflects a dramatic increase of interest in economic, social, political and psychological aspects of the GDR. It also sheds light on the way various concepts and points of view have come about, and on the explanations and justifications given for them. Some risk is attached to this increasing interest, which Fulbrook, a London based historian and GDR specialist, summarises as an infinite variety of factors complicating and cross-cutting any ‘objective’ debate in researching GDR history. She argues that “...memories challenge reconstruction; personal

experience queries documentary evidence; the sands on which any new interpretation is to be constructed are constantly shifting, as the archival remnants of the dictatorship are denounced as distortions, the memories as cover-ups, analyses as politically motivated and one-sided.” (Fulbrook, 1997: 7)

Research focusing on the visual arts and arts policy of the GDR has faced similar dangers on a smaller scale; the amount of available research has still been manageable. Feist, Gillen and Vierneisel’s (1996) “Kunstdokumentation 1945-1990” is a collection of essays, reports and materials on GDR arts policy and, as the most comprehensive publication currently available, it demonstrates that a differentiated view on GDR arts policy is possible. Since unification a number of studies (Goeschen (2001), Offner (2000) Poppe (1997) Raum (1999), Feist (1995)) have been conducted specialising in GDR art and GDR arts policy. For example, Kaiser and Rehberg (1999) present a comprehensive account of the dimensions of “contract art” (“Auftragskunst”) as an aspect of GDR arts policy.

However, most studies tend to present only a collection of articles on specific aspects of GDR arts policy; an overview is not yet available because the empirical basis is still developing. Jordan and Weedon (1995) examine GDR cultural policy as a case study of Marxist cultural politics in Eastern Europe, but do not consider the situation of the visual artists in depth. Entire accounts of GDR cultural policy written prior to 1989 were available in both German countries but by no means spoke with one voice. While Jäger (1982, 1994) and Gransow (1975) analysed “culture and policy in the GDR” from an outsider’s perspective, cultural policy specialists in the GDR such as Koch (1975,

1983, 1988) and Hanke (1977), sought to explain SED perspectives on cultural policy and “to read between the lines of official policies and personalities” (Fulbrook 1997: 6).

The focus of this chapter will be on arts policy and its implications for visual artists’ living and working conditions. Because GDR arts policy is presented here in its entirety, an overview and some background information is given - vital to an analysis of transformation after German unification - which runs the risk of missing some detail. Visual arts policy is reconstructed retrospectively and the chapter incorporates first-hand material referring to visual artists or to the visual arts community, such as documents of the Association of Visual Artists of the GDR and SED documents concerning arts policy and official documents that make no distinction between the different arts fields and speak of artists in general. In addition, secondary literature published before and after unification was consulted, as mentioned above.

This chapter consists of four sections and outlines the main developments in state arts policy, with special reference to visual artists, as well as providing some analysis of the changes following German unification - important because it analyses the events and circumstances that shaped the values and attitudes of visual artists in the GDR. Only by gaining a thorough understanding of the crucial relationship between the state and the artists in the GDR can one obtain any insight into the developments following unification because the present is reflected in the past.

The first section analyses arts policy structures in the GDR. Section two explains the concept of the “aim culture” (*Zielkultur*), which defines the overall policy goal of the

GDR government and the third section maps out developments from 1945 to 1989<sup>4</sup> and divides the development of policy into five sub-sections, which refer to the major shifts in arts policy. GDR arts policy fluctuated between repression and liberalisation. In the conclusion it is argued that the overall objective of arts policy was not achieved but that the aim culture left a lasting impression on artists.

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<sup>4</sup> A chronological list of events that are considered in this chapter is provided in Appendix A.

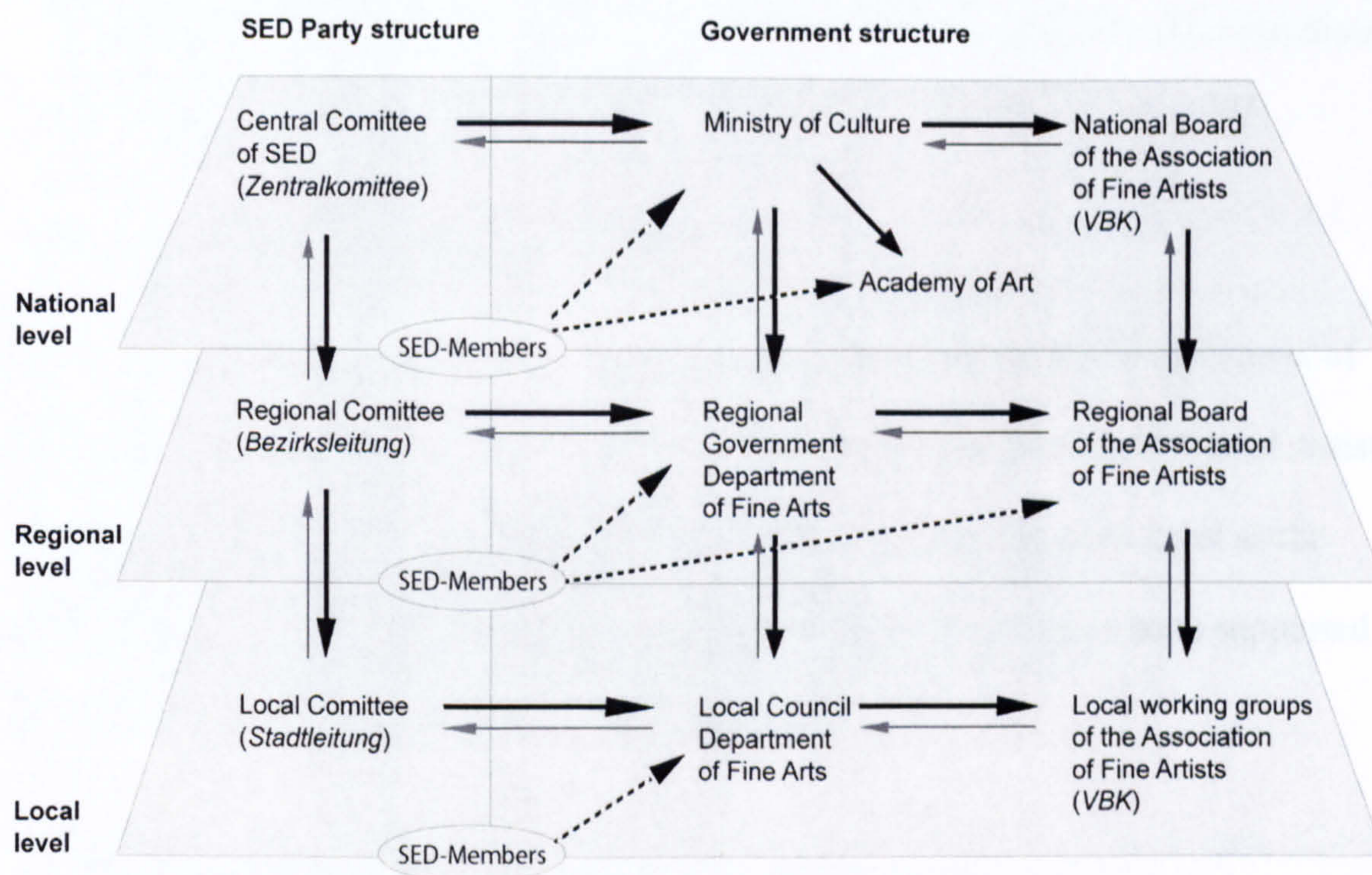
## **2.2 Structures of arts policy in the GDR**

### ***2.2.1 The leading bodies – the SED and the GDR government***

In the GDR, arts policy was embedded in the interaction between the directions of officially formulated arts policy and its interpretation and implementation by the arts institutions and by visual artists. Within these parameters, arts policy shuttled between a dictatorship of consensus and the individual resistance of obstinate artists (Kaiser and Rehberg 1999: 6). Artists were expected to act as educators and to contribute to the creation of a political consciousness for a “new” human being (Gillen 1996: 12).

GDR arts policy was devised within the structures of the government, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany’s (*SED*) Central Committee and the State Arts Department (see figure 1). The government financially supported organisations dealing with the visual arts such as the Association of Visual Artists (*Verband Bildender Künstler - VBK*), the Academy of Art (*Akademie der Künste*) and the State Art Dealers of the GDR (*Staatlicher Kunsthandel der DDR*). As demonstrated in figure 1, the relationship between government, SED and other arts policy bodies was complex because all the state institutions were organised according to the principles of democratic centralism.

Figure 1: Structure of administration of arts policy in the GDR



Democratic centralism refers to the dictates of the higher echelons of the party. Koller (1990) argues that its guiding principle was, 'orders from above and agreement from below'. Decisions from above were binding and the minority had to subordinate to the majority. Any cursory analysis of the structures of power would give a description of the SED hierarchy and the ways in which it sought to control and direct government structure and administration. Over time, the party became the government, controlled all the organs of state, and exerted its influence in every area of society. Control was exerted in three ways: through the executive, through individual SED members and through the secret police, the Stasi (*Staatssicherheit*). As shown in figure 1, control via the individual was incorporated into the structure but operated as a secondary mechanism to the formal hierarchy. A degree of duality between state and party remained, at least as a fiction of the separation of powers. It was certainly the case that the SED determined policy, including visual arts policy, and that the functions of parliament and administration were to transmit policy decisions, to publicise them, and

to carry them out in practice. The hierarchical system of government and administration was kept thoroughly under party control, but was nevertheless separate from the direct decision-making process of party politics.

### **2.2.2 *The Association of Visual Artists***

One of the main bodies concerning the visual arts, other than the SED department of culture and the government cultural departments, was the Association of Visual Artists, the *Verband der Bildenden Künstler* (VBK), which existed at the same level as the Association of Writers and the Association of Musicians. It acted as a state supported and controlled organisation between 1952<sup>5</sup> and 1989.

At this time the association was politically and organisationally based on the principles of democratic centralism, in line with the power arrangements in the GDR. It was the only association dedicated to the concerns of visual artists and its head office was located in Berlin. The 15 leaders of the regional offices formed the board of the association and the leaders of local working groups, which were divided into specific professional sections, such as painting, design, or crafts, in turn reported to the regional offices. The organisation was wholly funded by the government and, compared with the

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<sup>5</sup> In 1945 there was no legal structure that would allow the foundation of an Association of Visual Artists. All legal entities of the Nazi - Government including the "Reichskammer für Bildende Künste" were abolished after the capitulation of Nazi Germany. Nevertheless, preliminary activities were under way to set up a new Association of Visual Artists. At the first meeting of the Free German Trade Union Association (*Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*, FDGB) in 1946, its members agreed to set up several single trade unions that would be combined under the blanket organisation of the FDGB. The newly re-founded Association of Visual Artists (*Schutzverband Bildender Kuns -SBK*) became the seventeenth member trade union within the FDGB. The SBK was founded in the tradition of the old Association of Fine Artists (*Reichsverband Bildender Künstler*) that had existed before 1933. The work of the association was concentrated around social, economic and professional issues concerning visual artists. In 1945 the SMAD licensed another cultural organisation, the League of Culture (*Kulturbund*) which looked after the concerns of visual artists. In 1950, the section of visual artists from trade union no.17 and the Cultural Association merged into one Association of Visual Artists under the auspices of the Cultural Association. In 1952, together with the changes in the structure of the administration from *Länder* to *Bezirke*, the Association of Visual Artists of Germany became an organisation of its own. In 1970, once the GDR had given up on the idea of a unified Germany, the Association of Visual Artists of

budgets of present-day artists' associations, the levels of capital and revenue funding were high. The association received institutional funding of approximately DDRM 9 million annually (Gillen 1994: 140) and employed 161 full-time staff (Schuster 1992: 308). The regional office in Dresden employed 10 staff and the head of the regional office had a company car and a driver at his disposal. Members of the organisation had to pay a monthly membership fee of DDRM 5. Membership conferences took place once every five years following SED party meetings.<sup>6</sup> In 1988 the association had a membership of 6,000 visual artists (Gillen 1994: 140) including art historians. In the region of Dresden alone, 1,200 visual artists belonged to the association.

The VBK not only fulfilled a supporting role regarding the working conditions of visual artists but also acted as an information pool for contract work. The majority of contractors approached the association, which then distributed the contracts among visual artists. There were also some cases of contractors contacting artists directly, though mainly on the advice of the organisation. Membership secured not only the professional status of an artist but also gave access to exhibitions, scholarships, holiday homes and work contracts. For example, the association distributed information about contracts with factories that tended to demand large-scale paintings for the workers' restaurants, cafeterias and for entrance halls in factories and for public places.<sup>7</sup> Artists did not receive a monthly income from the association but knew that if they were in

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Germany (VBKD) replaced the D for Germany in the name with DDR, or German Democratic Republic (VBK-DDR).

<sup>6</sup> Party meetings outlined the state's main economic, social and cultural developments.

<sup>7</sup> Today, most of the "wall paintings" (Wandbilder) and murals have disappeared; sometimes the artists were given the opportunity to buy back their own products from the former factories. Some of the paintings are still on show, for example the entrance hall in the *Gewandhaus* concert hall in Leipzig.



financial trouble, the association would be able to help in finding commissions or in identifying organisations that were interested in purchasing particular pieces of art.<sup>8</sup>

The role of the association could be described as that of mediator between the interests of the SED, the state and individual artists. The association's position as mediator was also used by the secret police (Stasi). Applications to travel abroad had to be sent to the association but the decision on whether the applicant was allowed to travel or not was made by the Stasi. Also, secret police officers worked in association offices, for example in the Dresden regional office.

The character of the relationship between governmental bodies, the SED and artists' association could generally be described as friendly and supportive. The government would contact the VBK for advice on the artists' views on certain arts policy decisions: "What is the opinion of the artists on this?" was the usual question. The organisation, which acted as a forum for artists, was therefore regarded as worth consulting on issues of importance to this community. Together with the social benefits offered to members, the VBK's close relationship with the government generated a feeling of importance in the artists' community. Even the non-members, and especially those who were denied access, had to refer to the association because it set professional standards. However, the relationship was unstable and would change its character in line with developments in arts policy.

The association also offered the artists a window on the outside world because it had access to information about international developments in the visual arts and arts

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<sup>8</sup> As most of the grant-awarding institutions were state run, the end of the financial year was known to be

organisations. In addition, the association secured financial independence for most of its members, as long as they accepted their ideological dependence on the association. The association's work ranged from dealing with pension schemes for the older members to the organisation of exhibitions, including the five-yearly GDR art exhibition in Dresden. Exchange programmes, study trips and participation in international exhibitions were managed by or in collaboration with the Association of Visual Artists.<sup>9</sup> The association owned several properties in the countryside that were used as holiday homes for visual artists, as training and exhibition centres and as places for artists to work and meet. Members had access to special shops offering painting equipment imported from other countries (mostly from the Federal Republic of Germany, FRG) at low cost. The association had emerged from the trade union movement after the Second World War and therefore offered social benefits to its members similar to those provided by the unions.

Gillen (1994:140) argues that the association functioned as did a medieval guild. It guaranteed professional status, issuing a tax certificate (Steuernummer) that was restricted to members and automatically registered them as freelance artists. Being freelance in turn brought with it membership of the Association of Visual Artists. The system helped the state to control every single individual visual artist. The role of the association in admitting artists to membership divided artists into those professionals who attended professional training in the visual arts (preferably in one of the art academies of the GDR), and into autodidacts,<sup>10</sup> who had no qualification in the visual

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a likely time to receive some extra income because institutions wanted to spend the available money in order to avoid budget cuts in the next financial year.

<sup>9</sup> All other commercial matters concerning visual arts were managed by the Office of State Art Commerce or state art dealers (*Staatlicher Kunsthandel der DDR*) established in 1974.

<sup>10</sup> The term autodidact is usually reserved for self-taught artists. In the case of GDR arts policy the expression applied to anyone who did not hold an art related or fine arts degree.

arts. Following graduation from an art academy, artists could become candidate members of the association. Each graduate received a three-year grant from the state to develop his/her own style. In the second or third post-graduation year, candidate members were able to gain full membership of the association. Prior to the award of full membership artists had to present their progress in an exhibition organised by the VBK. Usually, however, an academic degree in the visual arts secured membership.

The number of students admitted to art academies was small, especially in the 1980s as the system weakened. The great majority of applicants were turned down. In 1988, out of 6,759 students enrolled at art and music academies in the country, 216 were visual arts students, according to figures from the Institute of Cultural Research. In 1988, only five students were<sup>11</sup> admitted to the first year of the visual arts degree at the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts and a total of 20 first year students were admitted to all arts academies in the GDR. The state allowed as many students to be admitted as they thought they could afford, bearing in mind the grants which the graduates were entitled to on leaving art school. Under this economic pressure, an elitist arts training system for visual artists was introduced, conflicting with official arts policy but welcomed by the arts academies. Although the intention had been for a policy of open access, educational privilege, far from breaking down, had in fact been re-constructed.

Self-taught applicants to the Association were considered differently. This group had to exhibit and defend their work in front of a commission, as well as demonstrate that they were able to adapt and willing to contribute to the Utopian communism of SED

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<sup>11</sup> This figure was cited by an administrator in the course of an interview. In 1988, five art schools (three at university level and two at high school level) existed. 216 students divided by 6 would give an average of 36 visual arts students per school and, with an estimated period of study of 4 years, there would be an average of nine visual arts students per year.

ideologues. However, these arrangements were subject to modification as the interpretation of the entrance criteria changed in line with official arts policy. In the 1970s, some applicants without academic qualifications had been unable to join the association even after several attempts. In the 1980s, autodidacts passed the entrance procedure without difficulty.

### 2.3 Aim culture

GDR arts policy was built on two foundations: the policy aim proclaimed by the state and the structure designed to support the realization of the aim. This section analyses the purpose and development of the aim culture, in which the artists were to play the part of mediators.

Arts policy, like any other public policy in the GDR, was designed to serve the overall political purpose of the state. The defining vision of the GDR state was in the creation of a society of harmonious people and the creation and promotion of a new and better type of human being. Brecht observed that in the GDR the aim was to nurture a new human being with a higher purpose (*“Es wächst der Mensch mit seinen höheren Zwecken”*)<sup>12</sup>. All activities related to change in GDR society were supposed to converge towards that aim.

The cultural sociologist Göschel (1994: 51) refers to this as the aim culture. The strength and energy of society were focused on the future. In addition the aim, by definition good, was compared with the fascist past, which was declared to be over, once and for all. The re-emergence of fascism was portrayed as the inevitable outcome if the future aim were not reached. The Utopian ideal is thus bound up with a warning about the dangers of fascism.

The GDR was, therefore, engaged in a conflict between past and future, remaining suspicious of the present. This is a familiar concept in German history. Plessner (see

Göschel 1994: 52), with reference to Nietzsche, described this state of being out of touch with the present and with reality as typical of the German destiny and as a reason for an unhappy consciousness. People can never live in the present but always live in relation to an as yet unachieved future goal.<sup>13</sup>

The vision of a future communist society had been based, at least in part, on the ideas of humanist culture and education of the 19th Century. Not only did German intellectuals and artists feel obliged to the bourgeois, humanist ideas of the German classical period,<sup>14</sup> but the Soviet cultural officers Dymshitz and Tulpanow, based in Berlin in 1945/46, were also learned enthusiasts of the period.

Before 1933, bourgeois humanist values had already been integrated in and adapted to the ideas of the German workers' movement in the Weimar Republic. Wilhelm Liebkecht (1976), for example, inverted Bacon's "knowledge is power" into "power is knowledge". The idea of a new human being connected the different working-class movements with the bourgeois reform movement. They met in their yearning for peace, social security and work. In practice, the leaders of the working class movement drew on the spiritual and social heritage of their parents and grandparents.

The aim culture was integrated into the old socialist and communist principles of equality and social justice. The SED party, therefore, aimed to abolish differences in social conditions and class differences. As a result, there existed officially only one

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<sup>12</sup> Brecht uses Seneca's quote "Crescit animus, quoties coepti magnitudinem attendit" ("*Im engen Kreis verengert sich der Sinn, es wächst der Mensch mit seinen grösseren Zwecken*", "In a tight circle sense is narrowed but man grows into his higher purpose"), Büchmann, 1959: 59.

<sup>13</sup> The German philosopher Mayer (1991), reflects on the utopian focus of the GDR with his ironic interpretation "*Utopien sind nicht*" (Utopias cannot be).

social class in the GDR - the class of workers and farmers, the *Arbeiter- und Bauernklasse*. This social change was understood to be a step forward in overcoming cultural differences and especially in raising the status of the working class, previously culturally underprivileged. For example, the so-called "programme of equalisation" was designed to overcome the difference between intellectual and physical work, as well as gender differences. It was intended to abolish the privilege of bourgeois education as practiced in the Weimar Republic.

In the aim culture, the artists were seen to be mediators between the people, the community and the aim. They were supposed to fulfil two main functions: one, to document the community's development towards the aim and two, to represent the aims in their works of art. Art was therefore important for the visualisation of progress, portraying as it did its ups and downs with the use of aesthetic principles. Therefore innovation and progress in the arts focused on the role of art as mediator. Arthur Danto (1991) argues that, in the Renaissance, art progressed if the representation of the artistic images was improved. In the GDR this idea was used to represent, describe and illustrate the Utopian aim.

This role committed the artists to a link with the power of the state in the GDR. Artists were defined as necessary to portray images of progress and this role gave them status. The need for art and consequently for artists was undisputed in a socialist community. Such status has never been reached again in any other societies to date.

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<sup>14</sup> The German classical period refers to the period in the arts between 1745 and 1830, when Beethoven, Goethe and others were active.

Artists were forced to gamble with power. Göschel argues that the artists' close relationship with power reinforced an old German proverb: "Truth I boldly risked to say and chains were what I gained" (*Wahrheit wagt ich kühn zu sagen und die Ketten war'n mein Lohn*).

This aphorism was used frequently in the 1980s by the opposition movement in the GDR and the chains were understood to represent ideology. Unlike other people, however, visual artists rarely use words but communicate through paintings, installations, actions or any other work of art. Usually, they use direct perception, which makes it difficult to pin down their meaning in interpretation. In depicting their perceptions, visual artists have more freedom to manoeuvre within the chains of official interpretation than, for instance, writers.



## 2.4 Arts policy developments

As mentioned above arts policy in the GDR was not static but changed over time. In order to analyse how it was implemented and how visual artists were integrated into the system of support and power, it is necessary to go back to the origins of the GDR and to examine the development of the institutions of power, including the SED art departments, governmental bodies concerned with the visual arts and the institutions outside party and government. This section aims to analyse policy development in the visual arts from 1945 – 1990, in order to help clarify the behaviour of visual artists after unification.

### *2.4.1 The hopeful beginning - re-direction and founding principles from 1946 to 1949*

In 1945, following the end of the second world war, day-to-day survival was foremost in the mind of the population and arts policy was not at the top of the agenda of the allied authorities either. Nevertheless, between 1945 and 1949 some artists returned from exile and the artistic community slowly came back to life. The art academies re-opened and the first post-war theatre production was Lessing's play "Nathan the wise".

In 1946 the political parties began rebuilding confidence in the political process in the occupation zones. "In the beginning was the party", argues Fulbrook (1997: 31) when writing about the Soviet occupation zone. The Socialist Party of Germany and the Communist Party of Germany merged to become the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) in 1946. The newly founded party began its search for a new concept of socialist culture in a period of social, economic and political chaos. Internal battles about the direction of the party and the distribution of power kept party members busy. The SED filled its posts with former members of the communist party in order to weaken the

position of the social democrats in the Soviet Occupation Zone. Many social democrats were expelled from the party over the following years and in 1948 a major purge took place. In addition, there was a search for the suitably qualified and politically blameless who could take on responsibility in the SED.

Relations between the party and other organisations were similar to those between the party and the social democrats. Reconstruction of the arts administration was dominated by the dispute between the German administration of education (Deutsche Verwaltung für Volksbildung) and the party administration over respective areas of responsibility. Arts policy decisions were taken by the German administration of education until 1949, in collaboration with the Soviet Military Administration (Sowjetische Militäradministration Deutschlands - SMAD).

Officially, the Allies administered the four occupation zones but the SED was already preparing and publishing guidelines on visual arts policy for the departments of culture in all occupation zones. The party aimed to appoint one of its members as a cultural representative (*Kulturobmann*) to each local party group. In July 1946, 22 visual artists, who were members of the party, discussed the new role of the SED as it concerned visual arts policy. The comrades set up a political committee and began work on the following four tasks:

1. To find solutions to “art problems”<sup>15</sup> from the party perspective.
2. To organise cultural policy education and general political education for artists who are party members.
3. To propagate the Marxist-Leninist perspective by publishing articles in the press and by training spokespersons on artistic matters.

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<sup>15</sup> The reference to “art problems” is typical of the SED’s policy language. The expression is not clearly defined but two interpretations are possible from the minutes of a meeting of artist party members on 5 July 1946. The artists referred to practical problems such as lack of materials and studio space and the establishment of an art magazine. The authorities however, referred to the new role of the visual arts in the party (Vierneisel, 1996: 791).

4. To organise exhibitions that would be of positive value for the party (Vierneisel 1996: 791).

Even though the visual artists' party programme appeared strongly politically orientated, it was, in the end, primarily a way of gathering and exchanging information for artist party members. At this time associations were still forbidden and the SMAD did not re-introduce the association law until 1947.

In 1948 the SED started to develop the "party of the new type" (*Partei neuen Typs*), similar to Stalin's model party, and the official proclamation of the new party took place at the third party meeting in 1952. The policy structure had become more focused and the diverse visual arts groups were no longer appropriate to party policy. In general, all the different party arts groups came to be seen as separate movements and finally the arts groups ended their collaboration with the party.

At around the same time, artists outside the party, administrators and party officials prepared the ground for a crossbench artists' association. Its aims were to organise permanent exhibitions with visual artists and to set up an arts organisation that would distribute and sell artists' work to support them financially. The state, *Länder* and municipalities were encouraged to commission and purchase visual arts products. The organisation was also given the task of fighting the excesses of the private visual arts market. Max Grabowski, administrator, party member, and one of the founders of the organisation, stressed the need for artists to have financial and social support when producing works of art.

At the time there was a heated debate about artistic quality between those artists who were party members and those who were non-party-members, particularly those whose works had been censored or forbidden between 1933 and 1945. A group of artists around Graboswki set up a journal for visual arts (*Zeitschrift für Bildende Kunst*)<sup>16</sup> and the arguments between the two groups took place mainly on its pages. The debate touched on the production of portraits of Marx, Lenin and Thälmann and their artistic quality.

At the second party meeting in 1949, the cultural policy framework was reiterated and party ideologues reminded artists that party-oriented socialist realism was the preferred style in the visual arts. This was familiar ground because Ackermann<sup>17</sup> had propagated this argument in 1946, while working at the party headquarters as a cultural administrator. He argued that the heads of the party wanted to see art that had realistic content and a social form. Artists should therefore be integrated into a factory environment to be closer to the leading class of society. The party members in the factories were asked to gather people in party discussion groups. However, artists and workers did not meet naturally: in the reports of party members one can read about the laborious and futile attempts to improve mutual understanding. In the 1950s, this policy was expanded with the *Bitterfelder Weg* movement.

The debate about formalism, which became the SED's second attempt to intervene in the content of the visual arts, also began with difficulties in 1948. Dumschütz, the head

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<sup>16</sup> The Journal of Visual Arts existed from 1947 to 1990 and was published in Berlin. The SED was not only its founder, but the party's influence was also visible throughout its existence.

<sup>17</sup> Ackermann served as Cultural Secretary in the Central Secretariat of the SED from 1945-1950. He was an advocate of socialist cultural policy and had been a political activist since 1919. In 1949 he became State Secretary in the Foreign Ministry and had been nominated as a future Minister of Culture but

of the cultural department of the SMAD, published an article about the formalistic direction of German art in the *Tägliche Rundschau*<sup>18</sup> 11/1948. He argued that there was a trend in German art that tended to overemphasize form to the detriment of the balance between form and content. After the publication of the article, the SED organised talks and round-table discussions with artists and people interested in art to convince them of these arguments. The attempt was unsuccessful, as the artists familiar with modernism and those returning from exile were unable to understand such a reduced and polemical interpretation of art. The new generation of ideology-led visual artists and administrators had not yet fully developed.

The SED maintained its deceptive strategy. The policy makers at the SED reflected the interests of the Communist-Stalinist section of the party. While discussions with party members continued (and sometimes with other interested parties), final decisions had already been made. In this way democracy had only a phantom existence in the GDR.

Another development in SED policy took place in Dresden in 1949 and was an object of concern to most artists. Heymann, the newly appointed cultural officer in the central committee of the SED, judged the first public show of German art after the war to be an exhibition of formalism. He argued that hardly any new developments were visible in the show and that the show itself contradicted democratic developments in the soviet zone. The exhibition contained works of art from all four occupation zones. Heymann planned to organise a counter exhibition under the auspices of his department, but his plans never came to fruition. The party report on the Dresden exhibition cited the lack of party control during the preparation of the exhibition as a reason for its “failure”.

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because of party censure did not get the post. Instead, once rehabilitated, he became head of the Film

According to party rhetoric, the geographical distance between the SED headquarters in Berlin and the local party office in Dresden were to blame. The campaign against formalism had begun with difficulty and had become bound up with internal organisational problems in the SED. In the Department of Culture's evaluation, less than 70% of the work plan had been fulfilled and in 1949 the department was duly reorganised.

At this time there was no arts policy as such but it was possible to discern the development of some characteristics and objectives in the Soviet Occupation Zone. These were developed further over the forthcoming years and became the Arts policy of the GDR. Its characteristics were as follows:

Firstly, the Soviet Union was considered to be the model and it was therefore deemed extremely important to build a close relationship. The slogan "Learning from the Soviet Union means learning to win" became very popular with the SED in the late 1940s as the links became closer. Fulbrook (1997: 25) argues that the relationship between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPDSU) and the SED was one of master and pawn in a game of chess.

Secondly, the two main arts strategies, the fight against formalism and the insistence on socialist realism as the dominant art form, were formulated and implemented between 1945 and 1949. This twin strategy had emerged out of the SED, which prepared the ground by publicising these developments through public speeches and the distribution

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Department in the Ministry of Culture and held several other positions until his death in 1973.

<sup>18</sup> *Tägliche Rundschau* was the official Soviet Military Authority German language newspaper.

of pamphlets. However, its influence had by that time not had a major impact on the artists' community.

Thirdly, there was a certain time lag between initial internal party policy discussions and the final public announcement of new policies. For instance, the SED first discussed the "party of the new type" in 1948 but did not make its ideas public until 1952. It appears that new policy ideas needed time to settle and were first tested in the party internally before being brought out into the open. This characteristic remained part of the SED political tool kit until the late 1970s and vanished only in the 1980s.

Fourthly, there was a clear push for a unified Germany. The art exhibition in Dresden contained works of art drawn from all four occupation zones and this concept was taken up in a discussion about German national culture. The SED later changed policy so that, between 1961 and 1989, unification was not an issue, after which of course it re-emerged.

To sum up, between 1946 and 1949 and after the horrifying experience of World War II, administrators and artists were trying to find ways of making the arts prosper. There was an apparent sense of chaos, but also hope and a renewed energy, as artists attempted to identify ways of producing and communicating their work. Administrators and artists agreed on a joint vision of the importance of the arts and their need for public support.

Although the characteristics of GDR arts policy were adapted, re-arranged and re-structured in the following decades, the guiding principles set out between 1946 and

1949 remained valid throughout that time. Developments in arts policy were affected by contrasting stages of flexibility and rigidity, depending on the current political situation, as has been shown in this chapter. However, the foundation stone of the policy was laid between 1945 and 1949.



#### 2.4.2 *The early days of the German Democratic Republic - 1949 to 1954*

In the first five years of the newly founded German Democratic Republic the SED leadership and the state administration combined to establish a visual arts funding structure. They developed a funding practice using the guidelines of the aim culture that established financial security for visual artists. Initially, the situation had a temporary feel and visual artists were hesitant about whether or not to trust the new administration. The problem was solved with the founding of the ministry of culture and the appointment of the first minister in 1954. The period of uncertainty drew to a close with the visual arts administration now firmly located within the state administration.

In 1949 the German Economic Commission (*Deutsche Wirtschaftskommission*) drew up a central budget for the GDR which included expenditure on visual arts organisations in the initial two-year plan period. In addition to this direct expenditure on culture, the Cultural Fond of the GDR (*Kulturfond der DDR*) was created in 1949. This was the instrument for distributing commissions among artists and was financed through the so-called tax for culture (*Kulturabgabe*), which was a small surcharge<sup>19</sup> added to each ticket or record sold. The state determined that 75% of the income from the surcharge should be spent on improving the cultural life of the working people in the city and in the countryside. The remaining 25% was dedicated to supporting up-and-coming artists. The guidelines of the funding authority held that art supported by the Cultural Fond should be of relevance to the whole population.

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<sup>19</sup> Five Pfennig were added to the price of every ticket for dance, concerts, ballet, exhibitions and film as well as to the radio licence. An additional charge of 10 Pfennig needed to be paid for clubbing or

In 1953 a second grant awarding body, the Central Commissioning and Remuneration Commission (*Zentrale Auftrags und Prämienkommission*), was created with the specific aim of commissioning work by individual artists. Finances were allocated partly from the budget of the State Commission of Art and from the Cultural Foundation.

The guidelines of the Commission document a strong political interest in the idea of socialist realism. The artists were to be supported in their efforts to master socialist realism as the dominant theme in the GDR (*Richtlinien für die Arbeitsweise der Staatlichen Auftrags- und Prämienkommission*, 1953) and as a result socialist realism became a basic concept of GDR arts policy. Börner (1993: 21) argues that realism can be characterised by the political attitude of the artist; by the willingness to add to the classical (humanist) tradition; by feeling close to the people; by representing positive heroes and by working with contemporary issues or themes. The adjective socialist added to realism made the latter meaningless. As Glaser (1997: 173) points out, realism is such a broad term that it needs many adjectives or none, rather than just the one, for example romantic realism, new realism, magical realism, visual realism. Socialist realism was meant to be the main stylistic concept of GDR art, originally developed by Lukacs,<sup>20</sup> and linked aesthetic form directly with socio-economic factors (Jordan and Weedon, 1995: 99). However, it turned out to be a hollow phrase.

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dancing. One percent of the price of every book, record or print sold from uncopyrighted authors went into the account of the Cultural Fund.

<sup>20</sup> Lukacs consolidated the socialist realist theory of art and literature, which was first developed in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, where he was then in exile (Tate 1988: 60). Lukacs (1963: 94) argues that socialist realism differs from critical realism not only from a socialist perspective, but also in using this perspective to describe the forces working towards socialism from the inside. Lukacs further points out that socialist realism is concerned with locating human qualities that make for the creation of a new social order. In this way, Lukacs's understanding of socialist realism and the concept of the aim culture are linked because they both favour the creation of the better human being.

Originally,<sup>21</sup> the authorities used socialist realism in their arguments against formalism. Socialist realism was proclaimed as an alternative to formalist tendencies in the GDR and to the “decadent developments”(Börner, 1993) in Western Europe and in the USA. By the 1970s it had become more and more obvious that the concept itself was meaningless and it was slowly amalgamated into a more expansive approach to socialist art. According to the *Kulturpolitisches Wörterbuch* (1978: 907), socialist realism cannot be reduced to a certain style, form or theme, but is open and universal to all artistic and life expressions of humankind. In 1988 at the tenth meeting of the visual arts association, the Association President, Willi Sitte, was no longer speaking of socialist realism. Instead, he used the phrase “art in socialism”, adding that its meaning could not be summarised.

In the early years of the GDR the need to produce works of art that would enable the ruling working class to gain access to the arts dominated art funding policy and it was expected that socialist realism would meet this need. The implementation of these policy objectives, which were directed towards the aim culture, was guaranteed because decisions on access, control and content in visual arts funding were taken by state-funded organisations. As a result, a close relationship was established between ideological intervention, making socialist realism the one preferred style of GDR art, and funding policy. The state provided funds as long as artists integrated GDR policy aims into their work. The freedom of the arts was therefore severely limited by the need for the financial support that was received in return.

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<sup>21</sup> According to the *Kulturpolitisches Wörterbuch* (1978), Stalin was the first person to use the wording in relation to the first Writers’ Congress in 1932.

The State Commission for Art (*Staatliche Kommission für Kunstangelegenheiten*)<sup>22</sup> was responsible for the implementation of policy aims and for the administration and control of funding policy between 1949 and 1954. Its main tasks included the defeat of formalism, the fight against decadence and the promotion of realist art by using the great old masters as a point of reference. The commission claimed to promote and to control cultural life in the newly founded republic as demanded by the SED. In 1952, as a result of administrative reform, the government introduced regional and district government departments<sup>23</sup> in the newly established *Bezirke*. The structure of government became similar to that of the SED and a close structural relationship between state and party was formed. Party headquarters determined the main policy aims and the State Commission for Art passed on the information to their regional and district offices. The debate on formalism was promoted with the slogan “We need to fight against formalism because it is inhuman” (*Stenographische Protokolle des deutschen Künstlerkongresses 1953*). This campaign was devised by the former political adviser of the Soviet Control Commission in the Soviet Occupation Zone, Wladimir Semjonow. The clear message to visual artists was that production of formalist pieces of art was inappropriate.

At first the artists did not take the debate on formalism seriously. At the time the government was encouraging artists in exile to return and settle in the Soviet Occupation Zone. As an incentive, privileges were offered, such as additional food rations and access to housing. Artists felt flattered by these attentions and paid little heed to the ideological pressures involved. They were also advised by SED-comrades to support the official line.

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<sup>22</sup> The State Commission for Art was located in the Ministry of Education.

In addition to the newly established governmental bodies, the Foundation of the German Academy of Art was created in 1950 and was broadly welcomed by visual artists. At first this was interpreted as a move towards greater understanding between artists from both German states and towards artistic freedom. However, the GDR government expected SED policies to prevail. Formalist artists were stigmatised and now had to deal with criminal proceedings, denunciation and threats to their artistic existence.<sup>24</sup> In 1951 Orlow published the article "*Wege und Irrwege der modernen Kunst*"<sup>25</sup> in the newspaper *Tägliche Rundschau*, building on Dymshitz's arguments and continuing the conflict with those artists who refused to follow the party line. In Dresden, Griebel, Grundig and in Chemnitz, Cremer, a former communist, came under attack.

The worsening political climate reached its climax in the uprising of 17 July 1953.

Demonstrations were held to express economic discontent and calling for improved living conditions. The protests expanded into broader political demands such as anti-communism and unification with the west.<sup>26</sup> In response, the regime put its security

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<sup>23</sup> In 1952, administrative reforms were carried out, changing the five *Länder* to 15 regions of the GDR, called "*Bezirke*". Every region was divided into several smaller districts (*Kreise*).

<sup>24</sup> See also Schulz, Ilona, *Die Barlach Ausstellung 1951/52 in der deutschen Akademie der Künste der DDR* in Feist, G. (1997), *Kunstdokumentation SBZ/DDR*, Dumont, Köln.

<sup>25</sup> Orlow was a pseudonym for Semjonow who was political adviser to the soviet control commission in the Soviet Occupation Zone.

<sup>26</sup> "The background to the revolt lay in the rapid changes of policy in the preceding twelve months. ...In May 1952 the *Sperrzone* - a restricted strip of land along the inner-German border - was created. Defensive forces were built up and the foundation of the paramilitary Association for Sport and Technology (*Gesellschaft für Sport und Technik*) increased pressure on young people to conform. At the same time, other measures were taken to transform the structures of the state and the economy. The 15 districts were created. In the autumn and winter of 1952/53, the pace of agricultural collectivisation was increased, causing many peasants to flee to the west, and bringing shortages and difficulties with food supply in towns.... The government proposed a 10% increase in productivity. More general economic difficulties were caused by a range of factors, including prior economic restructuring and dismantling, as well as more recent losses of revenue, difficulties with imports of raw materials, and diversion of material and human resources to the building up of the police and military forces. Living conditions were seriously deteriorating in early 1953. Following Stalin's death in May 1953, the new Soviet leadership

forces on maximum alert and answered the protests by force, backed by Soviet tanks. There is no evidence of direct implications of these events for arts policy, although visual artists had expressed dissatisfaction with the state for pursuing criminal proceedings against formalist artists.

Only a few days after 17 July 1953, the writer Wolfgang Harig criticised the work of the State Commission of Culture, arguing that its command administration had intervened in aesthetic questions. Many artists were disappointed with the management of the commission and wrote a letter of complaint to Grotewohl, the first GDR Prime Minister. As a result of this growing dissatisfaction, and after the experience of the uprising of 17 July 1953, structural changes were swiftly implemented.

In 1954 a Ministry of Culture was created. Its first minister was Becher, a well-known writer and activist who was already suffering from health problems. Nevertheless, artists had high expectations of him as they were sure that, as an artist himself, he would understand their concerns. In reality, little changed. The administration was re-structured and administrators changed positions but remained in arts administration.

To conclude, we can see that, in the first five years of the GDR, SED arts policy was successfully established. Arrangements for the financial and social security of visual artists had been implemented from the beginning. SED and government administrators put the tenets of the aim culture into practice and party policy decisions resulted in

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began to indicate its concern about the SED's hard-line policies. The GDR's SED leadership received instructions to halt the rapid collectivisation of agriculture; traders and craftsmen were to be given more opportunities; and the middle classes were to be won over with a range of concessions. The office of the SED (*Politbüro*) in the Central Committee rather abruptly issued a communique on 9 June 1953, openly admitting its mistakes and accepting the Soviet-imposed changes. Party workers were shattered; they

action. Arts organisations were created, structured and restructured. Artists participated carefully but seemed not quite to comprehend the significance of government actions. In 1953/54, following the uprising, some visual artists questioned the anti-formalism policy. After the repression of the uprising structural changes were used to strengthen SED arts policy and the responsibility for arts funding was given to a newly founded Ministry of Culture.

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could hardly believe that they now had to preach the opposite of what they had been struggling to support over the previous months." Fulbrook (1997: 179).

### ***2.4.3 The manifestation of the hard-line policy - 1954 to 1970***

In the years between 1954 and 1970 arts policy makers increasingly refused to accept any dissent. The SED and the government were determined to implement the aim culture by any means and as a result, arts policy makers increasingly expected conformity from the artists' community, and punished dissenters. This sub-section analyses how and why arts policy became so hard-line and how visual artists reacted to this development.

In general, the situation in these years was influenced by the Soviet Union's renunciation of Stalinism, as well as by the uprisings in Hungary and Poland. Artists had increasing difficulty in understanding or even following the party line of the SED and the ministry of culture. Most visual artists had experienced different artistic forms, styles and methods in other parts of the world and were used to drawing from a variety of different sources. They observed the growing influence of the party on the arts but again found it difficult to understand how serious the party was in terms of developing an arts policy. The SED paid little attention to new ideas in the party and went on the offensive instead. Show trials were organised and artists, mostly writers and philosophers, were prosecuted. Harich, Janka, Just, Loest, Zögel and Wolf were punished for deviating from the party line and most received lengthy prison sentences. Bloch, a philosopher at Leipzig University, had to resign his lectureship and Mayer, a well-known literature professor at the same university, was advised to behave in a more politically correct manner, which meant supporting the Utopian view of SED ideology.

In 1958, the anti-Ulbricht wing of the SED, well known because of the 1953 uprising, was silenced. Party members such as Wandel, secretary of the central committee of the



SED, and his comrades Schirdewan, Wollweber and Ziller were dismissed from the political committee. At this time Hager, one of the most important individuals in GDR arts policy, came to power and was to remain there until unification. In 1955 Hager accepted the post of party secretary of culture in the party central committee and in 1958 he became a member of the most powerful committee in the GDR, the political office of the central committee of the SED. Hager guaranteed a certain amount of continuity in GDR arts policy. He represented firm administration and was deeply committed to the SED ideology of the late 1940s. By the 1970s and 1980s he was one of the representatives of the inflexible, ignorant and lethargic old guard of the GDR that was to contribute to the collapse of the system.

Against the background of the suppression of the Hungarian uprising and the cultural policy trials, the SED re-established itself and launched the Bitterfelder Weg campaign. At the sixth meeting of the central committee in 1959, the first Bitterfelder Conference, SED arts officials<sup>27</sup> judged the arts to have failed in a quantitative and a qualitative sense in their twin aims of guiding the population to the vision of the new human being and of supporting SED arts policy with artistic productions. The party decided that the gap between developments in the arts and the socialist aim culture should be bridged with a new kind of contemporary literature reflecting everyday life (*Gegenwartsliteratur*). The conference, under the banner “seize your pen, mate....” (“*Greif zur Feder, Kumpel...*”), began a movement in which professional writers as well as factory workers participated. The SED attempted to improve the economic development of the GDR by educating workers to become creative writers in their spare time. Professional writers were asked to establish closer links with the leading working

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<sup>27</sup> SED officials are defined as the decision makers in the SED concerning arts policy.

class, as first outlined in 1946. It was regarded as the task of artists to portray a new positive hero emerging from the debate on socialist realism. The SED held political responsibility but the exercise was organised by the Trade Unions. The campaign became known as the *Bitterfelder Weg* and expanded into other arts fields including the visual arts. Painters were allocated studios in factories and as a result, a large number of visual arts workers' groups developed which then experimented with visual arts and were taught by professional visual artists. The *Bitterfelder Weg* was also used to distinguish between so-called high art, represented by the Association of Visual Artists, and the more mass-oriented cultural activities in the factories, led by the Trade Unions. A division between high art and artistic mass production (*künstlerisches Volksschaffen*) was created in a new structural plan in the Department of Culture at the SED headquarters.

At the same time a long-standing organisational problem was solved. Originally, it had been envisaged that party members would act along party lines and disseminate party directives in their workplaces. However, this had been unpopular with senior managers who were not party members and who thus received political instructions from their workers who were. For instance, it was possible for a Minister in the state administration to be in a position where he might receive party political instructions from a member of his staff. The situation did not arise in the Ministry of Culture, where the Minister, who was at the same time a member of the central committee of the SED, received instructions directly from the Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED, as first suggested by Grabowski in 1948. As a result, all those occupying senior arts management posts in government administration were required to be members of the

SED.<sup>28</sup> Vierneisel (1996: 807) argues that this demonstrates that organisational structures were seen as expressions of power and that hierarchical consciousness existed in the GDR.

While the ideological pressure on the arts administration increased, the financial situation of the visual artists' community in the GDR improved year by year. At the fourth meeting of the Association of Visual Artists in 1959 it was announced that between 1955 and 1959 approximately DDRMark 11 million had been allocated to commission work from visual artists (*Protokollband zum IV. Kongress des VBKD*, 1959: 303). In the following five-year period the amount allocated increased to DDRMark 20 million (*Rechenschaftsbericht der zentralen Revisionskommission auf dem V. Kongress des VBKD*, 1964: 40f). The amount of funding allocated by government and other organisations such as the *Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (FDGB), the German trade union movement and the *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (FDJ), the Free German Youth Organisation, was generous, especially when compared with the level of funding for the visual arts in the late 1990s. This increased the elevation of visual artists to a position of importance in GDR society. Funding was organised and available to visual artists as long as they committed themselves to the role of mediator between the aim culture and the people. Via the Artists' Association, visual artists knew how to obtain contracts and commissions, where to sell pieces of art and where to apply for grants. In a sense, artists were able to take funding for granted.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> The one possibility for non-SED members to work in senior management positions in government was to join one of the four other GDR parties. Often members of other parties were used as an alibi for democracy, proving the plurality of the GDR party system. In reality none of the other "*Blockparteien*" were political decision makers.

<sup>29</sup> The role of money in the GDR needs to be explained. The DDRMark was of course the essential tool for the exchange of goods but it had limited validity because not everything was available for the DDRMark. Goods were rare and often unavailable. The consumer society focused on the exchange of goods. It was most important to know where and when which goods were available.

Budget cuts as such did not exist in official GDR arts policy. Very few government officials knew details of the overall GDR budget, which was kept confidential. Financial information reaching the public was manipulated and only ever presented a positive picture: arts funding would be available as long as artists fulfilled their political commitments.

Another important political issue, the demand for German national unity, was resolved with the building of the Berlin wall in 1961. The last means of escape to the West was closed off overnight. Since the end of World War II, hopes of German national unity had lingered not only in the minds of the majority of the population but, as Fulbrook (1995: 25) explains, even in the highest ranks of the SED, where there had been momentary flirtations with the idea that reunification might be a preferred objective. In the visual arts several joint programmes had underlined these hopes. One example was the joint Dresden - Stuttgart city exhibition, which was shown in both cities in 1956. Nevertheless, cultural exchange with the Federal Republic was increasingly used as a propaganda tool and after the events of 1961 West Germans lost interest in East German art.

At the sixth party meeting of the SED in 1963, Ulbricht, the Head of State, criticised SED cultural policy and Kurella, Secretary for Culture at the Central Committee and amateur artist (Gassner 1996: 654), admitted that the Cultural Department had not been forceful enough in its attempts to convey the party line to the artists. Hager consequently took over from Kurella.

At the fifth Congress of the Association of Visual Artists in 1964 visual artists began to question SED officials. Cremer, a sculptor from Karl-Marx-Stadt (now Chemnitz) and SED member, asked the Soviet-trained officials about the disappearance of 1000 communists in the Soviet Union during Stalin's rule. The answer merely stated that this was the business of the comrades in the Soviet Union. Artists who actively participated and showed interest in policy had to recognise that there were some questions that not even SED members were allowed to ask. Artists became interested in the policy of taboos and the so-called white patches or blank areas. Taboos can signify failure, something SED official policy hardly admitted to after 1961. As a result some visual artists became suspicious of SED practices.

However, there was some evidence of liberalisation in SED headquarters as ideas such as decentralisation and the extension of decision-making from the party base were heard. SED officials sought advice on the implementation of their liberalisation policies from their colleagues in the Soviet Union in 1964. The timing of the visit turned out to be unfortunate. Brezhnev, who had just taken over from Krushchev as the new President of the Soviet Union, did not support ideas of decentralisation and liberalisation but instead claimed a higher contribution to the defence budget from the GDR. Benzin (1995: 243) argues that at this point the GDR lost its sovereignty, if indeed it had ever had any.

As a result, SED policy makers exerted closer control over arts policy developments and a new working arrangement was approved by the SED political committee in 1965. The Cultural Department of the SED analysed and controlled artistic progress, in particular making regular assessments of the ideological situation within the artistic

community (Vierneisel 1996: 814/155). In addition, administrators began to refer to culture, including the arts, as part of the production line. Culture, a producer of ideology, was therefore integrated into the vocabulary of the socialist economy. Socialist realism was seen as an integral part of socialism, enabling the policy objectives outlined in the aim culture to be reached.

Control and evaluation from SED headquarters was however regarded as insufficient. Hager argued that the SED would only know about the activities of the artists' community if it had reliable and exact information (Vierneisel 1996:809). As a result, the GDR's secret police (Stasi) took over some of the controlling assignments and began to extend its reach into the artists' community. In the early days of the GDR the Stasi had shown little interest in artists and had only made occasional observations. In 1964, the Stasi expanded and a new department (Hauptabteilung XX) was created with responsibility for internal surveillance. One of its main tasks was to increase the activities of agents in the artistic community. The Stasi initially focused on writers but then widened its interest to include the visual arts community. Walter and Prittwitz(1993) argues that the Stasi created an invisible internal front and became the policeman of SED arts policy. Until 1989, Stasi activities had been little known by artists. Only those who had had direct contact knew something of their activities but kept quiet for fear of punishment. The Stasi worked invisibly alongside and in conjunction with official policy announcements.

While the Stasi had taken over the control mechanism, conflict arose between visual artists and SED officials. Following the first Bitterfelder Conference in 1959, visual artists and workers had attempted to work together. This changed at the second

Bitterfelder Conference in 1964 when some visual artists announced that they could not continue working in factories. Artists felt like outsiders in the world of manufacturing. The slogan of the *Bitterfelder Weg*<sup>30</sup> conference unofficially changed from “seize your pen, mate” to “a harsh track across the fields” (*Bitterer Feldweg*), an expression of the general feeling among the participating artists that the movement had failed. It was announced publicly that the *Bitterfelder Weg* was in need of improvement and officials spoke of further developments. It was impossible to talk openly about failure. In reality, contracts between factories and artists declined and by the time of the VIII. party meeting of the SED in 1972 the *Bitterfelder Weg* was no longer mentioned.

At the 11th meeting of the Central Committee in 1965, SED criticism of artists continued. It was claimed that artists tended to support nihilistic and sceptical ideas contrary to official party policy. Ebersbach,<sup>31</sup> a visual artist from Leipzig, may be seen as a typical example of how young visual artists who did not adhere to SED ideology were treated at the time. Ebersbach’s painting “Self-portrait with friends” (*Selbstbildnis mit Freunden*) was criticised in the GDR journal of visual arts (No 3/1966 *Bildende Kunst*) for being too individualistic. The article claimed that the model character of socialist thinking and feeling was missing and that his philosophy of life was dominated by scepticism and individualistic self-admiration. He was summoned, threatened with arrest and occasionally visited by the Stasi in his studio to supervise his development. After the first visit of the Stasi he burned the contentious painting. Ebersbach was not a dissident of the regime but had tried to express the ideas of a young painter. As soon as these were deemed to be in conflict with official party policy, self-censorship came into

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<sup>30</sup> Bitterfeld is an industrial town near the city of Leipzig. In the GDR it was a centre of the chemical industry and a symbol of pollution.

<sup>31</sup> Hartwig Ebersbach studied fine arts in Leipzig. He finished his studies in 1964 and in 1965 made his debut at the VII. Bezirkskunstausstellung in Leipzig.

play. Becker (1990 and 1995: 459), a German writer, argued that a censor prefers not to have to exercise his/her powers of censorship but would rather not have artists produce contentious art. Thus, the use of self-censorship became more widespread in the visual artists' community.

As a result of policy intervention directed at the visual artists' community, artists increasingly lost their trust in arts policy. Information on policy was disregarded because official statements contained empty phrases and little actual content. SED arts policy was seen as all gloss and no substance as the rift between artists and government deepened. Some artists were persuaded to emigrate or forced into exile. Bohley (1995: 469) mentioned that 1,000 out of 6,000 members of the Association of Visual Artists had applied for an exit visa in the years before 1989. Others felt an obligation to the GDR as their homeland and remained, hoping that change would come, that official policy would allow more freedom and that there would be less interference and intrusion.

The artists' community was divided into four main groups, measured by differing degrees of political conformity. Some artists chose internal exile, which made them even more of a political target in the 1970s and 1980s, while others emigrated. A third group supported SED arts policy by following the party's decrees. The fourth group, which represented the majority, tried to produce their own art within the given political obligations and power structures. These artists developed a *modus vivendi*, which suited the GDR conditions of the time. Fulbrook (1995: 129) writes of the creation of a niche society. She argues that these artists had to create spaces of personal happiness,



privacy and fulfilment, with corresponding compromises if outer conformity was demanded. These personal arts spaces could be studios or even artists' flats.

In 1968, at a time when the western world was rocked by student protests, the GDR remained calm. Fulbrook (1995: 199f) writes that some spontaneous, individual or localised protests took place but that the Stasi was able to suppress all forms of resistance. The Prague Spring and the intervention of the forces of the Warsaw Pact to suppress protests in the Czech Republic added to the mood of frustration in the artists' community.

In addition, SED officials withdrew permission to publish from those writers who had supported the Prague Spring. Although visual artists were not under direct attack, fear created in other fields, such as literature, extended to the visual arts community. The artists' community as a whole was vulnerable to political intervention. Artists knew, regardless of which area they worked in, that critical political interpretation of their work could in the worst cases lead to imprisonment.

Arts policy practice remained unchanged during the remainder of the Ulbricht era.

Other than the successive waves of hope (on the side of the artists) and interference (on the side of the party), Ulbricht's legacy proved to be the proliferation of extremely large-scale monuments of the heroes of socialism. Dresden received a monument of Thälmann while the citizens of Karl-Marx-Stadt were now able to contemplate a bust of Karl Marx, described by Cremer (Feist 1996) as an "inhuman outsize desk sculpture".

To sum up, in the 1950s and 1960s arts policy was increasingly dominated by ideological policy announcements and their enforcement by SED and government officials. The Ulbricht era may therefore be described as a period of hard-line policy and censorship. The objectives of the aim culture were, however, not fulfilled, despite the determined efforts of SED and government officials to make artists fulfil their role as mediators between the aim culture and the people.

In general, GDR arts policy moved in regular cycles; waves of hope and quasi-liberalisation were repeatedly followed by periods of clamp-down and censorship. The aim itself was never questioned until the whole policy collapsed in 1989. Policy outcomes were measured regularly but often results failed to come close to reaching the aim. It proved difficult to create a new and better human being but policy failures were not made public and criticism of the government was eliminated.

#### ***2.4.4 The 1970s: from the years of hope to the ice age policy and the artists' niches***

In the 1970s, visual arts policy continued to swing between liberalisation and repression. As a result, misunderstandings between SED officials and visual artists occurred. Some artists created private arts spaces, known as niches, which slowly developed into semi-public exhibition spaces and informal information networks. The purpose of this section is to analyse these developments with special reference to visual artists' working and living conditions.

In 1971 Honecker replaced Ulbricht as General Secretary of the SED. By 1976 the leading positions of party and State had merged into one post and Honecker became Head of the State Council of the GDR (*Staatsratsvorsitzender der DDR*) whilst remaining as Head of the SED. After the uncompromising Ulbricht era Honecker came to power amid expectations of policy change. In the early 1970s, relations with the West had been frozen and past confrontational strategies needed reconsideration. With regard to arts policy, the relationship between party, government and artists was in need of rebuilding.

As always, new policy initiatives were announced at party conferences and meetings. At the VIII. Party Conference of the SED in 1971 a new general development programme was launched. The main task of this programme was to improve the living conditions of the people of the GDR. A large-scale housing<sup>32</sup> programme was announced, including not only the building of extensive housing estates, but also the development of infrastructure, such as schools, restaurants, youth clubs and

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<sup>32</sup> In this case the term 'housing' refers to large housing estates, built for thousands of people and conceived as small towns in their own right, for example Dresden-Prohlis.

supermarkets. It was hoped that life in a new flat on a new estate and some material comforts would make people feel more at ease with life in the German Democratic Republic. For the visual artists, the development programme guaranteed work as one percent of the total budget had to be spent on the artistic design of the buildings.

Additional social benefits were introduced and young families were offered interest-free loans. The development of youth fashion increased and the state supported the emergence of an indigenous rock music scene in its attempt to convince a generation that had only ever known life behind the wall that it was a place worth living in.

A fresh wind also seemed to be blowing through arts policy. The SED and government officials admitted that past interference and intrusion had paralysed artistic endeavour. In an attempt to reassure visual artists of his support, Honecker announced in December 1971: “When one takes into account the strong position of socialism, then in my opinion no taboos can exist in art and literature. This applies to questions of content and design as well as to style...” (Honecker, 1975: 247).

This was new rhetoric after years of constant reference to socialist realism as the only possible style for the arts in the GDR. The Head of Party and State made controlled concessions and appeared to address questions of arts policy sensitively. In addition, words begat action: in literature, signals were set with the publication of several politically controversial works such as *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* by Plenzdorf, *Franziska Linkerhand* by Reihmann and *König David Bericht* by Heym. Works of visual art depicting mental conditions of fear and threat were exhibited, something that would have been impossible in the 1950s and 1960s. There was less interference in the artists’ community, although Stasi surveillance continued.

Artists interpreted Honecker's speech and the actions that followed as signals of liberalisation in arts policy. Unfortunately, they had misunderstood; Honecker's words had been carefully chosen. The phrase announcing there should be no taboos in literature and art was in the conditional and the "when"<sup>33</sup> referred to a future, Utopian situation. Once Socialism had gained a position of sufficient strength and the aim culture had been achieved, taboos could be disregarded, but not now. Furthermore, Honecker used the phrase "in my opinion", implying that this was a personal statement and not necessarily a reflection of government opinion. Although he did not speak of the present, most artists related the statement to the present time and were hopeful of liberalisation.

Visual artists were not alone in interpreting the phrase in this way. In the 1990s, academics such as Glaser, Feist and Gillen regarded the speech as an essential turning point in GDR arts policy. The phrase "...there should be no taboos in art and literature..." was interpreted not only to mean the end of hard-line policies but also as the end of political restriction on visual artists.

Even though Honecker's 1971 speech had not been intended to produce policy change, a significant change in government strategy had emerged. In the 1960s, artists had had to act according to official policy announcements. The new strategy operated differently. Official policy was announced in vague terms that either could be interpreted in a number of different ways or had a double meaning. Misunderstanding between SED and government officials on the one side and visual artists on the other

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<sup>33</sup> In English, one can use if and when to express the meaning of the German *wenn*.

became an integral part of arts policy. Because of what I will call the deliberate “policy of misinterpretation”, communication problems between visual artists and arts officials were common. While the new strategy increasingly drove artists and decision makers apart, it also allowed both groups more freedom of movement within their separate communities.

The SED used the new strategy whenever they thought they could derive most benefit from it. The publication of the controversial books mentioned above was intended to give artists an impression of liberalisation in the arts. As soon as the SED felt threatened by the artists’ actions, control mechanisms would once again be put in place. The new strategy created time for policy makers to amend, reformulate or develop decisions without the need for official changes to policy. Government officials would make pronouncements on arts policy developments, then, based on the artists’ reaction, the announcements were adapted or qualified. Official statements were therefore used as market research or as a feasibility study for future policy decisions, giving the impression that visual artists had gained an even more valuable position than before.

However, the new approach did not suit hard-line politicians such as Hager, the SED’s Head of Culture. Hager (1987: 36) corrected Honecker’s vague phrase in 1972, commenting that, when considering the range and variety (*Weite und Vielfalt*) of socialist realism, concessions do not have to be made to bourgeois ideologies and imperialist notions of art. Hager continued to represent the hard-line policy of the Ulbricht era, attempting to re-introduce reactionary arts policies throughout the 1970s. Nevertheless, even Hager and other hard-line SED and government officials had to accept that policies needed amendment. The 1950s notions of socialist realism

gradually vanished in the 1970s. In addition, cultural heritage and traditions far removed from communist ideology and previously unconsidered were integrated into socialist society. One example of this was the celebration of the *Lutherjahr*, the anniversary of Martin Luther's birth, in 1983.

Honecker's relaxation of domestic policy was related to developments in foreign policy. The Federal Republic officially recognised the GDR as a separate German state in a Basic Contract (*Grundlagenvertrag*) in 1972. The Treaty on Security and Collaboration was signed at the 1975 Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and allowed selected GDR citizens to travel to visit relatives in the Federal Republic. The SED also tolerated the viewing of Western television programmes,<sup>34</sup> a habit they had tried to outlaw in the 1960s.<sup>35</sup>

Visual artists were initially flattered by the policy of misinterpretation, hoping for more liberalisation, and were therefore unable to see that they were being misled. Their optimism proved short-lived, as a new ice age in arts policy began. In 1976 Kunze's poem "The Wonderful Years" ("*Die wunderbaren Jahre*") was published in West Germany without official permission from the GDR's Ministry of Culture. In response, Kunze was dismissed from the GDR's Writers' Association. In the same year Biermann,<sup>36</sup> a poet and singer who had moved to East Berlin in the 1960s, was denied re-entry into the GDR, following a short visit to the West.

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<sup>34</sup> Western television could only be received via special aerials, but this was not possible in Dresden because it is situated in a valley and even very big aerials did not give access to western television.

<sup>35</sup> In the 1960s young SED members took down aerials in order to prevent people from watching western television.

Hager likened the sanctions to a thunderstorm that would clear the air (Jäger, 1994: 165). Some artists were deeply disappointed by these developments and twelve well-known writers addressed a protest letter to Honecker and Hager, asking for a rethink of the sanction on Biermann. Over 100 additional artists, including visual artists, put their signature to the letter. Kunze commented on this event, paraphrasing the former Minister of Culture Becher's words "In a different way there are high hopes" (*Auf eine andere Art ist grosse Hoffnung*) to read "in no way is there any hope" (*Auf keine Art irgendwelche Hoffnung*). The trust between arts policy decision makers and artists that had been rebuilt in the early 1970s had once again been broken and, as it was to turn out later, would never be regained. In the following years another wave of artists emigrated to the Federal Republic, including the Dresden painter Penck, who had been the hope of the young generation of independent artists, as well as Schlesinger, another painter.

In these years of repression many visual artists attempted to find other ways of coping with the "happy socialist world" (Koller, 1990: 39) imposed by SED officials, refusing to paint what the party wanted to see. In the late 1970s the gap between rhetoric and reality increased. Matteuer (*Protokoll der 9. Tagung des Zentralvorstandes des Verbandes der Bildenden Künstler der DDR 1976: 53*), a painter from Leipzig, addressed the IX. meeting of the Association of Visual Artists of the GDR in 1976 and responded to the pressure the false images of the happy socialist world placed on the artists' community, stating that "there is only one truth that could damage socialism, the hidden truth, because hidden truth is poisonous". He appealed directly to party leaders to lead open and honest discussions on the future of socialist arts policy rather than

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<sup>36</sup> Wolf Biermann became the most popular singer-song writer in the GDR. Biermann was to use his



pursuing the “policy of misinterpretation” and imposing covert censorship and surveillance.

While the situation between SED officials and visual artists was increasingly dominated by mistrust, communication among visual artists prospered. Aside from politics, the most important issue in these debates was that of artistic quality: how it could be achieved and who had achieved the highest standards. Some artists<sup>37</sup> defined artistic quality as the development of artistic skills combined with the achievement of their personal mission or goal. Both criteria had to be visible in the works of art produced. Socialist realism’s ‘new type of human being’ did not enter into this debate. Examples of high quality works of art mentioned by the artists included the work of Altenbourg and Glöckner, two older visual artists who had chosen to work in inner exile away from the battlefield of arts policy.

Some artists began to avoid dealing directly with the present and with everyday life and instead drew on history as an indirect means of showing the present day. It was no accident that visual artists became particularly interested in Greek mythology, the romantic era<sup>38</sup> and the Renaissance. Although the themes and topics that appeared on canvas were far removed from GDR reality this was highly politicised art because historical subject matter was used to depict current political statements and opinions. The historical characteristics, themes and symbols in these paintings did not conform to the party’s ideas on art but neither would they cause offence.

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exile to good effect shortly after the collapse of the GDR. Thousands attended his post-1989 concerts. By then Biermann was regarded as a symbol of the political changes of 1989.

<sup>37</sup> The issue of artistic quality was mentioned by most of the visual artists interviewed as the core issue of their professional career.

One of the most striking examples is the figure of Cassandra.<sup>39</sup> In the Greek myth, she was a soothsayer whose warnings of disaster went unheeded by the Trojan king. Kuhrt painted Cassandra's weeping and wailing in grief and pain. This might be interpreted as the pain of someone revealing his/her thoughts, an expression of the pain of self-censorship. At the same time, the painter could deny any such interpretation, citing the historical myth as the inspiration for the work. Some visual artists used the space created by the policy of misinterpretation to integrate historical and current themes, allowing for varying interpretations of their work.

Other visual artists used mythology in similar ways. For example, in the 1970s, Mattheuers focused his work around Sisyphus, Icarus and Prometheus. Artists attempted to overcome the restrictions of official arts policy by appearing to focus on mythology and history. They had identified a niche in which they were able to express their feelings without fear of censure by SED officials. It is very likely that in using these particular niches, visual artists increasingly refused to represent state art.

Public art was still dominated by the political portraits of the leaders of Marxist-Leninist ideology and by large-scale monuments such as those of Lenin in Berlin and Marx in Karl-Marx-Stadt. The artists recruited to complete these monuments originated from the Soviet Union but there were also many GDR visual artists who produced contract work. For example, in 1973 the SED decided to commission a panoramic

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<sup>38</sup> "Oh Caspar David", a very interesting homage to Caspar David Friedrich, was produced by Mattheuer. At the same time in 1974 Mattheuer and Friedrich had exhibitions in the Albertinum, a museum of the Dresden art collections.

<sup>39</sup> Other GDR artists also showed an interest in Cassandra as an art figure (*Kunstfigur*). One of the most famous examples is Christa Wolf's book "Kassandra" published in 1984. Cassandra's destiny was portrayed throughout art history, for instance by Rubens and Klinger.

painting to commemorate the 450th anniversary of the German Farmers' War at the Frankenhäusen battlefield. The concept of historical development in the GDR was to be represented in the painting. In 1976 Tübke, known for his historical work, signed an exclusive contract to produce the painting. In 1979 a model was exhibited at the IX. Art Exhibition of the GDR but ironically the painting was not unveiled until September 1989, only four weeks before the collapse of the GDR.

After Biermann's expulsion, the artists experienced another demonstration of the repressive nature of the regime. In 1979<sup>40</sup> a change to the GDR criminal code was introduced. The new legislation outlawed agitation against the GDR or any other perceived activities against the state. Establishing contact with the West became a reason for arrest and imprisonment. The interpretation of the law was the responsibility of the state. Koller (1990: 39) argued that at this point the ice age settled on cultural policy matters.

In response, the artists' community developed a niche culture within which artistic life prospered. Fulbrook (1997: 129) developed the idea of this "niche society" which has gained widespread popularity among politicians and historians. Fulbrook argues that the East Germans came to terms with the pressures and demands of the regime by leading a double life: outward conformity coupled with private authenticity. The niche society had established itself through a combination of grudging conformity and dissatisfaction, the net effect of which was stabilizing.

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<sup>40</sup> In 1979, before the change of the criminal code, the writer Heym had to pay a fine of DDRMark 9,000 because he allowed one of his books to be published in Western Germany without prior permission from the GDR Ministry of Culture.

Artists conformed to the ideological pressures of the aim culture only up to a point. At the same time, nonconformity, resistance and opposition became more and more apparent in the artists' community in the late 1970s and 1980s. Some artists constructed niches where they were able to exhibit, discuss and, in very few cases, even sell their works of art. Activities in the community developed in parallel with the official policy environment. However, this position was only possible within the GDR arts policy system where artists did not need to worry about finances. Their financial security was provided by the state.

In the 1970s artists opened up their studios and invited friends and friends of friends to exhibitions. Homes became small exhibition spaces, for example Schweinebraten's *EP Galerie*<sup>41</sup> in Berlin opened in 1974. In regular exhibitions the gallery owner showed the work of artists who had had difficulty exhibiting in public galleries. He also showed the work of international artists that were still very rarely seen in public galleries. Between 1974 and 1980 several events, such as performances, took place in the *EP Galerie*.

Artists' books (see below) were produced and the artists' community met at openings, making the gallery also a communication space. Schweinebraten (1996: 677ff) intended to distribute information on the international arts scene and on contemporary art. He argues that he prefers not to be labelled as the curator of an underground gallery<sup>42</sup> but rather that his intention had been to run a transparent, open gallery, albeit without official permission.

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<sup>41</sup> The gallery existed from 1974 to 1980, when he emigrated to the Federal Republic. Schweinebraten converted his own and the neighbouring flat into an exhibition space. Private galleries were rare in the GDR, and even fewer were officially recognised (for example Galerie Kühl in Dresden).

<sup>42</sup> Schweinebraten was sceptical of the qualitative criteria applied by underground galleries to their artists and would only exhibit high quality art. His painter friend Penck defined underground as something close to separation from official art.

A further, well-known example of an underground gallery was based in Karl-Marx-Stadt. In 1977 the artists' group "*Clara Mosch*"<sup>43</sup> founded a gallery and re-established the French idea of *pleinairs*, focussing on outdoor artistic work. The Mosch artists organised performances and 'happenings', which was very unusual at the time and had no traditional background in the GDR. These performances took place without an audience and received public attention only in the late 1980s (Blume 1996: 728).

In Dresden another group of artists re-established the printing tradition of the 1920s and 1930s. In 1971 Ehrhardt, who used to print for Dix, Schwimmer, Richter and other Dresden artists active in the first half of the century, set up a private printing workshop. In 1978 "the *Obergrabenpresse*", another printing workshop, was established. The five founders, four of whom were visual artists (Göschel, Hermann, Lorenz, Penck) and one a writer (Teilmann), managed the workshop, organised exhibitions and published artists' books. In the following years they became known for their excellent hand-bound books encompassing literature, political satire and the visual arts, together with poems, drawings and prints. The limited editions, mostly fewer than 50 copies, were sold immediately on publication. The Director of the *Kupferstichkabinet*, the graphic print museum of the Dresden art collections, was one of the most enthusiastic collectors of the *Obergrabenpresse* editions. Other museums, such as the *Landesbibliothek Dresden* and the *Albertina* in Vienna, followed his example and began collections of the books.

The primary purpose of the printing workshop was to create a space for experimental work that excluded the state and the SED. Artists had to manoeuvre up to and in some

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<sup>43</sup> The name of the *Galerie Clara Mosch* is formed from the initials of the founding members of the

cases beyond the borders of legality. Firstly, all printed publications had to be scrutinised by the district cultural authorities of the GDR government. Secondly, all products and publications had to conform to official regulations. The artists had to understand therefore how to circumvent the regulations. A print could be reproduced 99 times without permission. The artists' books were thus never copied more than 99 times and the writers themselves frequently reproduced the poems they contained by hand, to undermine the strict regulations on printed works.

The "home galleries" faced similar problems to the printing workshops, operating close to the legal boundaries set by the state. Artists who were not members of the Artists' Association were barred from showing their work in any of the state run galleries. The home galleries were able to host exhibitions according to their own artistic criteria. Officially, these were billed as a private showing of the host's own collection to a gathering of friends. In the 1980s, news of these gatherings was passed by word of mouth in the artists' community. A private space was used to host a public gathering with limited and exclusive accessibility. Most of these "unofficial events" could be regarded as a retreat into niches but, as Kroll (cited in Feist, 1996: 742ff) argues, they were more significant to the Dresden printing workshops and offered opportunities to challenge regulations and use weaknesses in the GDR legal system to widen the restricted space of visual artists.

Accessibility to the private arts spaces known as niches was exclusive and the so-called niche society never encompassed the whole population. Artists created niches and accepted that they had to work within the structures of the GDR government. At that

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gallery; Claus (CLA), Ranft and Ranft-Schinke (RA), Morgner (MO) and Schade (SCH).

time the institutions of the SED and the state worked hand-in-hand and, together with the security forces, the structures of authority and oppression operated smoothly.

Such artists' initiatives began in opposition to state arts policy, although these initiatives were only possible because of the very stability of the GDR system at that time. Günter Feist (1995) distinguished between "the art of the GDR", directed, administered and controlled by the SED and the government, and the "art in the GDR", driven by different criteria and intentions and of limited accessibility to the SED. The latter had originally been made possible via the government's policy of misinterpretation.

After unification it was discovered that these private initiatives had been extensively observed and controlled by the Stasi. A large number of artists' files held by the secret service revealed that even close friends used to write reports and pass on information to Stasi headquarters.<sup>44</sup>

In conclusion, it may be seen that the government's hard-line policy dominated in the 1970s and was only occasionally interrupted by periods of liberalisation. As a result the relationship between government officials and visual artists was increasingly shaped by mistrust as the ideological pressures on visual artists increased. However, a new key issue of arts policy practice, the policy of misinterpretation, emerged. Policies were formulated in vague language that misled visual artists to perceive a shift towards liberalisation. Instead the ice-age policy continued to dominate. Nevertheless, this

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<sup>44</sup> Since unification the sometimes very detailed secret service files have become available as research material and can be used to compare figures and dates with other primary material.

policy of misinterpretation created a space that was used by both government and artists. Visual artists created niches that acted as information pools and exhibition spaces outside the control of official policy. However, it was to become clear after unification that the niches had always been under Stasi surveillance. Government officials used the policy of misinterpretation to test the waters for the future direction of arts policy. As a result an unofficial understanding developed between visual artists and state officials. Policy decision makers took artists seriously, listening and reacting to their interpretations of policy announcements and artists accepted the arts policies, moving within the space they had been allocated. One of the options available to them was to express their political opinions by using historical analogy. Another option was to create private initiatives such as the *EP-Galerie* and the printing workshop *Obergrabenpresse*.

Feist summarises arts policy in the 1970s by distinguishing between the “arts of the GDR” and the “arts in the GDR”. The artists’ niches were important places for arts production in the GDR while the arts of the GDR was represented by large-scale public monuments and murals.



#### 2.4.5 From 1980 to 1989 - the time of policy exhaustion

In the 1980s arts policy continued to fluctuate between liberalisation and hard-line policy. However, a turning point was reached as government and SED lost the overall control over arts activities in the country. While in previous periods visual artists had had to react to arts policy decisions, in the 1980s the SED and the government increasingly reacted to activities in the artists' community. In 1989 the GDR state collapsed and its arts policy came to an end.

The early 1980s brought a shift towards liberalisation with an orientation towards neighbouring Western European countries in the form of an international exchange programme of visual art and artists. Some artists (Tübke, Matteuer, Heisig, Sitte,<sup>45</sup> Cremer and Jastram) had already participated in the Documenta in Kassel, one of the major European art shows of 1977. In 1982, works of art by Hegewald, Gille, Pfeifer and Stelzmann were exhibited at the 1982 Biennale in Venice. There were further regular exchanges of arts exhibitions between the GDR and the Federal Republic. Several exhibitions by West German artists<sup>46</sup> were put on in the GDR and individual and group exhibitions of GDR artists<sup>47</sup> travelled to West German cities. The number of exchanges increased after the signing of the cultural agreement (*Kulturabkommen*) between both German states in 1986. As part of the liberalisation process, some books previously considered too controversial were published (for example, three volumes by

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<sup>45</sup> Tübke, Matteuer, Heisig and Sitte were known as the "gang of four" in the GDR. Their works of art were extensively sold to West German customers, for example in the galleries of the *Staatlicher Kunsthandel der DDR*.

<sup>46</sup> In 1986 the exhibition "*Positionen*" was held in Dresden and Berlin and was seen by over 100,000 people. Early Beuys drawings from the collection of the brothers van der Grinten were shown in Berlin in 1988.

<sup>47</sup> Some examples of GDR exhibitions held in the Federal Republic should be mentioned here: In 1980 Cremer's work was shown in Duisburg. In 1982 a group exhibition "*Zeitvergleiche*" took place at the Arts Association in Hamburg. In 1986 the exhibition "*Menschenbilder*" was held in Bonn.

Freud and a booklet about Beuys) and new critical plays by GDR playwrights were staged in theatres.<sup>48</sup> As a result of the government project on the maintenance of cultural heritage, first announced in the 1970s, a large exhibition on expressionism opened in Berlin in 1986 to great public acclaim. These examples of liberalisation in arts policy brought new influences into the artists' community.

However, at the same time political interference, including Stasi surveillance, increased among those artists operating in the niche culture. For example Werner, a well-known arts journalist, was forced to leave his gallery, *Arcade*, on the basis of Stasi reports. The gallery was eventually closed in 1982. The art historian Schmidt was arrested and deported to West Berlin in 1984.<sup>49</sup> Some artists were forced to leave while others wanted to leave. Schweinebraten, the curator of the *EP Galerie*, for example, left the GDR voluntarily in 1980. The list of those in the artists' community applying to emigrate grew progressively longer and the emergence of new kinds of organisation, such as the open studios or the private galleries, continued. These developments towards an incipient civil society have to be seen in the context of changing circumstances and regime responses over the course of the 1980s.

Officially, arts policy was kept in line with the original aim culture. In 1986 Honecker called for works of art to strengthen socialism, to "demonstrate its vastness and beauty" (*Protokoll der Verhandlungen des IX. Parteitages der SED*, 1986: 83f). The results of this proclamation were shown at the X. GDR Art Exhibition in 1987. Many works of

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<sup>48</sup> For example: Brauns's "*Lenin's Tod*", Müller's "*Germania's Tod*" in Berlin and Hein's "*Die Ritter der Tafelrunde*".

<sup>49</sup> Klier mentioned in her speech at the Enquete Commission in 1995 that as part of the cultural agreement artists and art historians were "sold" to the Federal Republic. At this point the GDR government had to weigh up its options; what would be the benefit of deporting the artist against the damage to the GDR's reputation. (Marquardt 1995: 471)

art portrayed the lives of workers and farmers and thus were used to demonstrate the reputation and prestige of the GDR. Conformist and regime-friendly visual artists existed throughout the history of the GDR and produced a large number of works of art.

Behind the scenes of official activities, a change in visual arts policy had taken place. From the 1950s to the 1970s arts policy changes were developed, announced and organised by the government and imposed on the artists' community. Artists reacted to policy decisions, for example, by emigration, by keeping out of the SED's way or by developing niches. In the 1980s, artists acted and SED officials had to react to their undertakings either liberally or repressively. Visual arts policy in the GDR now consisted of two main groups of players, the SED and government arts decision makers, and the visual artists who were either active in the artists' niches or conforming to their roles as mediator between the aim culture and the people. In the 1980s, the SED and the government lost the overall control as communication with a large proportion of visual artists broke down, partly because of the confusion caused by the policy of misinterpretation. The policy makers therefore had to react to events and relinquish their original position of determining and controlling arts policy. There were no structural changes; the SED remained the leading power and, as mentioned above, the government continued to control and interfere but both were increasingly forced to react to pressure from within the GDR and elsewhere.

Operation "*Schreckenstein*" was an example of the new relationship between government and visual artists. In 1982, the printing workshop *Obergrabenpresse*, one of the visual artists' niches, produced a book with poems by three different authors. In

response, the Stasi organised operation *Schreckenstein*.<sup>50</sup> All members of the workshop were questioned and the workshop itself was put under constant surveillance. The government had intervened in the artists' activity because it had suspected agitation against the GDR. Feist (1996: 21) argues that the reprisals of the state authorities were an unmistakable indicator of resistance to the regime. In the end, no action was taken against the artists and the book was published, which was partly due to the fact that the printing workshop had by then become well-known in Western Germany. The government was only able to react to the artists' activities.

In the second half of the 1980s, rumours were in circulation that the regime was crumbling and that economic,<sup>51</sup> environmental and political instability were on the increase (Donda, 1992: 59). The leadership of the SED had grown old but party discipline and party members' submissiveness had allowed them to retain command instead of ceding power to the middle-ranking party functionaries. The ageing leadership had become so used to power that power had become a means in itself, even though they were no longer in full control of events. Fulbrook argues that the mentalities that had informed the founder generation of communists – “a unique combination of paternalism and paranoia” - were insufficient to meet the demands of a modernizing society in the changing world of the 1980s (Fulbrook, 1997: 277).

The GDR leadership also faced international pressures. In the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev introduced *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* and made clear that he also favoured

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<sup>50</sup> One of the book's poems mentions the *Schreckenstein* mountain in Bohemian Switzerland.

<sup>51</sup> Prof. Donda, the chief statistician “... began to realize this around 1982/83. It was quite clear, on the basis of all material known to me at this time... that we were heading for economic collapse. But the so-called Strauss-credit and the consequent agreements...managed to allay these fears to a certain extent. So then I began to think, well maybe the GDR will not fall like a rotten plum from the tree, but all the same, slowly but surely, it will eventually collapse.” (Donda, 1992: 37).

the adoption of the new policies of openness, restructuring and transparency in the GDR, whose intellectuals discussed the possible implementation of Perestroika and Glasnost, hoping for further changes.

In response Hager, representative of the ageing GDR leadership, argued in a now famous declaration that 'if your neighbours change their wallpaper there is no need to change the wallpaper in your own home'. The old slogan "Learning from the Soviet Union means learning to win" ("*Von der Sowjetunion lernen heisst siegen lernen*") that had previously underpinned friendship with the Soviet Union, was now forgotten. Hager's position demonstrated that the Honecker regime was not interested in the Soviet Union's new policies. Instead the GDR government obstructed any attempt to introduce Gorbachev's ideas<sup>52</sup> and tried to maintain a façade of normality to the outside world. At that point, many realised that the GDR was heading towards collapse but no one would have said so aloud.

Not only Soviet but also Western European influences continued to destabilise communist rule in the GDR. GDR inhabitants, including visual artists, made unfavourable comparisons of living standards in the GDR with the free and more affluent lifestyle of the West. The policies of the Federal Republic meanwhile tended to foster relations to obtain a degree of openness, debate and exchange of human contacts, which was certainly sufficient to encourage the survival of people in the niche culture of the GDR.

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<sup>52</sup> One well-known reaction to Perestroika and Glasnost was the banning of the Soviet journal "Sputnik" which featured discussions and articles on the changes by intellectuals, writers and journalists.

The artists increasingly led the way in setting out arts policy agendas, which, though not addressed by government, were still seen as essential for the artists' community to prosper. In this way another movement (in addition to the artists' niches) gained strength and grew in reaction to the pressurised situation of the 1980s. This movement came to be known by its slogan "Walking through the institutions" ("*Der Gang durch die Institutionen*")<sup>53</sup> and aimed to reform institutions from the inside. Some reform-minded artists became active members of the Artists' Association and stood for election as board members in the Dresden regional board of the Association of Visual Artists. This group aimed to force the government to change legislation to improve access to foreign travel for artists, which would then give visual artists access to the international arts market. The new reformist head of the board, who was still an SED member,<sup>54</sup> was elected against the will of the SED and, together with similar-minded colleagues, started "walking through the Artists' Association". They eventually succeeded in introducing changes, for example in the regulations for artists' travel to Western countries. At the same time they had to accept secret service interference and had to collaborate with two Stasi officers working in the Dresden office of the Association of Visual Artists. The reformers' walk through the institutions could not be completed because the system collapsed faster than anyone had anticipated.

To sum up, this section's heading identifies the 1980s as the time of policy exhaustion. It refers to the eventual collapse of a state whose policies had not stood the test of time. Tired of the ups and downs of policy intervention, the majority of artists also perceived the GDR to be exhausted and wondered how it had functioned for so long. Despite this,

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<sup>53</sup> This slogan was first used in the 1968 movement and was used by Rudi Dutschke, one of its main influences.

<sup>54</sup> As an SED member he had to report to the head of the SED in the regional party office of Dresden once a fortnight.

the thought that the state as a whole might collapse was still unimaginable. Those GDR citizens who fled the country in August 1989 galvanised the collected energies of the remaining GDR inhabitants. The last weeks of the GDR in September and October 1989 revealed a nation of disciplined demonstrators.

The collapse of 44 years of arts policy followed within days of the collapse of the GDR itself. The last decade of arts policy making had seen a complete role reversal by the government and SED on the one hand, and the artists' community on the other.

Pressures from the reforming Soviet Union contributed to the fact that, by the end of the 1980s, those responsible for arts policy in the SED and government had lost overall control of central arts policy. The artists' community was divided between dissent, dissatisfaction and conformity, but contributed to the collapse of arts policy by creating and maintaining niches and by beginning to reform the Artists' Association from within.

## 2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an analysis of arts policy in the GDR, placing the relationship between state arts administration and visual artists within a political context. It has explored the connections between the state and the SED and the visual artists in three ways:

1. The aim culture outlined the purpose of arts policy and determined its ideological framework based on the humanist tradition and Marxist-Leninist ideology.
2. The structure of arts organisations provided arts policy administration with a framework of organisations and institutions that acted on behalf of the GDR government and the SED.
3. Arts policy developments were dominated by the government's attempt to implement the aim culture, the overall policy goal.

The findings of this chapter suggest that the relationship between the SED, the state and visual artists was in constant flux in line with arts policy developments. Between 1945 and 1979 visual artists were forced to respond to government changes in arts policy and had little input in the policy-making process. In the 1980s, this relationship was reversed as visual artists determined policy change.

In general, developments in arts policy swung between liberalisation and hard-line policy between 1945 and 1990. While arts policy-makers supported, for example, the exchange of artists with Western European countries in more liberal times, in times of hard-line policy the focus tended to be on socialist realism as the preferred style of GDR art – a style which deemed formalism to be unacceptable. Hard-line policy was also associated with censorship, with surveillance and the punishment of non-conformist artists by the Stasi.



Despite these restrictions, the government ensured financial support for visual artists and provided additional social benefits via the Association of Visual Artists and other funding bodies. In return, visual artists were expected to fulfil the role of mediator between the aim culture and the people. The artists' dedication to this role varied with personal conviction and political circumstance. For example, activities in the artists' niches increased in the 1980s as policy took a turn towards liberalisation.

In general, the artists' community consisted of conformists who produced what was expected of them, refuseniks who retreated into inner exile and regime opponents who worked in artists' niches or attempted to reform the artists' organisations from within. Over a period of 44 years, visual artists attempted to reduce the ideological pressure of the role of mediator imposed by party and state, and this pressure only disappeared after the collapse of arts policy in 1989. While this main objective demanded the artists' energy, their working and living conditions, provided by the state, were taken for granted.

The main purpose of GDR arts policy – that of creating a better human being - was far from being achieved in 1989 and was finally abandoned with unification. However, the impact of government arts policy generally on visual artists in the GDR cannot be underestimated, as I will argue in chapters 4 and 5.

## **3 State Visual Arts Policy in Saxony after German Unification**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter analysed the development, aims and structure of GDR arts policy from 1945 to 1989, with special reference to the relationship between visual artists, the state and the SED. This chapter continues the analysis for the period from 1989 to 2000, focusing on policy changes in public visual arts funding policy in the *Land* of Saxony. It draws on documentary sources on public policy and on interviews with administrators, politicians and visual artists, all of whom participated in the transformation process in Saxony.

The chapter is in three parts. The first section explores the legal principles behind arts funding policy in the German constitution, the unification treaty and the constitution of Saxony, and compares them to the constitution of the GDR. It analyses why these legal principles are important for arts funding and what principles funding policy is based on, arguing that these legal principles provided a starting point for the development of arts funding policy in Saxony. The second section discusses policy aims and the newly established administrative structure at federal, regional and local levels. It addresses the question of how policy aims are integrated into the structure of arts administration. The third and final section considers arts funding practice and asks how visual arts policy is implemented at federal and regional level into everyday practice and what kind of results the policy has produced. The contrast between funding principle and funding practice will be the focus of the chapter.

In terms of territory, this chapter shifts from the GDR as a whole (see map 1) to the *Land* of Saxony, located in the south-east of the former GDR (see map 2). After unification, administrative changes re-divided the territory of the GDR into its five former *Länder*, originally constituted in 1920. Saxony has the largest population of the eastern German *Länder* with 4.49 million inhabitants and a long-standing reputation for business, trade<sup>55</sup> and culture. It looks back on a rich cultural tradition that produced and played host to artists such as Bach, Weber, Wagner, Klinger, Schumann and Lessing.

However, the importance of culture is not only relevant to cultural heritage and tradition. Culture in its broader sense is an integral part of Saxon society and aims to contribute to its future development, as Biedenkopf (1998), Minister President of Saxony states:

“... future success will depend highly on a combination of three factors: First, highly developed industrial potential. Second, highly developed scientific and technological potential and third highly developed cultural potential. We feel that these three factors, industry in its most modern expression, science and universities, and culture in its interrelationship will create a climate of innovation, inventiveness and development that can be superior if it is properly applied, can be superior in terms of competitiveness to all other newly developing industrial nations.”

Set within those parameters, an arts policy has been developed in Saxony since 1990. As a policy that began life during the transformation process, it incorporates the main changes to the legal, social and economic status of arts organisations. Most of the institutions that were run and owned by the GDR government changed their legal status and became either state-owned limited companies such as for example some theatres, or became state-owned institutions of the Free State of Saxony, such as museums. 439 galleries that had been state-run, or part of the GDR's state art trade organisation, closed and only a small number survived as private businesses (Gillen 1994: 140). In

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<sup>55</sup> Prior to unification, Saxony was a manufacturing centre famous for textiles and car production. Since 1990 Saxony has successfully established a reputation for high-tech industries, such as microelectronics and biotechnology, and for trade with and investment in eastern Europe.

line with the GDR's policy of full employment, arts organisations had large numbers of less productive staff, which were reduced in attempts to increase efficiency. The service areas of arts organisations were largely contracted out after unification. Each organisation's finance and accounting systems had to be adapted to the new economic conditions and financial regulations. Marketing had to be introduced as part of the day-to-day operations of a newly established business. In the GDR in many cases advertising events had been unnecessary as most tickets for performances or exhibitions were sold via company schemes,<sup>56</sup> but arts events were usually half empty because those who had received free tickets would in the end not attend. Audience development became vital to art companies' marketing efforts after unification. Another important issue faced by every arts organisation was the change in the state funding system. Before unification many arts organisations had operated as state institutions and were directly subsidised. After unification those funding mechanisms were abolished and arts organisations had to negotiate institutional funding and grants according to funding policy criteria as well as attempting to secure additional support from other resources such as foundations or private sponsorship.

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<sup>56</sup> Companies were allocated tickets by theatres and arts organisations for specific events or had annual



## **3.2 The legal principles of arts policy in Saxony**

### ***3.2.1 The significance of legal principles for arts policy developments***

It is important to consider legal principles when studying arts policy because legal principles and rules have a direct impact on decision making by institutionalising and facilitating the enforcement of standards and ideals (Fiss 1984; Fuller 1978). Guidance on funding policy or any other case management is expected to derive directly from precedent and doctrine (Manning 1992). In this way, it could be argued that legal principles play a central role in the way in which funding policy operates in practice.

In Germany, legal principles have played a groundbreaking role in arts funding policy since 1949, as the justification for arts funding policy was enshrined in both constitutions. The constitutions of the two Germanies were laid down on different societal principles and concepts, i.e. capitalism and socialism. While the constitution of the Federal Republic sought to ensure the freedom of the arts, the constitution of the GDR focused on the support and protection of socialist culture. During the process of transformation a third document, the unification treaty, provided a link between the two constitutions to ensure that arts policy in Saxony continued to be built on legal principles. This was then enshrined in the constitution of Saxony, established in 1990.

### ***3.2.2 The constitutions of the Federal Republic and the GDR***

After unification the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany became the German constitution, while the constitution of the GDR was abandoned. This section focuses on the different principles of arts funding in the two German constitutions in 1949.

The constitution contains the main legal principles of state. In the case of the German constitution, the arts are mentioned only once, in article five, paragraph 3.1, which deals with the freedom of the arts and states that "art and science, research and teaching are free" (*Kunst und Wissenschaft, Forschung und Lehre sind frei*). This paragraph does not legitimise state funding, partly due to the fact that it authorizes the *Länder*<sup>57</sup> to take responsibility for the support of the arts and to act in reference to the constitution.

What are the implications for public arts funding? Geissler (1995:39) argues that the state's position regarding the arts is similar to that regarding religion:<sup>58</sup> the state is neutral but not indifferent. It can declare art to be of value and can therefore demonstrate its support. Although the state is constitutionally able to support the arts it does not have the duty to do so, even if support is needed. Since there is no legal requirement to support the arts, the artist is in the position of supplicant and the state in the position of patron with regard to funding issues.

It is important to note this relationship between state and art, particularly at a time when funding cuts in the arts are common in most German *Länder*. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Germany has a long tradition of arts patronage, arising out of several principalities and kingdoms whose rulers employed court artists or awarded life-long grants. In Saxony one of the best known examples was Bernardo Bellotto<sup>59</sup> (1720-1780), who in 1747 became court painter to King August III of Saxony.

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<sup>57</sup> Paragraph 30 of the constitution states that everything not dealt with in the constitution itself is the responsibility of the *Länder*.

<sup>58</sup> The comparison between religion and art is also apt since some would argue that art is taking the place of religion, the weekend visit to the museum replacing attendance at church. (Schön 1991)

<sup>59</sup> Bernardo Bellotto was the nephew and pupil of Giovanni Antonio Canal (1697 - 1768), more widely known as Canaletto.

This tradition of support for the arts continued to exist in the GDR: the constitution guaranteed support for and protection of socialist culture, which had to serve the overall aims of peace, humanism and the development of socialist society (Koch, 1976: 5). Although the constitution provides a clear statement, the guarantee of support is limited to a narrow definition of art and culture, i.e. socialist art and culture.

The constitutions of the Federal Republic and the GDR are as fundamentally different as capitalism and socialism, both generally and specifically as they concern the arts.

The constitution of the GDR (*Verfassung der DDR*) does not mention the freedom of the arts but ensures support for socialist art and culture, whereas the constitution of the Federal Republic does not specifically support culture and, indeed, support for a particular kind of art would contravene the section guaranteeing the freedom of the Arts.

### ***3.2.3 The unification treaty***

In 1990 the two contrasting constitutions had to be unified. The unification treaty, a new legal document, provided the link between them. It was enacted by Parliament as an interim document and had no constitutional status but clarified any contradictions between the two constitutions. The treaty formed the legal basis for unification, dealing with the economic, financial and social matters of transition, for example establishing the right to restitution of property to expropriated owners and providing for the transition to the West German housing market.



The unification treaty attempted to solve the contradictions between arts funding policies of the GDR and the FRG by allocating financial support for the arts and culture in general, as indicated in paragraph 35 of the treaty, which relates to culture. While the constitution of the Federal Republic uses the term “the arts”, the unification treaty employed both “culture” and a combination of “culture” and “the arts”, as used in the constitution of the GDR. This is mainly due to the shift in West German cultural policy since 1968. While the affirmative definition of the arts dominated in the 1950s, this changed to the use of culture in the sense of a way of life, rather than just art in the late 1960s.

Paragraph 35 of the unification treaty specifies the aims and aspirations of the unified Germany relating to culture:

“(1) In the years of division, art and culture - despite the different developments in the two states - served as a basis for the continuation of the German nation. In the process of German unification and on the way to European unity, art and culture have made an original and undeniable contribution. The position and reputation of a united Germany in the world are dependent not only on political and economic power but also on the reputation of the cultural state. The priority aim for foreign cultural policy is cultural exchange on a co-operative, partnership basis.

(2) The cultural substance in the new *Länder* should not be impaired.

(3) The fulfilment and the financing of cultural goals needs to be assured. The protection of and support for art and culture in the new *Länder* and municipalities are based on the area of responsibility as defined by the German basic law.

[...]

7) The federal government can temporarily co-finance cultural infrastructure projects such as single cultural events and institutions within the territory of the new *Länder* in order to compensate for the effect of the division of Germany” (*Einigungsvertrag* 1990: 61-62).

The treaty emphasizes the importance of culture and, when compared to the constitutions, goes much further, specifying the aims that culture should fulfil in the unified Germany. It is also important to note that the culture of the GDR is recognized as worth preserving although the wording remains vague. Paragraph 35.2 does not

define "Cultural substance" and thus leaves room for speculation and interpretation. Nevertheless, despite its vague wording, the treaty represents more than a declaration of goodwill because the treaty effectively ensured that many eastern German arts organizations would continue to exist for some time after unification.

On the basis of the treaty, money and sponsorship in kind was supplied to many arts institutions and with this immediate financial injection the organisations gained time to implement change. Between 1990 and 1993, the federal government allocated DM 33 million with the aim of securing and maintaining the cultural substance and re-organising the cultural sector in the eastern German *Länder*. As a result, many state arts institutions were able to reopen, having initially closed down (such as, for example, the Association of Fine Artists).

To sum up, the unification treaty sets out the conditions for the transformation process. It linked the constitutions of both countries in such a way that financial support for the culture of the former GDR was ensured, at least for a short period of time after unification. As the treaty had to make reference to the German constitution, it also guaranteed the freedom of the arts. However, it went further than that, containing a number of specific aims for cultural policy both at federal, regional and local level.

### ***3.2.4 The constitution of Saxony***

As the federal government transferred most of its cultural responsibilities to the *Länder*, each eastern German *Land* had to legislate on the value and role of culture in its own region.

In its support for the arts, the Saxon Parliament went further than the paragraphs contained in German basic law and the unification treaty. The constitution of the Free State of Saxony<sup>60</sup> contains a clause declaring that it is the state's duty to support the arts. Saxony was one of the first new *Länder* to incorporate the *Land's* responsibility for culture in its constitution, which states:

- "(1) The *Land* supports cultural, artistic, creative, scientific and sporting activities and exchanges between these areas.  
(2) Access to cultural variety and sport has to be available to the whole population (*für das ganze Volk*). Therefore the *Land* will maintain free public museums, libraries, archives, memorials, theatres, sporting venues, musical and other cultural institutions and also open access universities, polytechnics, schools and other educational institutions.  
(3) Memorials and cultural heritage are under the protection and care of the *Land*, which is committed to their maintenance" (Ohlau 1994: 190).

The declaration in the legal framework that support for cultural, artistic and scientific activities were the duty of the state strengthened the position of the arts and continued the long tradition of arts funding in Saxony. As mentioned above, the history of arts funding in Saxony is more than 500 years old. Royalty and the aristocracy regarded themselves as art lovers and collected *objets d'art* from all over the world. They sponsored individual artists as well as institutions such as art academies. With the onset of industrialisation and the development of free trade a bourgeois culture prospered that gave a new impetus to the arts, increasing accessibility and professionalisation. A prosperous and lively artistic milieu thus developed over the centuries in Saxony and was maintained during the lifetime of the GDR. Saxony has a dense structure of theatres and museums. The *Land* of Saxony inherited not only art collections but also found itself with a rich cultural substance (Meyer 1996: 5). In 1989, for instance, there

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<sup>60</sup> The expression "Free state" is the German equivalent of the French term *Republique*. It recognizes that the *Land* is administered by free people and governed by the principles of democracy. In post-World War I Germany the monarchy had been abolished and the term *Republique* was not appropriate to the *zeitgeist*, leading to the invention of the term *Freistaat*, or free state. In 1990 the Saxons revived this old

were 270 museums, 18 theatres and 12 orchestras serving 4.5 million inhabitants (Ohlau 1994: 190). It can be argued therefore that the inclusion of cultural support in the regional legal framework follows a long tradition of support for the arts in Saxony. Culture and the arts are regarded as vital to the life and continuing prosperity of Saxony by its political elite (Meyer 1996: 5).

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tradition and named the *Land* in administrative term the “Free State of Saxony”. See also: [www.saxony.de/geschichte](http://www.saxony.de/geschichte)

### **3.3 Arts policy aims and administrative structure**

#### ***3.3.1 Responsibilities for visual arts policy at the federal government of Germany***

In the last section I mentioned the transfer of responsibility for arts policy from the federal level to the *Länder*. After the experience of Nazi Germany's centralised cultural policy, the Federal Republic and the United Germany had opted for decentralisation both before and after 1990. For this reason, a cultural ministry at federal level does not exist now and the possibility of its establishment was only recently formulated by the SPD/Green governing coalition in 1998.

However, even though there was a decentralised arts policy after unification, this did not prevent the federal government from making arts funding available to ensure the maintenance of cultural activities in Eastern Germany. In addition, arts funding at federal level was available for projects of national importance from a number of different federal ministries, thus producing a complex funding system and a diversity of funding criteria to support art projects.

For the individual artist it was difficult to discover which ministry was responsible for which funding scheme and how much money was on offer. Arts funding was included in various ministerial budgets but the criteria for making it available depended on the policy aim of each separate ministry.

The following three examples demonstrate that funding decisions were made primarily for non-artistic reasons and that in fact first-order criteria had little connection with the arts. First, funding for cross-border events was available from the Ministry for Home

Affairs. Its funding criteria specified cross-border initiatives of any kind and the programme funded environmental, educational, social and political, as well as artistic, projects. Thus the same funding scheme awarded grants for a cross-border water drainage system and a trilateral sculpture trail. Second, one of the responsibilities of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs was the promotion and representation of German cultural issues abroad, designed to improve the image of the German state following the Second World War. Artists were therefore able to apply to this scheme to participate in exhibitions abroad. Third, the Ministry for Economics and Work managed a funding programme designed to help young people to start their own businesses with the overall aim of reducing unemployment. Young artists, as well as young people from any background, such as engineers and graphic designers, were able to apply to this programme to improve their work prospects.

Although the sources of funding were not easily identified because they were not primarily related to art, this indirect (for the arts) funding system made resources available to visual artists and also avoided the concentration of arts administration at federal level. Funding sources were located in different ministerial budgets, which demonstrates that decentralisation in arts policy even operated at federal level.

Decentralised funding policy for the arts remained unchanged between 1990 and 1997 but, in 1998, shortly after the parliamentary elections, the new SPD/Green governing coalition changed the federal cultural policy structure with the aim of improving the framework conditions for art and culture and ensuring the maintenance of German cultural heritage and federal arts organisations. Naumann was appointed State Minister for Media and Cultural Affairs at the Federal Chancellery. The creation of this new

position and Naumann's appointment also solved the problem of not having a specific representative for culture in the European Union. Until 1998, the cultural ministers of the *Länder* shared this responsibility, taking the post in rotation. However, their interests were often directed towards their own region and they therefore felt unable to represent and take decisions for all German *Länder*. One of Naumann's responsibilities was to represent German cultural issues at the European level, i.e. at the European Commission and the Council of Europe. The Foreign Ministry remained in charge of foreign cultural affairs.

In terms of administration the new government amalgamated cultural issues into one department at the federal level, to produce a higher degree of efficiency and transparency. The new State Minister took over the cultural responsibilities of several other ministries. The Department of Media and Culture is part of the Federal Chancellor's Office (Bundeskanzleramt) and the State Minister is directly responsible to the German Chancellor, an unusual administrative arrangement.<sup>61</sup> Although there is still no Ministry of Culture, there is a Department of Media and Culture at the federal level. Culture therefore moved from a de-centralised position onto the executive level in the German Chancellor's Office.

Naumann argued for the emergence and renewal of German cultural policy at the federal level and the department's policy programme focuses on eleven headings, covered by separate funding programmes. One funding programme is specifically dedicated to the new *Länder* and is directed mainly at the capital funding of institutions. Another programme is dedicated to the support of artists but concentrates on those

seeking asylum and on writers-in-exile. Other issues are the capital Berlin, the Holocaust memorial, reform of the foundation law, book price regulation, film funding and cultural representation in European bodies.

On Naumann's appointment in 1998, the aims and strategies of cultural policy were concentrated in one Department, a policy that was continued after Naumann's departure in 2000 by his successor Nida-Rümelin. The cultural budget increased by 11% between 1998 and 1999, from DM 1,571mn to DM 1,754mn (*Aufbruch und Eneuerung: Bilanz nach einem Jahr Kulturpolitik des Bundes*, 2000).

The changes in policy at the federal level did not detract from the *Länder's* primary responsibility for culture.<sup>62</sup> The amount of funding for the arts and culture available from the federal Department of Media and Culture was paltry compared to the amount of funding available from the *Länder* and municipalities. Total annual spending on the arts and culture in Germany is broken down as follows: in 1996, the federal government spent DM377 million (2.7%) while the *Länder* spent DM6,212 million (44.3%) and the municipalities DM7,426 million (53%) (Kultusministerkonferenz 1999:3). In addition, as demonstrated in the chart below, the amount of government support at federal level declined from 1992 to 1996 as immediate unification-related emergency funding from the federal government for Eastern Germany was reduced. One can argue that any

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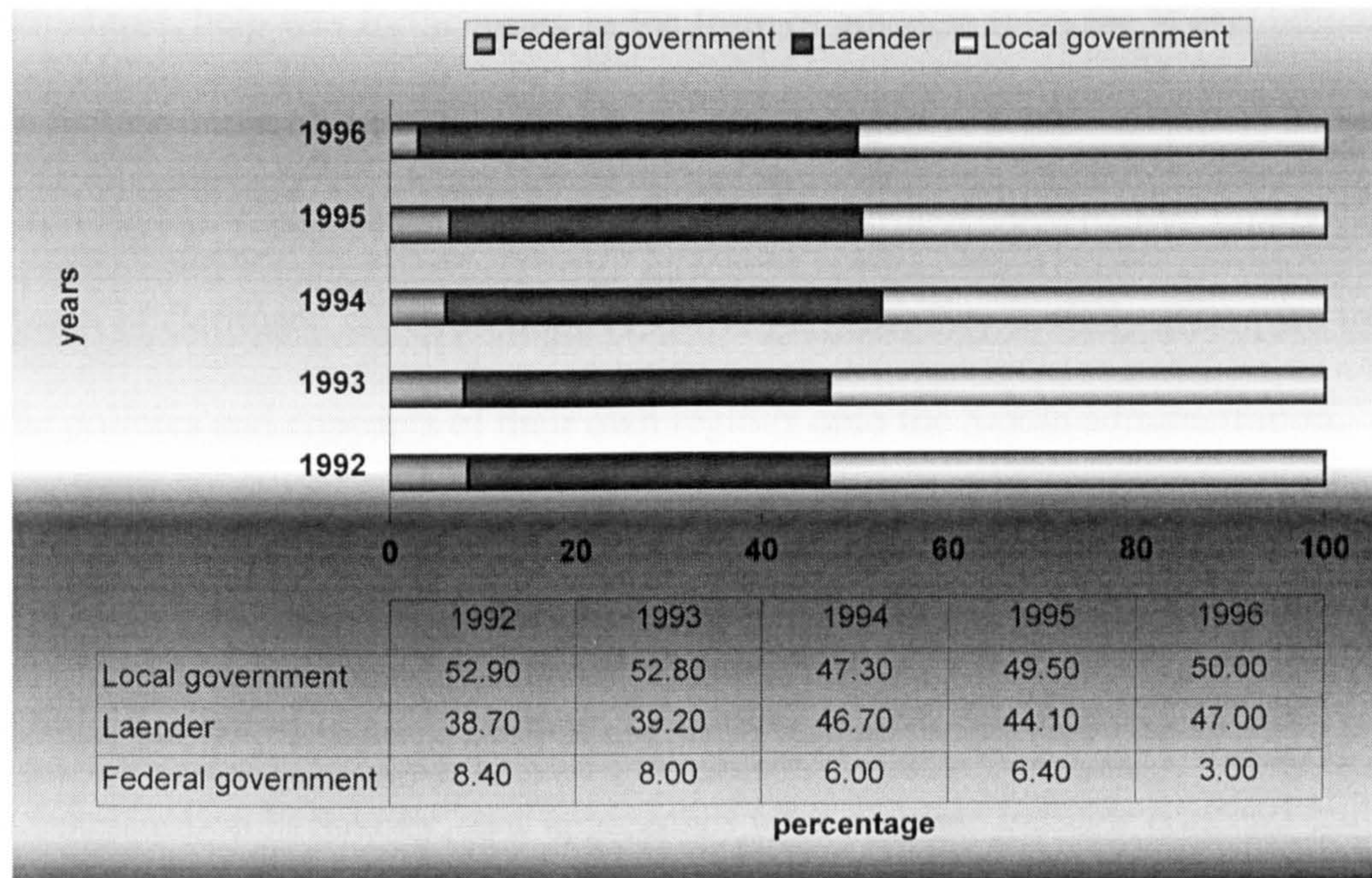
<sup>61</sup> There are only two other state ministers in the Federal Chancellor's Office, Schwanitz, State Minister for Affairs of the New States who deals with matters of unification and Bury, Minister of State at the Federal Chancellery.

<sup>62</sup> In terms of changes at the regional level there is one exception here, which is Berlin. Many of the cultural institutions considered to be of national importance are being co-financed by the region of Berlin and the federal government. In terms of cultural funding this puts Berlin in a far more advanced and wealthy position than any other *Land*. One could argue that the German capital is prospering and Berlin is being talked of as the new cultural capital of Europe. It is still too early to assess the situation and to find appropriate evidence but if Berlin prospers as a culturally attractive city the other German regions will suffer as potential artists are attracted to Berlin. Cultural policy would remain decentralised but the



analysis of arts policy should focus on the regional and local policy levels, since federal funding is minimal by comparison.

Chart 1: Changes in the division of expenditure on culture in Germany from 1992 to 1996



Source: Statistische Veröffentlichungen der Kulturministerkonferenz, 93, 07/1999: 3

arts world would focus on one location. Some evidence for this shift can be seen in the fact that 70% of young graduates of the Dresden Art Academy moved from Dresden to Berlin in 1995 to 1998.

### 3.3.2 *Funding structure and policy aims for the arts in Saxony*

After unification it became necessary to set up new administrative structures at *Land* level. Since the population of the former GDR had little knowledge of democratic structures, help was forthcoming in the form of advisers from the West German *Länder*. In Saxony most of the newly appointed arts managers and administrators had arrived from Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria, two CDU-ruled conservative *Länder* in the South of Germany. As Groschopp (1994:95) argues, they initially attempted to impose the policies and concepts of their own regions onto the Saxon administration.

Ten years after unification, one can find a mixture of new and old approaches in the administrative structure of Saxony. Even though there was a history of arts administration in Saxony, new approaches were possible but new concepts had to meet local needs and could not simply be transferred from the West German *Länder*.

Biedenkopf (1990: 27) declared that culture should be administered and supported by the state indirectly, “at arm’s length” (*staatsfern*), indicating that the state should not be directly involved in the administration of culture. This policy aim was underlined by the creation of two cultural institutions, which though not directly responsible to the state, were nevertheless state-owned. The Cultural Foundation of Saxony (CFS) and the Cultural Senate were set up in 1992 along the lines of a quasi-governmental body. As a foundation, the CFS receives funding from the regional government and from investment income. It is able to act independently from the Ministry of Arts and Science although in practice it maintains close links with the regional government. The Cultural Senate consisted of 31 nominated members from the arts and politics and acted as an advisory body to Parliament and the Government of Saxony on matters

concerning culture and cultural policy issues. The President of the Cultural Senate is also a board member of the Cultural Foundation of Saxony.

The Cultural Foundation of Saxony supports cultural projects in Saxony and encourages cultural exchange with the Czech Republic and Poland to the East as well as with other countries worldwide. It is the only body within the cultural administration of Saxony able to change and develop its own funding criteria without direct state involvement and as such it can set specific qualitative funding criteria above more general criteria. The foundation works in conjunction with a Board mainly composed of non-governmental representatives whose terms of reference are to ensure that the foundation acts as a corrective to official state cultural policy. In addition, the CFS acts as a think tank in the arts world in Saxony. People, ideas and resources are brought together and advice is given, for example, to the cultural industries, to local communities and to non-commercial arts organisations in Saxony.

In line with these developments, administrative arrangements for regional cultural policy were established with the creation of the Saxon Ministry of Science and Arts (SMWK) and the Cultural Departments in the Regional Councils (*Regierungspräsidien*)<sup>63</sup> at the district level. The departments are responsible for the support of the arts, as announced by Hans Joachim Meyer (Meyer 1996: 5), the Minister for Arts and Science, in 1996. Three cultural policy aims are stated:

1. Saxony aims to preserve and maintain its cultural institutions (such as the Semperoper and the State Art Collection in Dresden and the art academies in Dresden and Leipzig), which are either state owned or under direct state control.
2. Saxony supports artists and arts projects, focusing mainly on the development of the non-governmental sector, associations and individual artists.

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<sup>63</sup> The *Regierungspräsidien* represent the Ministries in the districts of Chemnitz, Leipzig and Dresden.

3. Saxony supports local cultural institutions and projects, which are owned or subsidised mainly by municipalities or provinces.

In order to achieve these aims, the Ministry's Department of Art is divided into five sections and the regional councils (*Regierungspräsidien*) follow a similar pattern on a smaller scale. Visual arts policy is determined mainly by the visual arts section at the ministry, which deals with funding programmes for visual artists and with the art academies of Saxony. Museums and art collections are dealt with in a separate section, which works to achieve the first aim. In the *Regierungspräsidien*, one member of staff usually administers visual arts projects. In addition, the Art Fond of the Free State of Saxony (*Kunstfonds des Freistaates Sachsen*), formally the Office of Visual Arts (*Büro für Bildende Kunst*), is responsible at the regional level for the visual art collection of the state administration. In this guise it purchases pieces of contemporary art for the administration and continues to be the only state art administrative organisation to survive transformation. At the regional and district levels the visual art sections focus mainly on the second aim, supporting non-governmental organisations, artists and art projects.

While the creation of the CFS and the Cultural Senate corresponded to the arms-length principle, the establishment of the Department of Art in the Ministry of Science and Art was, in contrast, directly administered by the state. In addition there was an overlap in funding activities. When comparing the second aim of the Ministry of Art with the aims of the CFS, one could conclude that both bodies support similar activities on the same administrative, i.e. the regional, level. Such a dual funding structure would seem unlikely to be cost-effective. In practice, however, a division of labour has been agreed

between the two bodies and there are negotiations on a daily basis to decide which institutions fund which project.

### ***3.3.3 Dresden's cultural funding structure as an example of local arts policy***

At a local level the administration of culture is directly incorporated into the city's administration. The cultural development plan of the city of Dresden, which will outline the aims of cultural policy in more detail, was being finalised in 2000. In general Dresden, the capital of Saxony, aims to retain its reputation as a city of culture for inhabitants and tourists alike. The cultural policy aims of the city correspond to those of the region but with a strong local focus.

On the administrative side, Dresden's Department of Culture, similar to the equivalent department in the regional Ministry of Arts and Science, is part of Dresden city council and is divided into sections. The main task for the different sections is to integrate local policy decisions into funding programmes. The visual arts section works with three administrators and a committee makes the funding decisions. A committee structure was put in place in 1992 in every section of the cultural department and members are mainly practitioners from the arts world. Membership of the visual arts committee, for instance, includes artists, curators and politicians.

### 3.4 Visual arts policy practice

While the previous section described the policy framework and policy aims at federal, regional and local levels, this section focuses on the funding policy practice of the past ten years and explores how arts funding policy was implemented at federal, regional and local levels. Funding programmes are analysed by examining what programmes exist, how they reach their targets and to what extent an individual artist could benefit from policy implementation.

#### 3.4.1 Federal government funding practice

As a result of the structural changes in the federal government in 1999, the newly appointed State Minister for Culture introduced several new funding programmes that addressed visual arts policies. Few of these were directly related to individual artists, such as the reformation of the foundation law and the funding of arts organisations. However, individual artists were able to benefit from these programmes indirectly because arts organisations were able to use the support to fund them. In the case of the Visual Artists Association the support is used to represent the interests of visual artists at the federal level. Another source of indirect funding for individual artists is the state-funded competition for public art projects.

In addition to the indirect federal funding resources there is one direct funding programme specifically dedicated to individual artists, including visual artists, i.e. the German Artists' Support Fund (*Deutsche Künstlerförderung*), administered by the federal President.<sup>64</sup> This programme funds artists who have created "work of cultural significance" within Germany and who are in financial difficulties due to illness, age or

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<sup>64</sup> The *Bundespräsident* is elected in four-yearly cycles by Parliament and is Head of State.

other difficult individual circumstances. The support represents recognition of the artists' achievements (*Individuelle Künstlerförderung des Bundes* 1993:7) and can take the form of a one-off grant or a permanent grant.

All the funding opportunities mentioned so far were designed to support the arts and visual artists throughout Germany. Following unification, some programmes were specifically designed for the East German *Länder*. The *Stiftung Kulturfond*, the Foundation for Cultural Funding, which was created out of the remains of former GDR mass organisations such as the *Kulturbund*, was established to support specifically East German artists. The board of the foundation consisted of representatives of the East German *Länder*, each of which owned one fifth of the total assets of the foundation. In 1998, the Saxon government decided to withdraw from the foundation and its portion of the fund was integrated into the Cultural Foundation of Saxony, which subsequently took over the administration of the fund for Saxony. This source of funding is still available for visual artists but is now located at the regional administrative level.

The other important funding programme specifically for eastern Germany was the structural fund (*Strukturförderprogramm*). The aim of this fund was to maintain the cultural substance of the new German *Länder*, as stated in the unification treaty. Support was therefore available immediately after unification, at a time when administrators were unsure how to manage the programme. The infamous German bureaucracy was not yet in place and as a result the programme lacked clearly defined funding criteria. One of the administrators interviewed for this study explained that the important thing about the funding programme was that a large amount of money was

available, and went on to describe the difference between now and the first three years after unification by adding:

“We supported projects that we would not support nowadays. Today, the legal bodies would discourage this kind of funding practice. Yet, 1991 to 1993 was a very important time and if we had not had these chaotic times we would be much weaker today. [...]

We started off with a creative understanding of the situation because we did not know what else to do. All in all, in the beginning there were few regulations and stimulating times. We tried things out, for example we supported private galleries with the money from the federal structural fund, which is not common in the western part of the country”. (A3: 11,12)

The structural fund programme was used as a stop-gap. As with any aid programme immediate help was necessary and money was injected into the new *Länder*, thus saving the cultural infrastructure. However, the programme created expectations for the future that would be very hard to fulfil at the regional governmental level without federal finance.

In terms of the administration it also created confusion. The programme was administered by the regions and municipalities although the federal government provided the funding, and this was not obvious either to the individual visual artist or to the arts organisations. The initial lack of administrative expertise and funding criteria and the introduction of criteria while the programme was running added to the confusion. One year funding criteria were unimportant, but the next year the same application would no longer be accepted because it did not meet newly established criteria. After 1994, the regional audit court (*Rechnungshof*) investigated funding allocations made between 1991 and 1993 and discovered that a large number of administrative mistakes had been made, according to the newly established criteria. An administrator of an arts organisation described the situation in the following way:

“They [the administration] did not check statements for years and now all of a sudden



they wanted explanations for mistakes that had happened between 1991 and 1993. Now they blame us, the arts organisation, but we were both sitting in the same boat” (A9).

Originally, the programme was designed to last three years, from 1990 to 1993. After 1994, federal government funding was reduced but not completely withdrawn. The programme was clarified as the regional government settled down and became familiar with the administrative system.

### ***3.4.2 State Funding of Saxon visual arts - programmes, guidelines and practice***

#### **3.4.2.1 Funding programmes**

As demonstrated above, financial support at federal level was available for the first three years after unification. The federal government’s assistance and funding programme ensured that regional and local governments were able to develop their own funding systems, which had to be in place by 1994 to take over from the federal structural fund. In 1994 therefore, the Saxon government and the municipalities assumed responsibility for funding with the aim of securing and maintaining Saxony’s cultural heritage - an ambitious objective when one considers its rich cultural density. Many cultural organisations needed not only funding but, more importantly, reorganisation and restructuring.

The Saxon Ministry of Science and Art (SMWA), as well as some municipalities, began to transform state-owned arts institutions into quangos, quasi-governmental organisations, or into private businesses under state ownership. Today, many theatres

and orchestras are limited companies but most museums and galleries as well as universities remain state institutions, reporting directly to the Ministry.

Another important step towards the implementation of arts policy aims was the creation of new funding programmes. Between 1994 and 1999, the Saxon funding bodies<sup>65</sup> and the municipalities developed criteria, procedures and guidelines for a range of funding programmes (see Table 3), similar to those common in the western German *Länder*.

Most funding bodies focused on the following questions in developing their programmes: how could arts policy aims be embodied in funding criteria and guidelines? Which funding body should be responsible for which sector of the arts? What kind of funding guidelines are appropriate and what kind of procedures should be applied to manage funding applications?

After unification the Saxon government discontinued GDR funding schemes and had to completely rethink its funding strategy. This was an unusual situation which made possible the introduction of developments needing no reference to past policies, which is usually impossible to avoid and which can severely restrict and limit choice and innovation (see Rose 1990, Rose and David 1994, Parsons 1995:604).

As a result, a number of funding schemes emerged in the 1990s, both regionally and locally, and a set of funding programmes for visual artists was created (see Table 3), some of which were directly aimed at individual artists, such as scholarships, travel

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<sup>65</sup> At the same time, non-governmental funding bodies (NGOs) were also created in Saxony, offering grants and project funding to individuals and organisations. This study will focus only on the state and public organisations and will analyse in particular those programmes that targeted smaller arts organisations and individual artists in Saxony.

grants and arts schemes. The policy aims referred to culture and the arts as one and the same, and the SMWK stated that it was working within a broader understanding of culture, defining culture as a way of life, as “an expression of the spiritual, material, ethical and humane qualities of society” (Kulturförderung: Das Handbuch 2001: 17). However, the funding programmes follow the traditional division of arts disciplines. The Arts Department in the SMWK is also divided into the classical categories of arts disciplines that include fine arts, performing arts, literature and music.

Table 3: Visual arts funding programmes in Saxony

| Funding body   | Funding schemes  | Who could apply?  |
|--|--|---|
| Ministry of Arts and Science, Department of Visual Arts and the Regional Council<br>( <i>Regierungspräsidium</i> ) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel grants and placements in Germany and abroad</li> <li>• Projects to support junior artists</li> <li>• Exhibitions, symposiums and workshops of national and international importance,</li> <li>• Projects with artists from abroad</li> <li>• Grants for printing costs of producing a catalogue for an individual exhibition for artists from Saxony</li> <li>• Purchase of contemporary visual art in the Free State of Saxony</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freelance visual artists resident in the Free State of Saxony</li> <li>• Artists who have a personal or a work-based relationship with Saxony</li> <li>• Municipalities, districts, artists' groups and free communal associations</li> </ul>                                      |
| Cultural Foundation of Saxony  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projects of contemporary art and the cultural sciences, interdisciplinary projects</li> <li>• Working grants for contemporary freelance artists for excellent artistic achievements - new work (since 1996)</li> <li>• Residency grants for Schloss Wiepersdorf/Ahrenshoop (since 2000)</li> <li>• International study programme New York City (since 1998)</li> </ul>  | <p>For projects: non-governmental organisations, public bodies, municipalities, individual artists, artists' groups</p> <p>Freelance artists with main work place in Saxony (<i>Schaffensmittelpunkt</i>)</p>   |
| Cultural areas ( <i>Kulturräume</i> )  | <p>Match funding for cultural institutions and events of mainly regional importance (since 1994)</p> <p>Inter-regional fund to support structural changes within different cultural areas in Saxony</p>  | <p>Cultural institutions and measures of regional importance or of model character for newly developed forms of organisations or of special artistic and scientific strength of innovation if also supported by the local area</p> <p>Cultural areas only</p>   |
| Municipalities <sup>66</sup>   | <p>One-off grant for renovation and conversion of studios for visual artists (since 1995)</p> <p>Project fund (interdisciplinary) for cultural and artistic projects (since 1996)</p>  | <p>Freelance visual artists (member of the Artists' Association or of the social insurance fund (<i>Künstlersozialkasse</i>) resident in the municipalities or associations if they rent or own studios.</p> <p>Applicant needs to be resident in the municipality or the project needs to be of importance to the city</p> |

One of the most innovative and adventurous programmes within this framework was the new “cultural area law” (*Kulturraumgesetz*). Despite the use of the term “law”, this is neither a piece of legislation, such as the unification treaty, nor a typical example of a funding programme but instead a mixture of both. It represents a legal obligation placed

<sup>66</sup> In administrative terms Saxony is divided into cities, municipalities and provinces with villages and smaller towns. The example chosen for the analysis here is the city of Dresden. Variations between cities in terms of funding schemes are slight and Dresden, as the capital of Saxony, represents one of the most culturally important cities in the Free State of Saxony.

on the Saxon government to guarantee support for culture to the sum of DM150 million per year and contains guidelines dealing with the disbursement of funds and the workings of the funding procedures. The law was passed by parliament in 1994 and is valid until 2004. The “cultural area law” corresponds mainly to the third aim of cultural policy, i.e. the provision of assistance to local arts organisations. At the same time as confirming the government’s duty towards the arts, it ensures that this duty is passed on to local administrations. The cultural area law therefore ensured that the Saxon cultural infrastructure was maintained in the way envisaged in the unification treaty of 1990. The law also guaranteed the survival of the majority of the regional arts institutions.

The law states that municipalities and provinces have the duty to support and maintain culture, but that the decision on the amount of support they wish to extend is taken locally. These are new developments in the regulation of culture, unique to Germany. The regional government of Saxony further ensures support for the arts locally with match funding of DM150 million per annum, as mentioned above. For administrative reasons, the law divided Saxony into eleven areas of which eight are rural and the remaining three are cities (see map 3). Within each cultural area towns and villages are obliged to develop a system of joint support with neighbouring provinces, calling also on the solidarity of suburban areas not usually involved in support for the more centralised arts institutions.

Map 3: cultural areas in Saxony

Freistaat Sachsen

Kulturräume

Stand: 1998

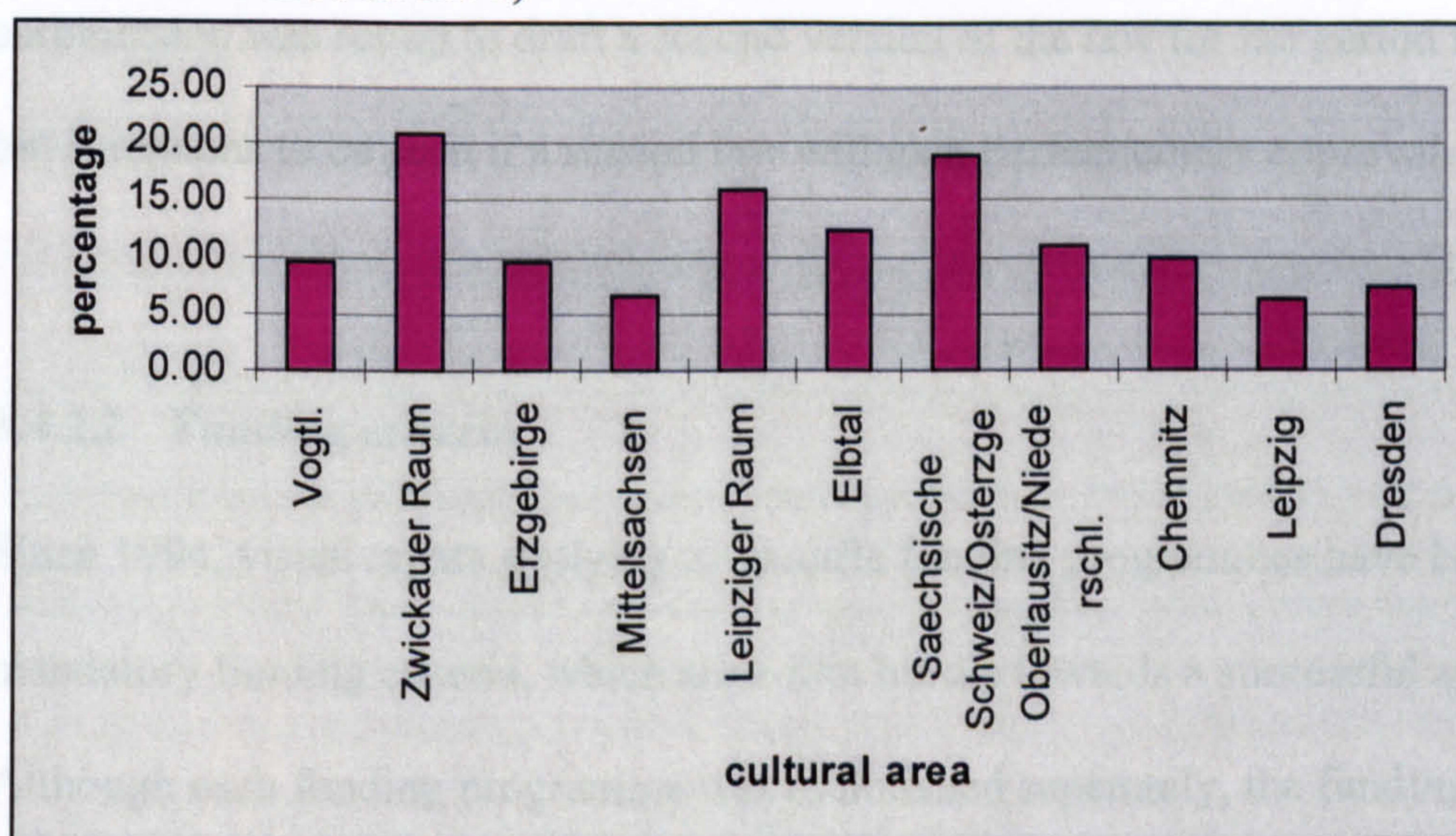


The cultural area law aimed to provide Saxony with a sufficient cultural base and sought to avoid cost-intensive repetition and inefficiency (*Kulturräume in Sachsen - Zwischenbericht 1999: 13ff*). With regard to visual artists, the law claimed to make available additional funding opportunities to individuals. For example, visual artists were able to receive funding for innovative projects or activities if the area also supported the application. However, in practice, the bulk of the support is allocated to organisations and institutions within the cultural areas and most of the funding is committed to the performing arts, i.e. theatres and orchestras in Saxony. Funding for the visual arts, which focuses mainly on museums and galleries but also includes grants for individual artists, varies from district to district<sup>67</sup>. In 1996 for instance, Mittelsachsen allocated 6.5% of its total programme funding to the visual arts while the

<sup>67</sup> The distribution of funding for visual arts in the districts often depends on the initiative and interests of individual programme managers and visual artists and on how well the funding programmes have been marketed to visual artists as well on the relative density of cultural institutions in the districts.

Zwickauer Kulturraum allocated 21% (see Chart 2). At no time did the visual arts receive more funding than theatres and orchestras. For instance, in 1996 the Vogtland district allocated 73.5% of total arts funding to the performing arts and 9.7% to the visual arts (*Kulturräume in Sachsen – Zwischenbericht 1999*: 44).

Chart 2: Distribution of visual arts funding in the cultural areas of Saxony (percentage of programme funding allocated to the visual arts inclusive of museums and galleries in each cultural area in 1996)



Source: *Kulturräume in Sachsen – Zwischenbericht 1999*: 44)

With regard to cultural policy in Saxony, the law fulfils an important role within the funding structure, in particular by putting one of the three cultural policy aims into practice. Its status is that of a "*Durchführungsgesetz*" (procedural law), more common in other areas of public life, for example the *Hochschulgesetz* in higher education. This is a new development in the cultural field and it can be argued that it results from the strong statement of support for the arts in the constitution of Saxony. Saxony has attempted to fulfil the obligations of the unification treaty with the introduction of the cultural area law, which has brought stability to the government's regional cultural budget for a period of ten years in the face of budget cuts in other areas.

Today, the SMWA views positively the overall effect of the cultural area law on funding practice (*Kulturräume in Sachsen - Zwischenbericht 1999*: 9ff). However, some municipalities and areas no longer fully support the law because of general financial difficulties - culture and the arts are still the first areas to be cut back in times of financial problems. In various attempts to cut costs between 1994 and 1999, some orchestras and theatres merged while others remained unchanged. In 1999 a commission was set up to draft a second version of the law for the period from 2004, but it remains to be seen if a second law will gain parliamentary approval.

#### **3.4.2.2 Funding criteria**

Since 1994, visual artists applying to specific funding programmes have had to meet mandatory funding criteria, which are a first hurdle towards a successful application. Although each funding programme was established separately, the funding criteria have tended to overlap. I have therefore identified the key recurring criteria in the funding programmes and will relate these to arts policy aims.

The following five criteria were identified:

1. The project or work of art must be relevant to the region of Saxony.
2. It needs to correspond to one of the traditional arts disciplines.
3. The project or work of art is only allowed one award from each funding programme.
4. The application must demonstrate that the artist's own resources (*Eigenmittel*) have been invested in the project.
5. The project outcome should be of good quality.

The first criterion states that any project or work of art must demonstrate relevance to Saxony. Artists must be born in Saxony, must live and practice there or alternatively, the content of the project must be related to the Free State of Saxony. There is a direct link here to the legal principle that the regional government has a duty to maintain



culture in Saxony. The same criterion applies to local funding schemes but is then narrowed down to the local area. For example, in one funding programme, the City Council of Dresden Department for Visual Arts offers capital funding for individual artists to rebuild or reconstruct studio space. The criteria state that applicants must be resident in Dresden (*Richtlinie der Landeshauptstadt Dresden über die Gewährung einmaliger Zuschüsse für Um- und Ausbau von Arbeitsateliers Bildender Künstler* 1996: Paragraph 3.1.3.).

The second criterion requires that the project is defined according to the traditional division of artistic disciplines such as the theatre, the fine arts, music and literature.<sup>68</sup>

This requirement matches the administrative division of the SMWK into traditional arts disciplines.<sup>69</sup> Interdisciplinary approaches would therefore have difficulty in meeting the funding criteria. Furthermore, interdepartmental funding is impossible. Funding criteria for the fine arts sector, valid since 1997, state that the Free State of Saxony aims to maintain and actively support all genres of the fine arts (*Richtlinie des Sächsischen Staatsministerium für Wissenschaft und Kunst zur Förderung der Bildenden Kunst*, 1997), but the Fine Arts Department will only accept applications with visual arts content.

It may be observed that the use of the terms 'art' and 'culture' in the arts policy aims and the funding criteria has changed from that in the legal principles. While the Saxon constitution neither separates culture or art into the traditional arts disciplines, nor limits itself to the arts, the funding programmes and their criteria imply a narrow

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<sup>68</sup> Film is partly covered under media and partly under the arts in the SMWK.

<sup>69</sup> One exception was the funding scheme for *Soziokultur*, for those managing alternative arts centres. This funding scheme is administered by the SMWK's cultural policy section, which deals mainly with the legalities of cultural heritage.

definition of art. In general, the regional government and its administration use the expression “art” instead of “culture”. As a result, the implementation of the legal constitutional principles is limited to the narrow definition of the arts rather than the broader understanding of the arts and culture.

It is argued here that the decision to use “the arts” instead of “art and culture” is political and refers to the conservative political understanding popular in 1950s Germany. While the federal SPD/Green coalition government speaks of cultural policy, the conservative-led government of Saxony prefers the use of the term “the arts”. Drawing on Alsop and Geertz, Zolberg (1997: 3) argues that “in the western European tradition, the domain of fine art came to be conceived of as an elevated autonomous sphere, structured with a hierarchical ranking of artistic genres and techniques. While other civilisations have glorified the arts, none has produced such a distinctive and lofty aesthetic realm”.

If Zolberg’s interpretation is applied to the Saxon use of the words ‘art’ and ‘fine art’, the autonomous sphere together with the hierarchical ranking of artistic genres and techniques can be found in the structure of the state funding institutions. This has a direct impact on the funding schemes, as is evident in the criteria which speak mostly of the arts and not of culture. Policy makers do not question the general understanding and use of common terms, especially not in times of change.

However, not all regional funding bodies limit themselves to the affirmative understanding and narrow definition of the arts. The funding criteria of the Cultural Foundation of Saxony state:

”The foundation supports events and organisations in the fields of music, literature, film, the performing and visual arts as well as general cultural work of associations (*freie Träger*) with the aim of maintaining existing structures and creating new structures” (Annual report of the Cultural Foundation of Saxony, Dresden 1999: 42).

Although the Cultural Foundation also refers to the classical fields of the arts, the new field of general cultural work has been added.

This is particularly noteworthy when one examines how the funding criteria are applied in practice. The guidelines for project funding continue as follows: ”projects of contemporary art and culture, especially interdisciplinary projects, are welcome”. Here, the foundation steps into the gap left by the Ministry’s funding criteria, which neglected the interdisciplinary approach.<sup>70</sup> A similar openness can be found at the local level, in the funding criteria of the City Council of Dresden, which invites applications to a general project fund covering all fields of art. However, the structure of the City Council of Dresden is the same as that of the Ministry and the department is divided according to the classical fields of art. Interdisciplinary projects therefore face difficulties, as it is unclear which department should deal with the application.

The third principle is designed to rule out the possibility of an applicant receiving funding for the same project from different funding bodies. It states that a project cannot be funded twice from the same source and its main task is thus to avoid overlap between the different funding programmes. If, for example, a project applied to the *Regierungspräsidium*, the district administration and to the SMWA, only one of the

three funding bodies would be able to support the project since both these institutions receive their funding from the same source, the regional government of Saxony.

However, my research did find examples of the CFS and the SMWK awarding grants to the same project but they were exceptions to the rule, and arose because of the financial split within the CFS, which, as a government foundation, receives a grant from the regional government. At the same time the CFS has another source of income, the former Cultural Foundation of the *Länder*, as mentioned above. If a project is funded out of the latter fund, the third principle no longer applies, as the funding is then from a source separate from the regional government.

In terms of financial requirements, a fourth principle was identified in most of the funding schemes, i.e. the need for the applicant to contribute his/her own resources. Every artist applying for project funding (excluding scholarships and travel grant applicants) has to prove that he/she contributes personally to the cost of the project. The exact amount of the contribution required differs between funding schemes but never exceeds 20% of the total project costs.

Finally, the fifth principle, the quality principle, is one of the most controversial and difficult funding criteria: quality as such is not clearly defined but, despite this vagueness, it is used world-wide. Ernst (1998: 104) wrote that “as soon as a government agency decides to support individual artists financially... the question arises who to support, who not to support and why?” In all the countries researched [Germany being one] selections were made based on quality.

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<sup>70</sup> The more open approach of the Foundation is also seen in its name, i.e. “Cultural Foundation of

In the Saxon funding framework the artistic quality principle includes terms such as “artistic innovation” and “outstanding individual artistic achievements” (*hervorragende künstlerische Einzelleistungen*) (CFS, Annual Report 1999: 42). Another funding programme supports projects demonstrating “an exceptional artistic-aesthetic or scientific strength of innovation (*eine besondere künstlerisch-ästhetische oder wissenschaftliche Innovationskraft*) ( SMWA, *Kulturräume in Sachsen, Zwischenbericht 1999*: 124). One administrator observed that grants are also awarded with the ulterior motive of initiating an innovative project that would not gain support from a private sponsor<sup>71</sup> but would provide the opportunity of encouraging future artistic development.

As mentioned above, it is hard to define the terms “quality of art” and “art” as well as answering the crucial question of what art actually is, although the questions have been asked many times. Both terms are vague and depend on the observer’s sensitivity, as Zolberg (1990:8) observes. She argues that interested parties almost always define the quality of art. Those used to dealing with this issue are art historians and aestheticians.<sup>72</sup> At the very least, these groups claim competence by the creation of a plethora of terms known as the “isms” in the visual arts. The administrators do not have the same reputation and instead apply and implement state rules and regulations. The evidence of this research shows that most of the interviewees working in state organisations define the terms “art” and “quality of art” in a number of different ways.

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Saxony” and not “Artistic Foundation of Saxony”.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with the Head of the Department of Visual Arts in the Ministry of Arts and Science in 1998. Here, it is assumed that private sponsorship is mainly interested in so-called “safe projects” that do not run the risk of damaging the sponsors’ image should the project fail.

<sup>72</sup> Aestheticians are defined as philosophers writing about the inside of the arts world. Zolberg mentions Bourdieu as an example.

According to Zolberg, this is because every individual perceives art differently since there are differing individual levels of sensitivity to art.

### **3.4.2.3 Funding practice**

While the previous sections focused on policy aims and funding criteria, this section analyses funding practice and its outcome. Policy aims and funding criteria are contrasted with the reality of the funding situation.

In most cases, the administrators employed by the state to manage and implement funding programmes do not necessarily distinguish between aims, principles and outcomes. They are concerned with the applications themselves and want to do their jobs, which mainly focus on the application itself. The administrators' role is to ensure that the application is eligible and meets any other requirements. Some administrators are entitled to make recommendations to the committees taking final decisions on funding; finance departments also exert control based on budgets and financial plans, as does Parliament due to the annual vote on the budget.

The funding criteria, together with guidelines provided by most of the funding bodies, were designed to inform funding practice. One example concerns the third criteria, on the avoidance of double funding projects from the same source. This third principle implies that communication about the funding applications between different funding bodies is essential. One administrator noted that, "we have to reach agreement with the CFS, the district administration and the cultural areas. Otherwise nothing would run smoothly"

(A7: 1).

This statement suggests a pragmatic and practical approach towards the funding process itself. But this is not always the case and only works if the process of communication between the different funding bodies is well defined. Depending on which geographical area is specified in each application, the responsibility for funding is divided between the various funding bodies. The Ministry of Science and Art and the Cultural Foundation of Saxony support schemes at regional and international levels while the regional council funds projects at the district level.

In interviews, administrators raised doubts about the effectiveness of the funding system in cases where terms and definitions could not be clearly interpreted. For example, there were difficulties in implementing the first criterion as both the geographical delineation and the question about relevance to the region of Saxony were vague and ill-defined. In many cases the decision to put forward an application was up to the administrator because the applicant would not follow the logic of the funding criteria. The applicant, i.e. the visual artist, would often be convinced that his/her project was of international importance and was aimed at the international arts world. For the artist, geographical setting would therefore be of minor importance (A2: 21).

At this point in the analysis one has to ask whether the funding bodies do take account of the artists' needs and concerns. There is no doubt that artists have been involved in the development of the funding criteria. One of the strengths of Saxon governance in this area is that working committees have the final say regarding artistic matters in funding applications and have been involved in the development of the criteria and guidelines since 1991. There are, however, noticeable communication problems on both the administrative and the applicant's side. As mentioned earlier, the funding criteria of

the programmes are almost identical, a problem brought up by an administrator in 1998: ” ...one [funding body] funds a project that advances artistic development, is of importance to the region and is innovative but these criteria also apply to the applications [to all the different funding bodies at the regional and district level] of the cultural area fund, the district funds and the regional funds” (A3: 21)

As a result, it is difficult for anyone not working in one of the funding institutions to distinguish between the different arts funding programmes. This confirms the artists’ impression that they are often unable to differentiate between the various funding bodies. The artists interviewed for this research reported experiencing difficulties in deciding where to apply for funding because their applications corresponded to most programme specifications.

Another problem is apparent in the practice of allocating matched funding. A project may receive support from different funding bodies as long as their resources are not identical. Therefore, a project could receive local and district or regional, federal and European support. In this situation, all funding bodies involved have to address the same questions: how will the other funding bodies handle this project? Will they consider funding it? If they support the project should we go ahead as well? It is common practice for funding bodies at all levels to fund a project if another funding body has also made a decision to fund. Some programmes even require support from several levels. The European Union welcomes matched funding from countries participating in its funding programmes. This is not a phenomenon peculiar to Saxony, where applicants attempt to inspire agreement between a number of different funding bodies.



This practice raises further questions: Why do administrators and policy makers need reassurance from the other funding bodies before making a funding decision? Is this practice a result of the similarity of the funding programmes? Are the funding criteria too vague or confusing?

The administrator faces internal difficulties, but his/her main complaint lies with the application itself: "...many artists are unable to write applications, they cannot describe their projects" (A2: 25). Another administrator notes "that artists are often unable to describe their ideas in a way that allows one to imagine what the project is actually about..." (A3: 21). The same problem holds for the final report (*Verwendungsnachweis*), which requires the successful applicant to demonstrate that the project was carried out according to the project and financial plan.

If the administrator is unable to perceive what the applicant's project is like, it will be hard to make an accurate recommendation to the funding committees. In some cases the administration can adopt a service function and help the applicant complete the forms but it would be impossible to deal with all applications in this way. The same method is used for the final report, as an administrator explains: "They [the successful applicants] have half a year to write the report. Yes, it then works in the same way; when the reports are here and they cannot be used at all, we work on them in the office until they are done as they should be done" (A7: 27).

However, in practice we see that the administration does not want to let an applicant down just because the formal application has not been completed correctly. This

approach is possible because the administrators are most familiar with the weightings of the criteria and the funding guidelines and sometimes seem to be alone in having this knowledge. Some expressed doubts about the way their programme guidelines were written. On reading recently rewritten funding guidelines, one administrator reported that he could not understand their meaning himself (A4: 22). He suggested that “the jungle of guidelines and rules” should be reduced to a digestible amount and the language used<sup>73</sup> should be changed and simplified.

Another important aspect has to be considered here, namely the solidarity among the eastern German population. Despite communication difficulties between administrators and artists, those interviewed demonstrated a sense of solidarity that was alien to the recently imported western bureaucracy. Both interest groups, the administrators and the visual artists referred to a common understanding, a feeling that “we are all in the same boat”. The transformation brought changes for all parties working in the arts but it seems that collaboration between funders and artists could lead to positive results for both.

It should be noted that this feeling of solidarity was mostly limited to those with experience of growing up in the GDR, who could be identified by language<sup>74</sup> and behaviour.<sup>75</sup> In many cases the West Germans were unable to appreciate or understand this solidarity, and faced communication problems when dealing with the eastern Germans. Following unification, those experienced in West German systems filled

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<sup>73</sup> The legalistic language of funding guidelines is often difficult to understand without special knowledge of legal principles and the law.

<sup>74</sup> Eastern German dialects and accents are quite distinct from their western German counterparts.

<sup>75</sup> Distinguishing people by behaviour is more difficult but, bearing in mind the dangers of generalization, eastern Germans are known for being more reserved than their western German counterparts.

many of the leading positions in organisations and the intention was to implement Western standards as quickly as possible. Eduard Beaucamp (2000: 1), writing on the tenth anniversary of unification, explained this position in relation to museum curators. "The curators from the west who took over the top museums in eastern Germany after 1990, took their mission seriously and quickly tried to bring the museums up to date with respect to Western aesthetics".

Beaucamp's observation can more generally be applied to visual arts administrators. However, the 'imported' West Germans did not always succeed in implementing change as they discovered that their knowledge, experience and structures were not necessarily understood by their East German colleagues and therefore did not always work as intended. Experienced West German lawyers developed the funding guidelines but, as the quotation above demonstrates, the guidelines did not address the intended audience. Important as feelings of solidarity are in times of change, they were built on confusion and lack of knowledge on the part of administrators and artists. This became most obvious in the way the administration dealt with funding applications.

While the initial confusion caused administrative difficulties, it also provided the impetus to improve, amend and in some cases to correct funding guidelines. As a result of reflection on day-to-day funding practice, the handling process for applications was changed. Administrators noted that visual artists had to overcome two hurdles.

First, it was not widely known among artists what a project represented in practice; the terminology had not been used in the arts world of the GDR. The definition of a project as the practical implementation of an idea with a defined beginning and end was

unfamiliar to artists. In many cases they were unable to be specific about timing and budgets or to tell in advance when and how work would be completed and what in the end it would represent.<sup>76</sup> Visual artists regarded projects as extras, to be undertaken once their livelihoods had been ensured via other resources. An administrator agreed: "Project funding is not appropriate to the visual arts because it does not secure artists' needs. One cannot live from projects" (A9: 24).

Ten years after unification, administrators and visual artists have become accustomed to the term and many now understand that it is possible for artistic ideas to be realised within a framework provided by a project. However, travel grants and scholarships, rather than project grants, remain the most popular type of support requested by individual visual artists, as demonstrated by the following figures: In 1999, the CFS received 57 scholarship applications from visual artists, 10 of which were successful (Annual Report, CFS, 1999: 28). In 1998 the SMWK received 98 applications for scholarships and made 14 awards (A2: 44). In comparison, the CFS project funding programme received 43 applications in 1999. Of those applications, only four had been submitted by individual artists, 19 by artists' groups and associations and 20 by museums. 27 out of 43 projects were supported, broken down into three successful individual artists, eight associations and 16 museums and galleries. The figures for 2000 are similar: the Foundation received 54 applications in the visual arts. Eight applications were made by individual artists and 30 by artists' groups and associations. 23 projects were funded, of which two were by artists and 21 by artists' groups and associations (A1). Individual artists clearly applied less frequently for project funding than for grants and scholarships.

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<sup>76</sup> Exceptions were one-off performances and 'happenings', effectively time-limited events.

The second problem noted by the administrators was that many artists willing to apply were unable to contribute to project costs. Artists applied for funding because they did not have the resources to invest themselves, a common problem for most eastern Germans at the time. Schröder (2000: 150) estimated that as a result of the different economic developments in the Federal Republic and the GDR, the average eastern German household was worth one fifth of the average Western German household in monetary terms in 1990. This demonstrates that the financial resources of the eastern German population as a whole, and artists in particular, were very limited.

To solve this problem, the regional administration adapted its interpretation of the term “own resources” with the publication of the second version of the funding programme’s guidelines in 1997. This change meant artists could include working hours and other resources in kind as “own resources” in the funding application’s budget. The administration’s working method of “learning by doing” had been in place since 1989 and in some cases had proved very successful.

One problem the administration had not solved was also one of the most obvious: the lack of information available to applicants. Between 1990 and 2000 there had been very little evidence that the funding bodies publicised and advertised their funding programmes. Initially, information was passed on to the Artists’ Association. It is interesting to note that this is the same information strategy as that practised in the GDR. The Artists’ Association of Saxony would then publish information in a monthly newsletter. The administration was aware that not all possible applicants were necessarily members of the association. Funding bodies thus began advertising in

newspapers and later used the internet to distribute information, but the number of visual artists with internet access is limited and many artists do not read newspapers. It therefore continued to be difficult to reach potential applicants who did not participate in public exchange.

To reinforce even further the lack of information available to visual artists, the state administration did not provide a general guide to available funding programmes at European, federal, regional or local levels, arguing that provision of general information was beyond its remit. Each funding body's perception of its public service function was thus limited to its own funding programmes. General information should be provided by the arts organisations (such as artists' groups or the lobbying bodies), argued an administrator: "... the main organisations for visual artists should invite interested artists and train them. Many artists do not care about this at all but within artists' groups there should be at least one individual who knows how it [the funding system] works [...] but this is not our task".<sup>77</sup> However, the Artists' Association was also unable to bridge this information gap.

In an attempt to put matters right, the Saxon Ministry for Science and Art published a general funding guide in 2001, which included details of funding schemes at local, regional, federal and European level. However, the information provided is of general interest to inhabitants of Saxony and does not take into account the specific needs and concerns of artists who, as Mühler and Wilsdorf (2001: 59) point out, have little

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<sup>77</sup> Many administrators understand their role as a service provider, though the emphasis is on serving the state and not necessarily on serving the client. This is partly related to a general understanding of German civil service bureaucracy as offering special social security benefits to those working within it in return for loyalty to the state. For example, most appointments to the state administration are for life. The loyalty of the administrators is built into the structure, as is the case in most of the German *Länder* and in some other European countries such as France and Sweden.

interest in engaging in minutiae of funding guidelines and administrative jargon. The guidelines are not written in a way that will make applying for funding any easier for artists.

Despite the publication of the guidelines, funding bodies remain reluctant to run public relations campaigns and to take the concerns of their clients into account as part of their marketing strategy. A typical arts marketing manager would argue that arts marketing is not just about techniques such as advertising, publicity and sales. In the official discourse of the profession, marketing is about knowledge and communication (Colbert 1994: 161). In the GDR with its planned economy there was no need to think about these issues. The idea of using marketing in the arts and in public arts administration was introduced in Eastern Germany only in the early 1990s. Administrators and managers of state-run arts organisations had hardly any experience of implementing marketing tools in public administration. The idea that the state could and should make use of marketing had been neglected and not until the late 1990s did the German federal government discover marketing to be a useful communication tool. This development may eventually have an impact on government at the regional level but for the moment the use of marketing in the regions is poor.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has analysed the development of state visual arts policy in Saxony after unification with special reference to visual arts funding policy. Legal principles were seen to be the starting point for the formulation of a cultural policy. Under its constitution, the Free State of Saxony is committed to supporting cultural, artistic and scientific creativity. This commitment is further defined in policy aims, which in turn have resulted in funding programmes focussing on arts policy rather than on cultural policy. The structure of the government's funding bodies corresponds to its designated policy aims. However, the original aim of an arms-length arts administration, which was initially fulfilled with the founding of the CFS, was contradicted with the establishment of the SMWK. In practice, the two organisations in this dual structure work within their own remits and avoid "double" work.

The use of the term "culture" in the legal principles has changed to "the arts" with its implicit classical, traditional meaning, especially in the funding programmes run by the SMWK. It is argued that this change in terminology implies a conservative understanding of arts policy in Saxony.

Most of the visual arts funding programmes specified five criteria, designed to ensure the implementation of the policy aims. The criteria corresponded to the legal principles but caused problems in funding practice. The regional administration was able to solve most of the difficulties by adapting the guidelines and criteria to the needs of the visual artists. However, the provision of funding information to visual artists failed to meet their needs because of the administration's hesitation in making use of marketing tools. Many communication problems between funding bodies and visual artists were caused



by misunderstandings of terminology and language. While these problems could have led to a widening gap between administration and visual artists, the feeling of “solidarity” that had developed among eastern Germans strengthened the relationship between both parties and motivated both sides to find a solution.

To sum up, ten years after unification a visual arts policy was in place and the process of large-scale change seemed to have come to an end. The former Head of Culture, Sport and Youth of Dresden City Council summarised the situation in 1998: “We took over the non-conformist model from Western Germany and this is in place now. The structural changes have been implemented and the system works. Transformation has finished” (A6: 1).

## **4 The unification shock – visual artists' career developments from 1989 to 1994**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter aims to portray and analyse the main features of the changes to living and working conditions of visual artists in the first five years after German unification. The previous chapter focussed on the range and degree of change seen in public visual arts funding policy whereas this chapter concentrates on artists' reactions to change in the process of political, social and economic transformation. Special reference is made to the living and working conditions of artists in Saxony, comparing individual experiences with the aims and outcomes of visual arts funding policy before and after unification. The following questions will act as a guide. How did visual artists manage change, given their situation before unification? How did visual artists react to arts policy developments in Saxony? To what extent were they engaging in arts policy issues and why? How did visual artists react to the demands of the emerging art market?

Change is defined here as the overall phenomenon dominating the process of transition. Usually a phenomenon is said to be a fact or an occurrence that appears or is perceived, the cause of which is in question (Thomson, 1998: 668). The causes of change in the process of unification have been questioned and investigated by researchers working in a number of different fields, as was outlined in the introduction, because this change was a large-scale phenomenon affecting all levels of society and permeating every corner of it.

Change on such a scale is a continuous process and as such it is difficult to fix into a timeframe with a beginning and an end, if one can talk about change ever ending. This chapter reflects mainly on the developments of the first five years after the collapse of the GDR. These years have been widely described as the years of chaos or as “euphoria and crisis of identity” (Glaser 1997: 434). Unification brought with it changes in law and economics which were implemented at great speed on a large scale at a dynamic time.

This chapter argues that the changes at the macro level had a complex impact on the living and working conditions of visual artists. The changes left artists in a state of shock, from which they struggled to regain control of their individual situations. Some stability and normality was recovered but many were forced to compromise, both artistically and personally, in order to meet their financial needs and to ensure their reputations.

## 4.2 Environmental changes in the 1980s

It is difficult to specify exact dates for the beginning and end of change within the unification process, as noted above. Some dates may be regarded as milestones within the process. The GDR ceased to exist on 3 October 1990, when the two Germanys were formally united to become a new political entity, the enlarged Federal Republic of Germany. Prior to unification itself a series of peaceful demonstrations had taken place in October and November 1989.<sup>78</sup> The demonstration most often remembered is that of 3 October 1989 in Leipzig, now seen as a turning point. This event marked the transition from demonstrations for the right to free speech and the lifting of travel restrictions to peaceful revolution.<sup>79</sup> 4 November 1989 is considered to be important as the date on which politicians and the artists' community pledged a political "third way" at the largest demonstration of the time. Finally, three days later on 7 November 1989, the Berlin Wall fell. These dates marked the end of the GDR and the beginning of the democratic era in eastern Germany.

Referring to these crucial dates, Fulbrook (1997:281) argues that the communist dictatorship had started to disintegrate long before its official conclusion. In the 1980s rumours were beginning to surface that the GDR faced serious economic and internal social problems. The forces for reform had by then developed a more sophisticated organisational network, summarises Fulbrook (1997: 202), mainly referring to the

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<sup>78</sup> Glaser (1997: 424) quotes secret reports from the Minister of State Security Erich Mielke mentioning that between 16 and 22 October, 140,000 people participated in approved/prohibited demonstrations in East Germany. Between 23 and 29 October, 540,000 people took part in 145 demonstrations and between 30 October and 5 November, 1.35 million people participated in 210 demonstrations.

<sup>79</sup> The term "peaceful revolution" was used mainly by journalists reporting developments in the eastern European Countries in 1989/90. Most East Germans used the word "Wende".

growth of political activism<sup>80</sup> and tactics for applying pressure for change from below. The last two years of the GDR's history, prior to the autumn of 1989, "were characterized by increasing instability and political polarisation".

In the late 1980s, the government liberalized arts policy and attempted to address artists' concerns. Concessions were made to visual artists, allowing them to exhibit at and to participate in western European art fairs, and trade between East German visual artists and West German galleries began to flourish. Exhibitions were held that would have been unthinkable in the 1970s and the "niche artists" were about to gain a broader audience. Evidence from the Stasi archives has since come to light indicating that the GDR secret police observed these activities throughout but only occasionally intervened at a time when visual artists had assumed that arts policy had been liberalized (VA12).

A group of visual artists in Dresden saw this as an opportune moment to become more involved in the day-to-day politics of the Association of Visual Artists. They stood for election to the Board of the Artists Association and were elected, an innovation in itself as the party and state had always nominated Board members. When they attempted to liberalize the rules of the association they again succeeded:

"...We tried, for example, to get more women into leadership positions; [we tried] to restructure exhibitions, to change the membership conditions for the association...this would have been impossible ten years ago but in 1988/89 it worked.... it was working well. One had the feeling that things were taking a turn for the better". (VA8)

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<sup>80</sup> Fulbrook (1995: 201) points out that the East German regime never succeeded in quelling dissent, discontent, or opposition. What was new about the 1980s was not the 'growth of opposition' - as is so often argued - nor even the growth of discontent, but rather a combination of other interrelated factors. Fulbrook includes among these the changing organisational networks and cultural leanings of a growing minority of political activists who were seeking to improve the regime from within, the changing domestic political context of their actions and the changing international context.

Improvements in visual artists' conditions brought about by this group of artists were related mainly to the ideological propositions of state arts policy and its intention to control visual artists' activities. The Artists' Association's unpublished membership conditions favoured art academy graduates who had already demonstrated their support for state ideology. Artists without formal education, autodidacts, found entering the association and working as artists difficult, as one explains:

“Those artists who were not members of the Artists' Association could not really work as freelance artists. They had no access to artists' materials...tax registration was impossible...the artists' association primarily had a control function. They [the state] wanted to know what kind of individuals were working as artists”. (VA4)

Many of those who wanted to be artists but who, not having been educated at one of the GDR art academies, did not qualify for membership of the association, made several attempts to join. The entrance board was much stricter with these applications than with those from the art academies. These artists were often self-taught and highly motivated but because they had not been through the control process as students of the art academies had, they were politically suspect, having failed to declare their support for the ideology of the GDR state.

The reformers changed this unpublished membership criteria for artists lacking a formal arts education and therefore made the association more accessible to self-taught artists. Another change brought about by the reformers was an increase in the number of exhibitions held abroad and increased participation by GDR artists.

The concept of change from within, expressed by the slogan “walking through the institutions” (*Gang durch die Institutionen*), had been in practice in many other areas, especially in the 1980s. The ideological concerns at the head of the state's agenda collided with the will to change in the institutions. There was little concern over

working and living conditions, visual artists were financially secure and studio space was available and affordable. Members of the Artists' Association obtained regular contract work, according to need. In addition, direct and indirect state funding was available through direct purchases of works of art by the state, for display in museums, factories and other public organisations. One artist notes: "... that people [visual artists] who had not earned anything for some time, could at the end of the year go to the Office for Visual Art [at the regional government] and request funding. ...The office would then buy works of art and lend them free of charge to factories and other organisations." (VA2)

Basic living conditions, such as the ability to generate sufficient income by the production of works of art was taken for granted in the GDR. The state took care of artists in return for their acceptance of the role of mediator between the people, the community and the communist ideal.

Compared with the present, artists received very little money for their works of art in the GDR but they did not complain, as they were able to live comfortably even on a small income. For example, graduates from the art academy received a three-year grant consisting of monthly payments of DDRM 400 to cover all bills and other living costs.<sup>81</sup> It is important to note that GDR citizens perceived the value of money to be low. Consumer goods, when available, were heavily subsidised<sup>82</sup> but because of

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<sup>81</sup> Compared to the amount offered by the graduate scholarship, the average monthly wage was DDRMark 925 net in 1988. This would be sufficient to maintain normal living standards (Dennis 1993: 103).

<sup>82</sup> Rent, public transport and basic foodstuffs (above all potatoes, bread, milk and milk products, meat, sausages, fish) gas and electricity, many printed materials and some manufactured goods such as children's clothing were heavily subsidised. Other major beneficiaries of subsidies were education, sport, house construction and social insurance. Basic foodstuffs, rents and public transport were the most heavily supported items, their combined subsidy rising from GDR Mark 16.9 billion in 1980 to GDR Mark 49.8 billion in 1988. (Dennis 1993: 27)

shortages people were unable to make significant purchases with their money. The price of artists' materials was appropriate to their low income. Money itself was therefore not the main problem, but how to obtain the necessary tools and materials when they were often out of stock was. To conclude, the state provided the economic necessities for visual artists and the majority were able to carry out their profession on a full-time basis in the GDR in the 1980s.

However, more than the purely economic features of working and living conditions of visual artists has to be considered.<sup>83</sup> Although economics has increased in importance over the last few years, other aspects of artists' working and living conditions, based on mutual respect and authority should be considered. In the GDR the financial security available to artists was closely related to power, status and privilege. Artists were dependent on funding from the state and other state controlled organisations. There will be no discussion here of the power of visual images as such, instead the focus will be on power relations between government and artists. Although the relationship between both parties was not always as harmonious as GDR officials would have liked, because of ideological differences and artists' demands, all-in-all many artists received recognition and professional respect, especially through the Artists' Association itself. In return, their views were sought when policy decisions concerning visual artistic issues had to be made. The Head of State as well as other members of the government would participate regularly in the Artists' Association's annual meetings. Party members represented artists in the Artists' Association at SED party meetings. The leaders of the regional branches of the Artists' Association's were responsible to their

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<sup>83</sup> Butler (1995: 11) argues " that the problems of economic decline in the West, on a macro political level, have largely been addressed by economic solutions rather than sociological or cultural ones. [...] A legacy of the Thatcher era [in Britain] is that everything we do is now judged as if it were a business. We are all economic units and we should aim to be self-sustaining".



head office, which worked closely with the Ministry of Culture and the SED Headquarters in Berlin. The Artists' Association was entitled to symbols of status and privilege to which only few GDR citizens had access as pointed out in chapter 2.

Ten years after unification an assessment of the close relationship between artists and power in the GDR is fraught with difficulty because the issue has since been politicised and was caught up in a well-publicised East-West argument, which will be discussed in chapter 5. Although the interest in the arts demonstrated by state officials appears to have been genuine, generating a sense of importance and closeness to the artists' community, one should not underestimate the state's fundamental purpose which was to control and spy on the artists.

All in all, artists, particularly members of the Artists' Association, enjoyed a relatively high social position within GDR society as well as enjoying financial security. Many artists took these conditions for granted; those without experience and knowledge of life elsewhere saw this as the natural order of things. The generation of artists, which had grown up under a different kind of state was about to retire.

However, artists were dissatisfied, badly informed about political developments at the macro level and disappointed at the lack of opportunity for travel to western European countries. Hardly anyone considered the possibility of a total collapse of their living and working conditions in the near future.

### 4.3 The “Wende” and its immediate impact on visual artists

Many visual artists lived through the final stages of the GDR without recognising the seriousness of political developments but by the late 1980s they realised that change was imminent: “In 1988 I did not know that the whole country was about to collapse...[but] I was aware that the situation was ripe for change, we could all sense that things were changing (VA17). “.... I was sure that the whole thing [GDR] could not go on for much longer. Why, [this was the case] I did not know.”(VA11)

A former student of the Dresden Art Academy explains the position of art students in 1989 at the beginning of the revolution:

“ Everything was upside down.... the political situation at the Art Academy was very open.... and a critical potential had built up. Heisig [the newly appointed principal who was known to be a member of the niche culture] tried to reconcile the different positions and to negotiate...so that bombs would not be thrown, but that instead one should find an expression via art” (VA24).

As these statements demonstrate, it was felt that artists should contribute to the struggle against the state using their particular tools and resources, i.e. their art. She/he should use art as the most appropriate expression of discontent. Artists continued to employ this strategy when it came to their involvement in the round table discussions<sup>84</sup> and the peaceful demonstrations that were part of the “*Wende*”<sup>85</sup> during the unification process. Whereas writers and actors delivered speeches and participated actively in discussions, visual artists joined the masses in silent protest. Their participation in the demonstrations “went without saying” (VA13) but only very few participated actively in the process and provided posters and banners.

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<sup>84</sup> The “round table” was an interim governing body with 38 members drawn from all organisations and parties of the GDR. It aimed to secure the interests of the GDR citizens and to represent them. One of its tasks was to develop a first draft of a new constitution, but it was never completed. The round table closed in 1990 after 16 meetings.

During a time when the majority of GDR citizens were to be found demonstrating on the streets each evening, few artists responded directly to the upheaval through their work. The speed of events made it impossible to relate works of art to continuous political change and documentary photographs became the chief means of expression. Politics had taken over. One day the head of state resigned, followed the next day by the collapse of the government. A week later parliament was closed and state-run institutions such as the State Art Trade Organisation ceased trading. This had a direct impact on the working and living conditions of visual artists. Within a few weeks many realised that their contract partners, such as factories, farming co-operatives, art centres and the State Art Trade Organisation, were having either to close completely or were no longer solvent. The once secure working conditions of many visual artists had collapsed.

Although visual artists appeared to be less active in public politics, the group of reformers in the Artists' Association attempted to implement change within the association. In the GDR, the Artists' Association had acted as the contact between the contractors and its own members. It acted on behalf of the state and its membership comprised the majority of the visual artists' community. The breakdown of the generous state subsidy system resulted from the economic collapse of the GDR. The newly appointed heads of the association, who were known to be from niche cultural circles, proposed a merger with their West German counterpart. While their West German colleagues hesitated the East German artists themselves abolished their own

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<sup>85</sup> It is difficult to find an appropriate translation of the term "Wende". Neither "change" nor "turn" adequately capture the meaning of the word. East Germans used the term to cover the transformational activities at all levels of society between 1989 and 1990.

association in November 1990. The reformers in the association had been overtaken by events of the “*Wende*”, as one of the reform leaders states:

“ ...the important people [mainly artists from a circle of friends] went to the West [Western Germany],...sure, they were looking for curators and galleries, they were trying to make contacts and were less interested in changing the organisation...artists are not interested in gathering in organisations, they only do this when there is no other way out, they just want to paint... ”. (VA28)

For artists the “*Wende*” was a time of displacement and collapse and they were overwhelmed by their new-found freedom. At this time the extent and the consequences of the collapse were impossible to imagine. Interestingly, the artists’ ability and willingness to organise as a group to represent their own interests was limited even at the height of the upheavals. Any attempts at organisation were swept away by the daily changes of the “*Wende*”.

#### **4.4 Discovery and constraints of the international market**

The freedom to travel, which the GDR government had introduced accidentally by opening a Berlin border check point, inspired many visual artists to visit the large art collections and museums around the world: the situation felt like a dream come true. In addition many artists attempted to sell their art to galleries in Western Europe and in some cases in the USA. This had been impossible for the majority of artists in the GDR, and the prospect of international recognition was the main spur to this move abroad. Judging from the artists' comments the results of these journeys were diverse.

While artists reported feeling overwhelmed by the beauty of the original paintings and sculptures previously seen only in books, the business of selling one's own work proved much more difficult than expected. Visual artists had expected to be met with the recognition they had been afforded in the GDR but instead they came up against the fiercely competitive international arts market, so that the sales side of these journeys often proved a failure. While the internal German arts market was desperate for East German works of art, the international market showed little interest.

Many artists discovered that merely producing "good art" was insufficient but that recommendations either from reputable critics or from other members of the arts world were needed to exhibit in a Western European gallery, which might then provide an entry into the international market. Only a small number of GDR visual artists were trading with reputable West German art galleries.

The difficulty of entering the arts market has been noted by many writers and is a common problem not confined to East German artists. As Becker (1982: 116) points

out, dealers have little trouble recruiting aspiring artists; in fact, it is aspiring artists who have difficulties finding dealers. The international arts market is tiny by comparison with other market areas and “visual art is now sold almost entirely through an international network of [...] dealers” (Becker 1982: 108). Becker found that in many cases dealers preferred to take on young artists, giving them their first chance to be seen by serious critics and collectors and allowing interest among the gallery’s regular clientele to build up at an early stage in their careers. Some GDR artists were therefore ruled out because of their age, having reached their forties some time before. From the point of view of the West they were considered too old for a new beginning.

Yet it was not only age that disqualified artists from the market, as they learned that their art was strongly associated with the GDR regime and communist ideology. East German artists themselves did not see this association at all, having lived through years of repression and ideological pressure from the GDR regime, but to outside observers the situation looked different. Artists were not seen as independent of the communist regime and neither was their art. Images of the cold war remained in place and prejudice informed opinion in Western Europe. East German artists had believed that they would be able to build on the reputation and status they had gained over the years but experience showed them that this counted for little if anything at all. It appeared to them to be a continuation of the ideological repression of the GDR regime, after having thought that they would be welcomed with open arms, and money.

In addition, many artists were unable to present their work in catalogues and exhibition lists and, as one of the arts administrators noted, “there was a demand for catalogues, but they [the artists] did not have any presentable publicity material” (A7) necessary to

get a dealer interested. The reason for this lies with the past practice of only occasional production of exhibition catalogues. In the GDR publicity material had been little used since the arts world operated on a closed system<sup>86</sup> and information about artists was distributed more effectively by other methods of communication, such as word of mouth.

East German visual artists also struggled to meet dealers' demands. Works of art have to be produced in sufficient quantities for a dealer to be able to fulfil a continuous schedule of exhibitions. Dealers have to react to the changing conditions of the market (Moulin, 1987: 65). East German artists were nervous when confronted with these developments, regarding them as impossible to fulfil. One artist mentioned that she felt very lucky that she did not have to conform to the supposed obligations of the arts market:

... To a large extent I can still offer things [works of art] for sale from my own fund. I don't have to produce anything for anyone. But it is also difficult, because if one produces a nice piece, or a cycle [of pictures] and then shows them at an exhibition then you would not sell any of the big pieces. I know for sure that if they were a bit smaller and in a certain format, priced around DM 7000, I could paint ten a day and they would be sold because [for these smaller paintings] there are buyers [on the market]."  
(VA8)

Another of the artists' general objections to the arts market was that, from their point of view, some dealers were regarded as unreliable, for example cancelling contracts following changing market conditions or a dramatic fall in stock market prices. The artists' community did not accept that selling art is a business, sensitive to economic fluctuations.<sup>87</sup> Also, the economic interests of artists and dealers often diverged, as Moulin and Becker argue. Dealers want to see the value of a piece of art appreciate over time and may therefore be willing to wait to realise its long-term value. Moulin

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<sup>86</sup> A closed system is defined as a system that largely constructs its empirical world within itself.

notes that the artist wants his/her reputation to grow as much and as quickly as possible. The painter wants to see his/her works of art shown in exhibitions, galleries and museums, sold to collectors and to other private clients. This is the highest possible achievement for the visual artist within the process of distribution.

In a sense what has been written about the artists expresses the opinions of East German artists in general. They were keen to enter the West European market and make contact with western art dealers as fast as possible - if they had not already done so before unification. Many artists naturally intended to carry on as normal artists, producing work much as they had done before. They could not have imagined that the changes in 1989 to the system of distribution and production would in many cases threaten their very existence. Returning home from abroad, they often felt lost and at the mercy of the market. As one artist reported: " I have thrown away my ideals and my life experience, because I know now that in the big arts market which I became acquainted with during my travels abroad, everyone is just a plaything of the market, myself included."(VA22)

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<sup>87</sup> Becker (1982: 114) notes, with reference to Moulin that when stock market values fell dramatically in 1962, American collectors sold off their paintings and produced a dramatic depreciation in the prices of contemporary paintings in New York and Paris.



#### 4.5 The sell-out of GDR art before monetary reform

Those artists who had been unable to penetrate the international arts market viewed the market negatively but their experiences did not reflect those of all artists. There were some who successfully made use of their old contacts and connections from the 1980s. Ironically, the GDR State Art Trade Organisation (*Staatlicher Kunsthandel der DDR*) had often negotiated these contacts and, although the organisation collapsed, those contacts secured a living for some artists after unification. Dealers could draw on their past experience with a particular art form and had already built up a clientele of collectors interested in GDR art. They could also now negotiate directly with the artists whereas previous negotiations had mostly been conducted through the State Art Trade Organisation. These artists' works initially sold very well and the artists' community assumed a gold rush in the arts to be in prospect, as noted by one artist:

“...There were a couple of well-known artists who sold art via the Staatlichen Kunsthandel abroad. In '88 they also had galleries in West Berlin, Essen, Dortmund and Köln and these people could now make contacts themselves ...and they did this by saying that now they wanted to make real art, wanted to be part of this society which was not the one they came from...”(VA4).

It is interesting to note that the artists chosen by the GDR government to represent the country abroad were the same artists who were now able to use the old structures and contacts to secure their living in the new society. This was not a development unique to the artists' community but was even more common in other areas of work immediately after unification. Some managed to adapt easily and in turn acted as a driving force, often totally dismissing their own GDR past. Schröder (2000: 168) points out that the “*Altkader*” (old guard), in particular those who had held powerful positions in the GDR, succeeded in settling into the new arrangements, entering areas such as housing, insurance and financial consultancy. The artists remained in their own profession but also used the old structures to their advantage.

While some visual artists managed to maintain an income as artists through international sales, others struggled and failed to enter the international market. The majority had to rely on national or regional markets, which usually worked well within their own geographical boundaries. In 1989/90 the arts market in eastern Germany was still operating according to the unique conditions of pre-unification. Distribution was organised centrally and this pre-market system was managed either by the state or by state-owned institutions, except for one privately run gallery each in Dresden and Berlin. In the last months of the GDR, when many of the state controlled organisations tried to survive by selling art, one could describe market conditions as booming.

The key dates were 1/2 July 1990, the days of monetary reform when the official currency changed from the GDR Mark to the DM. Prior to monetary reform, some had been desperate to invest their remaining GDR Marks in anything that might hold its value after unification.<sup>88</sup> Visual art was regarded as a safe investment and this conviction resulted in an increase in sales for many artists. For a very short time the old dream of artists being discovered in their studios became reality, as noted by one artist on being asked about his financial situation in 1989: “Well, strangely enough I lived from the sales in my studio.... Nearly all the artists I know [lived from sales] between spring 1989 up to monetary reform. It was like in the middle ages, when art had another function. Everyone invested their money [in art].” (VA14)

Artists felt themselves to be in demand because buyers came to see them in their studios. They had fewer interruptions and were contacted directly by buyers, whereas it

would have required a conscious effort on their part to approach a curator or art dealer. People<sup>89</sup> who had never before, or very rarely, entered a gallery or a studio visited artists' studios and invested in paintings. Shortly after unification these investments turned out to be a failure.

In the GDR a small group of art collectors had existed and they also used this opportunity to buy and possibly to complete their collections.<sup>90</sup> For many artists the additional sales income arrived just as other sources of income collapsed. Some used the money generated to build up savings, to be used at a later stage. Those artists currently travelling to explore western European art collections had not expected an increase in sales and friends at home had to sell their paintings on their behalf. Others conducted the sales personally, travelling later, and some never left eastern Germany at all.

The thriving arts market in 1989/90 filled artists with confidence and it was expected that these developments would continue after unification. Dealers and art collectors from West Germany specialising in GDR art also took advantage of the situation, purchasing art in great quantities from both niche artists and mainstream painters as long as they were able to pay using GDR Marks. Many dealers, relying on their experience for guidance, bought art works that might not be on view for twenty years. To sum up, while many artists had travelled abroad in the search for success but had returned disappointed, the domestic arts business had flourished in the last months of

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<sup>88</sup> When one compares the rate of exchange at the time of monetary reform with the unofficial exchange rate in the 1980s, which was 10 GDR Marks to 1 DM (see also Schroeder p.128), the currency exchange actually turned out to be a very good deal for all East Germans.

<sup>89</sup> Mainly professional groups in the GDR with a higher than average income, due to their work involving access to materials generally in short supply, such as plumbers.

the GDR and secured a living for many artists after the collapse of the GDR funding system and up to unification.

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<sup>90</sup> Most East German small-scale collectors stopped or interrupted collecting art after unification because other financial priorities had to be met.

## **4.6 The artists' unification aftermath**

### ***4.6.1 The collapse of living and working conditions***

Artists' circumstances changed after monetary reform and German unification on 3 October 1990. From one day to the next the boom in the arts market was over and for many artists a period of waiting began. Visual artists were uncertain what to do next and waited for the new government or other public bodies to act. One administrator describes the situation as follows:

"... in general people were in a state of shock, especially those people [artists] who had been, how shall I put it, relatively close to the system....yes, and for the masses, for them, well it was as if they were thrown into water when they had never been in water before....yes, it was almost like....the rabbit in front of the snake [proverb] and also like, oh Jesus, now everything changes..."(A5)

Although the shock of the changes left artists bewildered and disorientated, there was hope in the community that new opportunities would emerge and that, based on previous experience in the GDR, someone such as the state would in the end look after their interests.

The first hope was based on the emergence of private galleries in eastern Germany. However, the network of galleries expanded only slowly and many were unable to function commercially in 1990/91 and were instead dependent on subsidies from regional and local government. Some galleries offered exhibition space but very little was sold. The purchasing power of the East Germans was limited and people tended to migrate from East to West rather than the other way round. Therefore there was little injection of new capital and the nascent arts market was stagnant. Some West German art dealers moved their businesses to cities such as Dresden or opened a gallery department there but these galleries specialised in the traditional Dresden painting

school that had developed at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and were less interested in contemporary art (Wesner 1995: 12).

The second hope harboured by visual artists was based on the memory of their main source of income in the GDR, the now defunct Artists' Association. There had been attempts to reform the old structures and introduce new management but the association was eventually abolished. On 6 October 1990 the new association of Visual Artists of Saxony was founded and with it three new organisations were launched which administered the remnants of the old association, including its finance and property.<sup>91</sup> The associations opened offices in Leipzig, Chemnitz and Dresden. Surprisingly, many former members who had withdrawn their membership some months earlier, as well as artists with no previous involvement, would join the new organisations.

In 1988 the old Artists' Association had about 600 members from the wider Dresden area. In 1990 the new association claimed to have 900 members from the same area, a 50% increase in membership. Some of the artists who had been refused membership of the GDR association now joined the new organisation but the number of members steadily declined over the years and by 1998 only 350 artists were still registered (A9).

The artists expected the new organisation to take over where the old had left off and supply contracts and a guaranteed income, even though they had actively participated in the abolition of the old association. They had secured ideological freedom but now had to face the fact that the new association was unable to secure their living conditions. No

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<sup>91</sup> The Artists Association of the GDR owned a number of properties in the countryside that had previously been used as offices, holiday homes for the artists or training centres for artists. Most of these properties were sold and the income was divided between the new regional artists' organisations, which were set up on federal lines.

one wanted a return to the old Artists' Association, but many artists, especially those of the older generation, were disappointed:

“...The social situation of many colleagues is such that, and I can see this with myself, I am unable to find a partner in the association with whom I could discuss my worries. If I cannot solve my own problems...no one will solve them for me. That is the same for everyone...Sure, the association tries to help with housing problems, that is well known, or with studio space, as it says [in the association newsletter], but where are the empty studios? And [they try to inform us] how to work out the rent which is payable, but this is all without the power the association had in the past when it was listened to, also because of its size...and we were taken more seriously in the past.”(VA28)

In addition to their disappointment with the effectiveness of the new artists' association, many artists reported feeling neglected and abandoned because of the dramatic changes to their living and working conditions. They had previously felt that the main threats to their existence as artists had been the collapse of contract work and the disappearance of the old distribution system, but they now realised that their working spaces were also at risk.

The housing market was reorganised and studio rent increased by up to 400% over previous GDR rents. This left many artists unable to pay for their studios. The general cost of living, including transport, insurance and food, also increased albeit slowly. Shortly after unification many artists registered as freelance and therefore became directly responsible for all the running costs of their one-person business. As a result, many costs that prior to unification had been paid for by the state were added to an artist's budget, such as health insurance, pension contributions and further education. In addition, new costs emerged, such as unemployment insurance, as well as an additional solidarity tax to cover the cost of unification. The new system of taxation had become more complicated, though this was not immediately clear to those unused to the system.

#### 4.6.2 *Government support for visual artists*

Many artists had to struggle to understand and gain the know-how necessary to cope with the changes. Few were in a position to remain freelance, but the government prevented a possible financial breakdown of the community with funding programmes that came into practice immediately, as described in chapter 3.

Usually, freelance workers such as artists are excluded from the unemployment benefit scheme but an exception was made in 1990. Artists were able to claim unemployment benefit of up to 65% of their last salary, and to participate in the “*Arbeitsbeschaffungsmassnahmen (ABM)*”,<sup>92</sup> a job creation scheme that would provide a guaranteed income for another one to two years. Work on the ABM scheme was often art related. For example, a media artist would be offered work in a media studio and was given responsibility for media art related projects. These schemes enabled some artists to continue practising their profession.

The federal government implemented another such measure as part of the emergency fund, which was established to maintain the “*Kulturlandschaft*”<sup>93</sup> and avoid the closure of many cultural organisations immediately after unification. Local and regional departments of art and culture administered the fund and were able to distribute grants using relaxed funding criteria, even as stringent conditions and criteria for applications were put in place. Artists were informed that funds were available and that they needed

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<sup>92</sup> The “*Arbeitsbeschaffungsmassnahmen*” is a government programme designed to support the unemployed and to reduce the unemployment rate, which increased very rapidly in 1990/91 and even in 1999 (Schröder 2000: 135) eastern Germany had an unemployment rate of 19%. The programme allows companies to reclaim the monthly salary of a previously unemployed job seeker.

<sup>93</sup> The term “*Kulturlandschaft*” encompasses all cultural organisations, associations and institutions that can be found in a certain territory, for example “*Kulturlandschaft Sachsen*”.



to apply. Even the application process had not yet been formalised but funding was quickly made available.

The main outcome of the emergency fund was that the structure of the so-called “*Kulturlandschaft*” was reorganised. Associations and galleries, last known in eastern Germany at the time of the Weimar Republic,<sup>94</sup> were offered an opportunity to prosper. For the artists this new structure brought with it new places of engagement and work. Some individuals used the funding opportunities to secure one-off grants for project work, thus securing their living for a short period of time. Other artists obtained contract work from organisations that had been allocated part of the project fund. Some artists, though not the majority, set up special associations, such as the “*Sezession*”, an association of women artists. Individuals were then able to earn a part-time salary working for the association, which in turn was supported by the emergency fund of the federal government.

#### **4.6.3 *Changing position - The dual career artists***

Some artists reacted differently to the new conditions. Avoiding the state support system, they took up art-related careers and obtained income from other sources, becoming “dual career artists” as Brighton and Pearson termed them in 1985 in the UK. This is a practice well known in Western European countries and ten years after unification, eastern German visual artists can be found working as restorers and art teachers.

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<sup>94</sup> The association culture (*Vereinskultur*) was a movement that brought together people with similar interests and hobbies who wanted to formalise their interest in a legal body, for example the friends of literature, stamp collectors and various dance groups. The movement began at the beginning of the 20th century and reached its peak during the time of the Weimar Republic. In the GDR there were few associations and most were newly established in eastern Germany only after German Unification.

The change from a full-time career in the visual arts to employment elsewhere was something of a struggle for artists. Firstly, it was difficult to apply for work in a competitive market already employing skilled labour with specific training in teaching, restoration and design. Secondly, artists had to find a balance between work that secured a livelihood and work that enabled them to develop as professional artists.

East German artists thus joined the debate about the consequences of becoming dual careerists. For many it was a new experience and they were initially reluctant but felt they had little alternative because of their financial needs. As one artist points out, work in addition to that of the artist is considered "...an acute obstruction. Everything you do is slower, you can concentrate less on your work than you would like...you are somehow disabled...some things are never created because there is no time...." and another added "...working in another job for more than one week [per month] is impossible for an artist in the long run." On the positive side, "...one is forced to come straight to the point. Fiddling about is abandoned...."(VAD3).

Similar debates have been mentioned in other studies (Becker 1982, Zolberg 1990, Zolberg and Cherbo 1997). Plattner (1996: 78) describes three strategies of dealing with the existential problem of making a living as well as producing art.

He divides artists into three categories. "High art artists" value their artistry above all and tend to have an academic education. They call themselves "real", "serious" or "good" artists and often scorn and deride the others, using derogatory terms such as "sell out", "hack artists" or "Sunday painter" to describe them. For the business artists

income generation is paramount and they produce art to please customers in order to support themselves. Hobby artists have not committed themselves to art enough to warrant a significant investment of time and energy. The business and hobby artists usually resent attempts to deny them the status of artists and rationalise the difference between their own work and high art as merely stylistic, arguing that “ugly” and “gritty” work has taken over the art scene.

East German artists would place themselves in Plattner’s group of “high art artists” and immediately after unification were afraid of losing the “reality”, “quality” and “seriousness” in their art. The belief that an artist needs to work on his/her art full-time in order to achieve these values added to this fear. One explanation can again be found in history. In the GDR these anxieties were less obvious and I would argue that they were of very little concern because the main group of artists were “high art artists”. This was part of the self-perception of artists. Business artists were the exception and hobby artists were defined differently in any case.

However, in the artists’ community the minority group of “GDR amateur artists” was less shocked by the changes following unification than their colleagues who had been members of the Artists’ Association in the GDR. The artists who had been denied membership of the Visual Arts Association of the GDR, and had experienced professional difficulties in the past, and the group of artists who had been expelled from the GDR Artists’ Association for political reasons<sup>95</sup> were able to draw on past

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<sup>95</sup> One has to note that some of the older artists had had to deal with exclusion several times during their artistic careers. One example concerns a woman artist who studied at the *Kunstgewerbeakademie* and at the Art Academy in Dresden in the 1920s where she later taught. The Nazis sacked her in the 1930s because she produced constructivist works of art. During the bombing of Dresden in 1945 she lost all her works of art. In the early years of the GDR she regained her position as a teacher at the Art Academy but was once again expelled after government officials initiated the debate about formalism in the arts in the

experience. Karttunen (1998: 4)) argues in a similar vein to Plattner that “normally we would understand “amateur” to mean a person who pursues an activity for the sheer love of it, without any interest in its potential to provide a living”. These artists, who were referred to as amateur artists in the GDR, were not allowed to practise their preferred profession on a full-time basis as they were not members of the Artists’ Association and were therefore unable to obtain the necessary social security number from the government. This minority had already had experience of not being able to earn an income from the arts and had entered other professions as early as the 1970s and 1980s. After unification, some of these artists continued to earn their living in non-arts related professions and, as an Artists’ Association administrator points out:

“ The artists [who were denied membership of the Artists’ Association] had to struggle in the GDR. They had to work in order to earn a living and then they had to see how they got on with the association... for these people the changes (“*Wende*”) were less catastrophic because they had always had to look for ways of surviving...”(A10)

These artists earned money outside their artistic careers both because of the state’s attempt to control the artists’ community and because of economic need. The fact that they needed to earn a living outside their artistic careers proved to be irreversible. This situation had been rare for artists in the GDR, whereas today it has become common for many artists throughout Europe.

#### ***4.6.4 The artists’ struggle with information and time***

The difficulties faced by artists in the early days of unification because of the changes to working and living conditions were compounded by what can be called an

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1950s. She never received recognition in the GDR, was not entitled to become a member of the GDR Artists’ Association and her work was not exhibited anywhere. She received part compensation after unification.

“information deficit”, which describes the inaccessibility and unavailability of information.

Pre-unification, the Artists' Association of the GDR, the state and the regional departments of art acted as information and meeting points for artists and even artists' materials shops brought artists together. It was common to visit exhibitions on the opening night. Artists met to see colleagues' work and received and distributed information at the same time. They all knew each other and there was little change because travel outside Eastern Europe was impossible.

In sociological terms, the GDR arts world represented a closed system, largely constructed and living within its own empirical world. In the GDR, the artists' community was easy to understand and artists kept track of each other's development for the following three reasons. Firstly, the system provided the artists with a feeling of community. Secondly, belonging to a group increased the self-confidence of many artists, despite the importance of acting as an individual. Thirdly, the group as a whole could express its opinions against the hidden enemy, the GDR state. This engendered a feeling of participating in the “opposition movement”, an expression not used at the time but which became popular after unification. Many artists were convinced that they were opposed to official policy and therefore did not support the communist system even though they had been educated and funded by the GDR state. Fulbrook argues that an opposition movement as such never existed in the GDR, and I would argue that this was correct also in the case of the artists' community and includes the group of reformers within the artists' community mentioned above: “It was not these popular expressions of outright hostility to the regime which ultimately brought it down but -

ironically - attempts to improve the GDR from within: that is, it was not opposition, so much as a form of reformation, which contributed to the beginning of the end of the GDR” (Fulbrook (1997: 200).

The fact that there was no opposition movement also highlights the distinction between theoretical feelings of opposition to official policies and practical actions that made use of or even supported the system. There had been dissenting murmurs and, as in other sections of the cultural intelligentsia, some artists had indicated their disapproval by passive withdrawal, compromise conformity, critique within the bounds of the artists’ community or flight to the west. This was the full extent of the opposition, because life in the GDR was not about protesting against the use of force but about coming to terms with the parameters of the system and operating within often unwritten rules that everyone had learnt by heart in order to ensure life was as easy as possible. Stability was predicated on conformity (Fulbrook 1997: 273).

Within these bounds the artists’ community operated its own information system, which made artists feel well informed, using a number of different information channels, such as meetings with colleagues and word of mouth. This informal system had existed in parallel to the official information system, via the media and the Artists’ Association. After unification this familiar information system collapsed and the usual informal gatherings at exhibitions and first night events no longer took place because many artists were busy travelling or reorganising their living and working conditions. The information flow in the artists’ community slowed to a trickle. At this time few artists, in common with most GDR citizens, had a private telephone connection at home. Many sought advice and information from the newly established governmental

bodies dealing with arts policy issues. However, in the period immediately after unification administrators were unable to help because their information flow was also impeded.

The financial situation improved swiftly once the federal government had announced the availability of emergency funding in 1990, but funding alone could not overcome the artists' information deficit and they continued to feel confused. Following the injection of funding it was no longer a case of information not being available, but instead a wave of information washed over the artists, who now had to make their own choices and selections. Prior to unification all information had been pre-selected.

The lack of information within the artists' community and the information wave generated by private and public sector organisations increased the artists' feelings of confusion and disorientation and some artists and administrators summed up the period from 1990 to 1993 as chaos. One visual artist describes this time as a vacuum (VA18), appropriately defined as a situation where the normal or previous content has been removed (Thomson 1998: 1016).

In a vacuum it is easy to lose track of time and along with the loss of confidence there was a sense of time being compressed. The artists' relationship with time was about to change. The definition of compression used here is that introduced by Harvey who argues that the history of capitalism has been characterised by the speeding-up of the pace of life, thereby overcoming spatial barriers, so that at times the world appears to collapse inwards upon us (Harvey 1990: 240).

In the case of the artists the speed of change had begun to increase in the last months of the GDR and continued to accelerate after unification. Visual artists also perceived the new democratic system as obscure. Some reported feeling that the world was upside down and the speed of change minimised space and time to think and to reflect. In the interviews it was obvious that many artists described their feelings, especially concerning the early days of unification, and rarely based responses to questions on facts or rationales. The artists reacted by withdrawing, as is summarised here:

“I could talk about myself - I am an art historian and I was also [like the artists] one of these *Sensibelchen* [sensitive people] who were intellectual and also closely connected to the arts and none of us had learnt what it means to put something into a certain structure and then to implement it, to bring it to an end. It was bearable in thought but one has to actually do it afterwards. We had not learnt how to do it and artists do not normally have these skills, to prepare, to build and to maintain a structure. And, I believe therefore they pulled back because they were unable to cope.”(A7)

In addition some artists argued that the new system had been imposed on them by external forces and had not been developed by them (VA21). The argument expressed here, of having been taken over and not being allowed to develop their own strengths highlighted the ambivalent relationship of some East German artists and intellectuals toward unification and its results. While in 1990 Willy Brandt spoke of a united Germany within Europe, “Germany and Europe belong together now and for all the future”, the East German writer Becker pointed out that some East Germans still considered the idea of socialism to be worthwhile, saying that “during my lifetime socialism did not have a chance to recover – that makes me sick” (Wiegenstein, 1990). Others regarded the relationship between the West and the East Germans as a difficult one. Thierse (1990: 38) warned that if German unification were to be carried out under the dominance of the West [Western Germany], even if it were to succeed economically, it would fail humanely. These voices increased in volume in the first five years after unification and found sympathy with the public, resulting in a revival of a



GDR identity, which manifested itself politically in the strong electoral performance of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the successor party to the SED.

Even though visual artists tended not to get involved in politics, their feelings of disaffection in conjunction with the revival of a GDR identity led to nostalgia for their former way of life in the GDR.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

To sum up, artists' hopes that unification and the process of transformation would be mastered within a few years and that there would be a positive outcome for their community turned out to be in vain. While there was relief at the lifting of the ideological pressure, bitter feelings of disappointment, neglect and frustration dominated this period.

Despite the artists' background of reliance on state support and artistic reputation in the GDR, in the late 1980s and early 1990s many struggled to overcome the shock of the changes and in particular of the rapid collapse of their working and living conditions. The breakdown of the system of contract work was followed by the abolition of the Artists' Association, which was never to regain its original strength as a new organisation in the united Germany.

The promising early signs of an increase in the sales of East German art prior to monetary reform did not last. Many artists found it difficult or even impossible to break into the international arts market. They lacked recommendations and reputations and thus did not make an impact on the international network of art dealers, collectors and buyers. At home, artists hoped for a revival of the local and regional market, but the galleries were unable to work profitably and private collectors were not interested in buying East German art after monetary reform. As the business of selling art collapsed, the cost of working materials and studio rent increased enormously, when compared to previous prices and rent in the GDR. In addition, the speed of the transition and the changes within the information system resulted in many artists withdrawing from public engagement.

The federal government secured the survival of many artists in these first years through special arrangements, such as access to unemployment benefit, job creation programmes and the emergency fund. One could argue that support for artists continued to be available. The channels had changed but both pre and post-unification governments provided financial support. In the GDR the Artists' Association and other state-directed organisations had distributed contract work to artists and secured their support in this way. In the unified Germany the state offered direct (unemployment benefit, job creation programme) and indirect support (emergency fund) to visual artists. The continuing support of the new German government immediately after unification was not recognised by the majority of the artists.

The dual career artists handled the situation reasonably successfully by adopting one of the common methods of artists' survival in Western Europe. Some artists thus continued to earn an income in art related careers and produced art whenever time was available, as they had done before in the GDR – sometimes of necessity.

However, artists tended to make general statements about their distressed situation in this period and were often overwhelmed by feelings of disappointment. In this sense it is not surprising that comparisons with the former conditions dominated at this time. In relation to different issues, several artists pointed out that unification had exchanged the ideological pressure in the GDR for economic necessity in the unified Germany. This is a broad and very general comparison but it captures the dimensions of change experienced by the artists in a more emotional sense, which dominated the first period of transition from 1990 to 1993.

This period had begun by putting the artists' community in shock. Some of the changes were short-lived, such as the notions of chaos and disorientation, but the majority were permanent and long-term solutions were needed that would improve the artists' view of themselves and their living and working conditions.

## **5 Coming to terms with the past and living in the present – artists' careers and arts policy development from 1994 to 2000**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter analysed the main features of change influencing the living and working conditions of visual artists in the years immediately following German unification, i.e. the first period of transformation.<sup>96</sup> This chapter continues the analysis but focuses on the second period from 1994 to 2000.

The research so far has concentrated on visual artists as one coherent group and on the artists' community as a whole. However, the perceptions of visual artists differ according to age profile and three different and distinctive age groups have therefore been identified. Artists within each group share similar values and opinions and act comparably. While the previous chapter made no particular distinction between them, the change in the analysis of the artists at the second stage of the transformation process is due to the increasingly divergent opinions and reactions between the different age groups. Between 1990 and 1994 no distinct differences in (re)action between visual artists of different age groups could be observed, as the artists' community as a whole suffered from the shock of unification. Differences in their public awareness and

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<sup>96</sup> Flockton and Kolinsky (1998: 2) also identified two phases in the process of economic and political transformation. The first phase ended in 1994, a year of two major economic milestones: one, the *Treuhandanstalt*, the agency designed to administer the privatisation of state-owned enterprises in the former GDR, declared its task accomplished. Two, the interim financial support mechanisms provided by the German government to cushion the negative effects of transformation on the labour market, incomes and on the cost of living generally, came to an end. The first phase of transformation also included the 1994 elections in the new Länder and at the federal level, which broadly confirmed the two main parties, the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) and the SPD (Social Democratic Party), as the preferred parties of government in east Germany. While the first phase defined its parameters, in the second phase the recast system consolidated its impact on all aspects of economic and social life.

perception became increasingly apparent between 1994 and 2000 as both artists and public life settled into an organised routine.

The division of artists into groups is an analytical tool - in this case experience of different societal systems and age are related. It is an artificial construct and is used for research purposes only. The values and opinions of artists in each group largely matched, and this validated the decision to use the age division.

The first group comprised the older artists, who had been aged between 40 and 60 at the time of the interviews in 1998. This group had grown up and received most of their education in the GDR. A large number were trained in one of the five art academies of the GDR and they had all spent most of their working lives as professional artists in the communist state.

The second group represents artists aged between 30 and 40. This middle group is part of the generation of GDR children who were born, raised and educated, or began their education, in the GDR. They had grown up within the security of the communist system. At unification many were art academy students or had just completed their artistic education.

The third and last group is made up of young artists aged between 20 and 30, who were born and grew up in the GDR but who entered the secondary and tertiary education system after unification. This was the first group of artists whose entire work experience was gained within the new society.

In this chapter the analysis of the older group dominates, because their experience of the developments brought about by unification was greatest and they had had to deal with an accumulation of problems during the transformation process.

The chronological structure of this chapter is much the same as the previous one. However, because the second stage of transformation (from 1994 to 2000) contains fewer milestones than the first stage, it is structured by topic (environmental changes, age discrimination and funding issues) rather than chronologically.

The first section focuses on the condition of the group of older artists and their reaction to issues such as their careers, changes to the regional and local arts market, pension schemes and arts administration in general. It also analyses the relationship between visual artists and the Stasi, the secret police of the GDR, as well as the effect of the “state artists’ debate” on visual artists after unification. The second section of this chapter compares the opinions, reactions and values of the middle and the younger groups of artists with those of their older counterparts.

I will argue that each of the three groups attempted to find their own method of managing change, according to their position and circumstances. In general, the group of older artists tended to complain about their living and working conditions and believed themselves to be disadvantaged. While some were able to maintain their status as full-time freelance visual artists following contracts made in the GDR, others were reliant on public support provided by the regional government, which was at a much lower level than that available in the GDR. The middle group faced similar difficulties. They were unable to rely on GDR connections and were still influenced by the values

prevailing during their GDR upbringing but they also realised that if they wanted to establish a successful career they would have to adapt as fast as possible. The youngest group were most optimistic about the future, seeking success through their art, although they were at too early a stage in their careers to be able to predict future developments.



## **5.2 The opportunities open to older artists**

### **5.2.1 *Environmental changes between 1994 and 2000***

What were the circumstances of artists in 1994? Major changes had already been introduced and the German constitution had set down legal principles. As the transformation process continued, change had become accepted as the norm - a part of everyday life. The initial shock of unification had been overcome. Confusion had been replaced by habit, new methods found for dealing with changed circumstances and a sense of order and structure was beginning to prevail.

By 1994 most artists had established a new routine of managing their living and working conditions, for example in dealing with tax declarations, health insurance<sup>97</sup> and housing matters. The changes immediately following unification had been absorbed and artists were beginning to understand their new situation, but further longer-term changes were in the offing. While, during the first stage of unification, a large number of rules and regulations had been announced simultaneously, and solutions were largely short-term, the second stage involved long-term solutions and change.

In 1994, some of the short-term solutions introduced by the new government either came to an end or were restructured for the longer term. For example, arrangements that had enabled artists to register as unemployed were abandoned and the emergency

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<sup>97</sup> In Germany artists can become members of the *Künstlersozialkasse* (KSK), a special social insurance for artists introduced in 1981 and based on the *Künstlersozialversicherungsgesetz* (KSVG), which states that freelance artists require special social protection. The KSK is the administrative body that determines the liability of insured artists. It is financed through the artists' social security contributions, the federal government and the contributions of their clients. After unification the KSK's competences were extended to eastern Germany. In Germany, the employer usually has to pay a proportion of the employee's health insurance, pension scheme and nursing care insurance (*Pflegeversicherung*). In the case of the artists the KSK contributes the state's share and the artist's monthly contribution depends on

fund, introduced by the federal government soon after unification to cover immediate needs, was replaced by a similar programme, although its funding was to diminish in the following years. These changes caused more confusion among visual artists but, once it was understood that they were to be permanent, or at least were unlikely to change in the near future, they were accepted as routine.

Some of the confusion was caused by delays in the dissemination of information to the artists, such as, for example, that on funding application deadlines. This was partly because artists usually worked alone in their studios instead of in groups and that therefore the speed at which information was distributed was slow. Few showed any interest in new technologies: internet and e-mail had reached neither Saxon artists nor public organisations. While the results of a recent US-based study<sup>98</sup> on individual artists in all disciplines showed that three quarters of those surveyed owned computers and a quarter used information technology to disseminate and market their art, this was not a topic for discussion<sup>99</sup> in most of the interviews conducted with the Saxon visual artists. There was also a contradiction between artists' lack of information on the changes to their own profession and the large volume of trivial and non-essential information now available from the media: visual artists were not used to either.

Another factor was the artists' withdrawal from official engagements that would have given them access to information. Over and above this, the organisations in charge of

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income. In return he/she has full health insurance, a pension and nursing care insurance. In this sense the artist is treated like every other employee.

<sup>98</sup> The study "Information on Artists II (IOA-II)" was carried out by the Research Center for Art and Culture at Columbia University in 1997. It focused on artists' work related to human and social service needs in the USA and included several questions on technology. See also abstract of the study at <http://www.columbia.edu>

<sup>99</sup> Some artists noted in the interviews that they were considering learning about information technologies and most of the younger artists were using Internet facilities at the Artists' Academy, which had recently launched a course in new media.

the changes were unable to reach the artists directly because little attention was paid to addressing potential clients.

### 5.2.2 *Age discrimination? The forgotten senior artists*

Older and more experienced artists were generally more reluctant to change and when interviewed would often show feelings of bitterness when comparing the old situation with the new. While doing so they indicated a number of changes that had convinced them that their age was a distinct disadvantage to them. One artist summarised his own situation as follows:

“In the GDR artists received a salary for four years after graduation [from the state]...It was not much but it paid for things like rent. Today, there is funding available, which is also good, ... but I am already 52 years. ...By the time the process of transformation (*Wendezeit*) had begun I had already developed my artistic style to its full extent. I was no longer a young artist who galleries were interested in promoting...” (VA17).

The concerns of older visual artists were often unrecognised or simply overlooked by the unification authorities. Those close to retirement faced particular difficulty and a threat to their continued existence. They were, they argued, about to slip through the social security network, because the special circumstances of freelance artists were not specifically provided for in the unification treaty.<sup>100</sup>

However, the new regulations on social security matters<sup>101</sup> did not exclude artists, who were treated the same as other employees. After unification, coverage of the West German social security system was widened to include all East Germans. Artists were generally equated with employees and were therefore insured by the

*Pflichtversicherungsgesetz*, a compulsory national insurance scheme, which includes

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<sup>100</sup> The unification treaty did not contain special arrangements for retired artists but regulations concerning pensions were applicable to all citizens of the former GDR.

<sup>101</sup> The main changes to social security matters were regulated through the Social Union (*Sozialunion*) and included the change from the centralised system of social insurance to a system of self administration

health insurance, pension rights and nursing care. Artists' financial contribution to the national insurance scheme was the same as that of other employees. The employer was obliged to contribute 50% of the cost of subscription to the scheme and, in the case of artists, the contractor and the federal government were responsible for this contribution.

The system of national insurance contributions is based on monthly income, where there is an imbalance between artists and employees. In 1999 the average net income of employees was DM32,687<sup>102</sup> (Statistisches Landesamt 2000: 17), but average net income of visual artists<sup>103</sup> in Germany as a whole was only DM18,461 in 1994, DM20,078 in 1997 and DM21,377 in 2000 (Bericht der Bundesregierung: 14, 17). The average net income of painters in Saxony in 2000 was even lower at DM15,772.<sup>104</sup> Artists are therefore clearly at the lower end of the earnings scale. Although their income increased between 1994 and 2000 (see Chart 3), it did so from a very low base and the difference in average income between employees and artists remains substantial.

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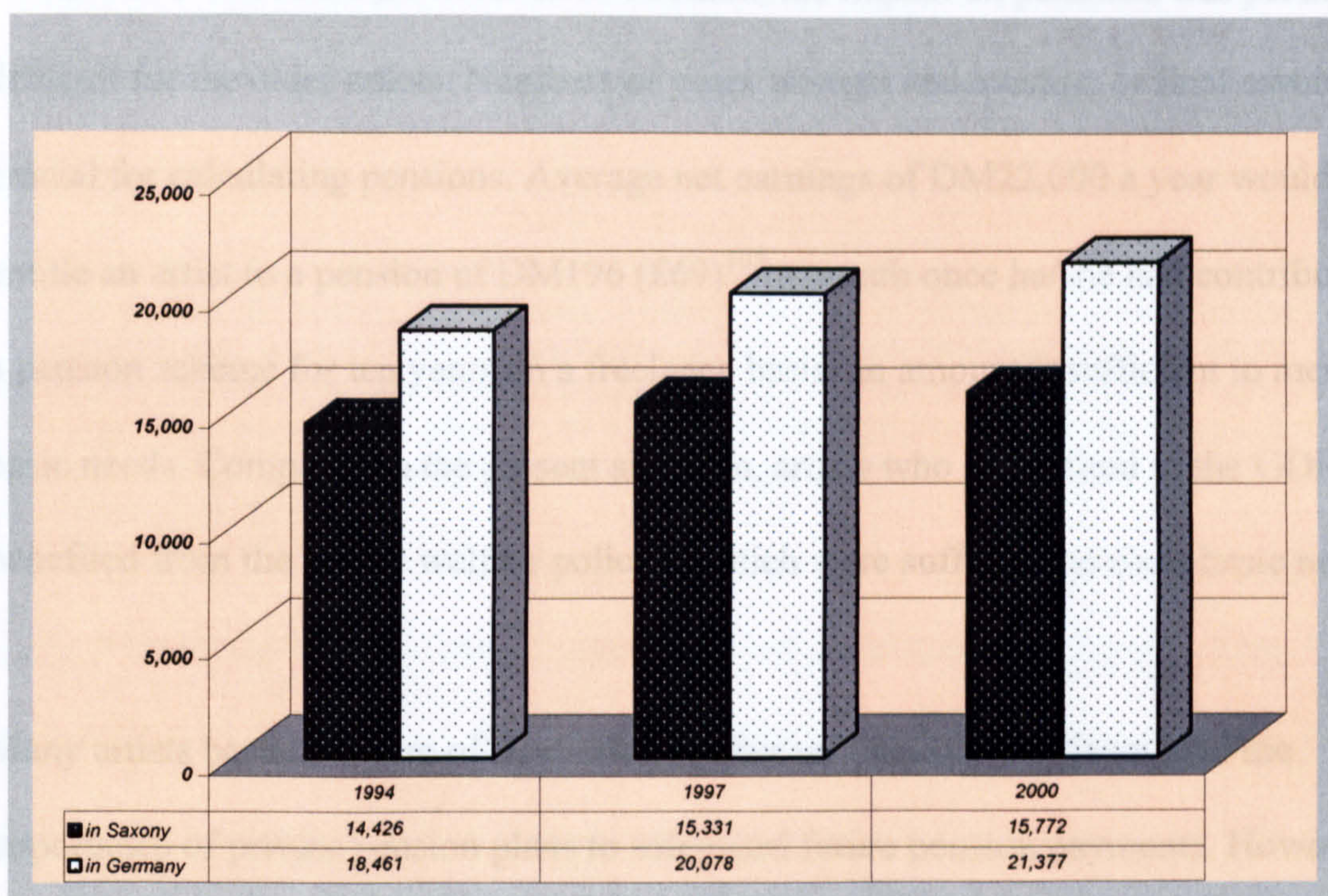
for pensions, health insurance, accident and unemployment insurance, under the auspices of the state (Unification Treaty: 222).

<sup>102</sup> Statistics for employees' average incomes are only available pre-tax, which in this case is DM 65,374. 50% has been deducted from this figure to arrive at a likely figure for net earnings.

<sup>103</sup> The whole range of visual artists is included in these calculations, i.e. sculptors, experimental artists, painters, portrait painters, performance artists, video artists, photographers, illustrators, cartoonists, advertising industry photographers, craft artists, wood designers and art teachers.

<sup>104</sup> Mühler and Wilsdorf (2001: 38), in their study about the social situation of freelance artists in Saxony, state the income of visual artists in Saxony in 2000 as DM1,529 per month, which adds up to DM18,348 per year after tax. This is DM 2,576 per year more than the income figures provided by the KSK (Table 4). However, even if the higher figures are used, visual artists in Saxony still earn less than the average for visual artists in Germany as a whole.

Chart 3: Visual artists' average earnings after tax (DM) in Saxony and in Germany as a whole.



Source: Künstlersozialkasse (KSK) 2000

Artists seem to have similarly low incomes in many Western Countries. In the USA, artists' income from their art is even lower, as demonstrated in the study "Information on Artists II", which contacted 7,700 artists in two parallel surveys with a response rate of 31% for study 1 and 28% for study 2. According to the two surveys, conducted by the Research Center for Arts and Culture at Columbia University, 45% of artists earned less than \$3,000 from their art annually (Jeffri, 1998: 1-5).

Low earnings and low income from their art are seen as common for artists in western countries, as is summarised in a quotation from "Culturtext", a US based cultural journal: "Artists remain the least paid professionals, relegated to being poor cousins to social workers and teachers" (Shaw 2001).

East German artists had not previously experienced this kind of income gap between visual artists and other professions. In addition, the impact on pensions was particularly difficult for the older artists. Numbers of years worked and average or final earnings are crucial for calculating pensions. Average net earnings of DM22,000 a year would entitle an artist to a pension of DM196 (£69)<sup>105</sup> a month once he/she had contributed to a pension scheme for ten years on a freelance basis, an amount insufficient to meet basic needs. Compared to the present situation, artists who had retired in the GDR had benefited from the state's welfare policies, which were sufficient to meet basic needs.

Many artists became aware of this problem after unification and discovered the importance of private pension plans to safeguard future pension payments. However, many of the artists interviewed argued that they had insufficient income to be able to afford additional payments to secure a pension while some disregarded the problem altogether because it was too far in the future to worry about. In 1994 visual artists tended to concentrate only on their immediate problems. The situation had not changed very much by 2001: Mühler and Wilsdorf (2001: 50), in their quantitative study on the social situation of artists in Saxony, state that only 53,1% of 1,787 artists of all art disciplines had made preparation for retirement.

It should be noted that, compared to the situation of most western artists, the majority of German artists are generously supported through state subsidies if all available funding opportunities are taken into account.

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<sup>105</sup> This example is for illustration only. The state authorities are assuming that artists have other sources of income from other, non-artistic work by which artists could contribute to the state pension scheme. For the pension statistics, the total number of years worked are counted and no distinction is made between artistic or any other work.

East German artists were, however, unconcerned with international comparisons but were preoccupied with their own circumstances, which is not surprising at a time of constant change. As one arts administrator points out, commenting on the threat to the artists' existence:

“ It is really bad at the moment, because in the East those about to retire are mostly single artists, by the way a lot of them are women, and they have lived all their lives in the East and are now getting a pension of about DM1,000 per month and this is not enough to live on, it is just not enough. The social component, yes, this topic is really acute and the funding is decreasing. It is a fact that at the moment this is the way things are and more artists are hit by poverty. Often these are artists who attempted to live from their savings [in the first stage] and hoped for better times but now they realise they are not getting a foot in the door.”(A5)

Some artists were living in poverty and could not understand why, after a long working life, which had often proved difficult in the GDR because of quarrels with arts policy makers, the authorities had let them down once again (VAD2).

### ***5.2.3 Career re-start after unification***

The second major issue that threatened the group of older artists is also age-related. Every artist in this group had to take into account that, in terms of career development, their age would increasingly tell against them. After unification, many experienced a decline in their careers at an age at which the chances of restarting a career as an artist are not considered good.

It is generally believed that an artistic career has to be established by the time the artist reaches 40. As is said in Germany, “with 40 one must have made it” (“*mit 40 muss man es geschafft haben*”). One artist noted: “...one reaches an age when it gets more difficult, and actually it [the development of one's career] must happen when one is young” (VA25). Although a small number of artists have proved that career changes are possible at any age, in the case of those interviewed for this research, this was

believed to be difficult and many mature artists had no intention of changing career despite their financial situation.

Artists who had been regarded as well-established in the GDR prior to unification were reduced to a point at which it was not even clear that they were established at all. The problem was made worse by the fact that their well-established counterparts in western Germany, who were at the same age, were able to maintain their status.

The downturn in the fortunes of East German older artists was at the same time both unique to them and commonplace. Hundreds of individual artists were affected together, which could have engendered a feeling of solidarity in the group. At the time, however, a common purpose was not foremost in the minds of these artists and a sense of competition developed, as one reports:

“Sometimes I talk to foreigners and they cannot understand how fast people could jump [change]. From a certain sense of solidarity, which appeared to be the case [in the GDR]...and now the jump towards individualisation, where everyone puts himself first. And I recognise this from my colleagues; there were times [after unification] when no one talked about what he/she was up to and where he/she exhibits. This happened because of fear that the others might go to the same curator [and ask for an exhibition]. Instead, when we met everyone complained and when I asked someone how they were they answered, oh, I feel so bad. These are all things that this new society brought with it” (VA4).

An artistic renewal after unification was not evident in terms of changes to style, form or content, as had been observed in individual cases throughout the history of the visual arts.<sup>106</sup> The focus of the older group of artists’ was on reorganising both the distribution of their products and their living and working conditions and in their attempts to achieve these aims they were constantly confronted by age barriers. Their

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<sup>106</sup> In some cases I observed changes in artistic styles, for example the use of different colours before and after unification. The change from figurative to abstract painting was visible in two cases. In the case of the sculptors, one artist turned his sculptures in different ways in space than before unification but since I am neither an art historian nor an art critic I feel unable to interpret the change of style in more detail.



experiences, illustrated by the following three points, caused them to question their suitability for a renewed artistic career.

First, most artists aged over forty are excluded from career development programmes. Scholarships as well as many prizes are oriented towards the promotion of young people. Older artists were often not even entitled to apply for these programmes as the age limit tends to be 35 years, as an arts administrator noted: “Scholarships are age dependent. Only young artists are entitled to scholarships. For the older ones it becomes more difficult and the older they become the more difficult it will be”(A10).

Second, as mentioned earlier, dealers and collectors prefer younger artists in order to be able to document and observe their development from the beginning of their careers.

Third, the older artists’ difficulties in adapting or changing were largely related to values fixed in the GDR, which were partly a function of age and the amount of time spent in the GDR system. This made them less likely to be able to re-start their careers.

Age was therefore an important factor in the transformation process, and particularly apparent when comparing the three groups of artists. The middle and younger group were more fortunate than the older group in terms of meeting age requirements needed to start an artistic career. At the time of unification the group of young artists were about to begin their artistic education and it would therefore have been premature to consider career development in addition to their artistic education. Artists in the middle group were about to begin their freelance careers and were well aware of the advantage their age could offer them, as one artist pointed out: “ ...I applied for different

scholarships again and again [between 1990 and 1998] and now I do not need to think about it anymore because I am over 35 years of age now and that is the end of it” (VA19).

It should be noted that advancing age, a key factor in terms of career development, might also be an advantage, in that personal contacts that might support and sustain an artist’s career are built up over time.

#### **5.2.4 *Governmental support continues***

The regional government recognised the age-related problems of the group of older artists and measures of support were put in place. The regional government of Saxony reacted to this problem by introducing a specially targeted funding programme, which excluded any artist under the age of forty (*Richtlinie des SMWK für Bildende Kunst*, 1997).

As mentioned above, the older group of artists had little material available with which to promote their work, since catalogues as such had been uncommon in the GDR. In the cases where a catalogue was available, it had tended to be of poor quality and did not meet western European standards since its aim was to document the artists’ work for future reference rather than to help sell the product. Hardly any of the existing catalogues could be used as marketing tools to re-start an artists’ career. The targeted funding programme aimed to help artists to present their work on the free arts market and artists were able to apply for a one-off grant of up to 50% of the total production and printing costs of a catalogue that would retrospectively showcase their work to date.

Many in the group of older artists have made use of this opportunity over the past ten years but, as they were neither experienced in production nor in dissemination, the printed catalogues were often stored at home rather than actively used for the promotion of works of art. Originally, the funding programme was targeted specifically at this older group of artists but the middle group is already anticipating making use of it, as one artist noted while reflecting on her situation in general:

“In the next year or the year after I want to try to put together a catalogue. Then I will see. I will see to it because there is some scheme that everyone over forty can get money from for a catalogue... But if you know nowadays what a catalogue costs then this is just a drop in the ocean. ... I mean of course it is important to have a good catalogue because you must always have a catalogue. One has to perform like a horse in the circus...”(VA12).

The funding programme had originally been introduced to help older artists to re-start their careers after the collapse of the old system of contract work. The transformation process has been continuing for over ten years now and the older generation of artists has had the opportunity to adapt to the changes following unification. The programme's aim therefore seems to have been fulfilled, but the next generation of artists is already looking forward to making use of this opportunity as soon as they are eligible to do so.

One could argue that the funding programme is no longer necessary or relevant but, as can be seen from the quotation, the demand for the scheme remains strong. Artists are keen to use the funding opportunities offered to them and to a certain extent expect the state to continue to provide such funding in perpetuity. It might be argued that ten years is long enough for the situation of the older artists to have improved and therefore for certain funding schemes to be discontinued.

### ***5.2.5 Grumbling and discontent amongst older artists***

The statement in the previous section demonstrates that artists welcomed the funding programme and indeed recognised that self-marketing and sales promotion are necessary, even though they might be unpleasant. These sentiments were similarly expressed by both the older and the middle group of artists and are related to the widespread opinion among artists that administrative work, which includes writing funding applications, reports, tax declarations and producing promotional material, is of very low value to them.

The comparison with a performing horse in the circus indicates that artists perceive this type of work to be inappropriate for them, although they acknowledge it to be a task they have to perform if they wish to sell their work. The comparison expresses not only shame and anger but also shows ignorance of business practices such as marketing and budgeting. In the GDR marketing tools had not been needed to sell work. After unification artists were not used to such methods, neither were they trained or informed about their use. Artists generally regard these tools as inappropriate and still feel uneasy in using them for the promotion of their work.

However, eastern German artists are not unique in their reluctance to engage in administrative work or sales promotion. Their opinion is shared by many colleagues from western European countries who have also found that administration interferes with the production process and is therefore best dealt with by a dealer, as a quote from a French painter in Becker (1982: 116) confirms: "To be honest, I have to say that we are always on the lookout for a dealer, in order to get away from the administrative

work, the publicity that the dealer takes charge of, in order to protect myself, in order not to have to entertain collectors....”

For the older and middle groups of artists in eastern Germany the amount of administrative work has increased in the years following unification. While there had been little need for administrative skills in the GDR, since the Artists Association took care of such tasks, in the unified Germany artists had to use market tools to manage themselves and their work and to cope with the demands of German bureaucracy.

Although they shared the opinions of their western European counterparts, most had to manage their business affairs on their own, as dealers were rarely interested in taking on this work. Artists therefore learned that if they wished to make a successful funding application they had to adhere to the funding criteria even if it involved administrative work.

Once the regional government had agreed and implemented its funding structure in 1994, the quality of funding applications had to be improved. As funding requirements became more stringent, the older and middle groups of artists experienced increasing difficulties. Between 1990 and 1993 a laissez-faire approach to funding guidelines was taken in the regional and local administrations, but after 1994 a framework of regulations was put in place.

Some of the artists in the older and middle groups were uneasy with these changes since they underlined the feeling that administration and bureaucracy were on the increase. They felt that more bureaucracy would be unlikely to improve their working

conditions and would take them away from the production of art. One described his experience with the new administrative structure as follows:

“About the structures, that is a wide field.<sup>107</sup> There was, for example, a committee, Agenda 2000<sup>108</sup> .... I participated and wrote pamphlets and developed suggestions, well, and then everything petered out in the bureaucracy, in the big parliament, they are only able to administer themselves. Also, I do not have much confidence that they will do anything.”(VA22)

Since 1994 this general distaste for administration in all its forms increased in the older and middle groups of artists. It is interesting to note that the younger artists were less worried about the administrative aspects of their work, but they had less experience of applying for funding, since they mainly used that available from the Art Academy, which was limited to students and managed by the academy’s administration. Art Academy grants are related to special student programmes such as international exchange programmes between different art academies.

The older artists expressed concern not only at the amount of administrative work, but also felt that bureaucracy in general might be a problem. In some cases they made detailed remarks about funding procedures and application processes, arguing that completing funding applications was beneath their dignity, as is summarised here by one artist:

“ ...The real issue is that art at the end of the 20th century has no social context anymore, instead let’s say it has a supportive reality which needs to be kept alive.... Well, how does one feel when one has to complete a form and has to ask for support for one’s art...It is a problem, let’s say a social problem that art is not natural and integrated into society, but instead it has to represent value, it has to be supportable [has to fit into the funding criteria]. It is just like an unemployed person going to the job centre, right?”(VAD3)

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<sup>107</sup> The expression “that is a wide field” is from Fontane’s novel “Effi Briest”. The book was on the core curriculum in the extended secondary school of the GDR. The sentence is used in the book to describe a matter better avoided because it is too broad and opaque.

<sup>108</sup> The Agenda 2000 process was an outcome of the environmental conference in Rio de Janeiro in which the majority of the participating countries agreed to begin a process that was to be based in the local community. This process aims to create unity between environmental, social and economic interests in towns and in the countryside. The movement was adopted by a number of cities in Germany and the

The statement refers to the loss of status encountered by artists after the failure of the GDR and I would argue that this is one of the reasons behind the artists' complaints and their antipathy towards administration as a whole.

In the GDR art was respected as a "natural" and integrated part of society because of its ideological function. Artists had to deal with administrative matters as did everyone else, but to a lesser extent, and they were regarded as important. GDR decision-makers consulted members of the Artists' Association on policy matters.

After unification artists welcomed the loss of ideological pressure but found the resultant loss of status more difficult to bear: art was no longer linked with power. The middle and older groups of artists saw this decline in the status of their profession as a decline in the values of society as a whole. Artists were no longer at the centre of society and could no longer claim to hold special status but were now of equal or lower standing to other professions.

The quote links the loss in status with the fear of unemployment. Registering as unemployed is widely seen as a personal failure, even though, with East German unemployment reaching 25% (Schröder, 19: 135), it would be difficult to argue that this represents individual failure. The high levels of unemployment due to economic restructuring represent more of a collective failure than an individual one but it is nevertheless interpreted as personal disappointment and defeat.

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city council of Dresden (to which the artists referred) organised, together with other partners, the "Agenda 21" initiative.

In one sense the feeling of being unable to find work may have led the artists to make the comparison with the unemployed. In the artists' case, having to approach a funding body, begging bowl in hand, might be interpreted as an individual failure to earn a living under market conditions. This would then make necessary an application for funding that might be regarded as a public admission of failure, even though markets had not previously existed in East Germany and the sales figures of dealers since unification had been minimal. Many artists found it impossible to succeed in the free market, as the possibilities for earning money on the local or regional arts markets were limited.

There is another argument against artists accepting self-management and "paper work" as part of their profession, in addition to the fact that administrative work is regarded as more mundane than artistic work. One artist notes:

"...There are always two things, on the one hand there is your personal strategy or management and if one is good at this then the artistic outcome is less great but on the other hand if the artistic outcome is good then there is no public presence and therefore less chance of selling; as a result one cannot live from it [the art]..."(VA6)

Another value judgement can be identified here: not only does administrative work, such as completing funding application forms, have a lesser status but it also affects the artistic outcome. Bad management is perceived to equal good art and vice versa.

When this argument is applied to funding applications, it would suggest that a successful application implies a certain inferiority on the part of the artist and his/her work. The administrators who received the applications concurred with this, concluding that, in their experience, those with the best ideas were worst at writing funding applications (A3). This might be due to the artists' lack of experience in writing funding applications. The funding bodies have attempted to overcome this difficulty by



offering assistance in completing the forms but, according to the logic of this argument, artists will make little effort to learn how to write successful applications since this might damage their artistic reputation.

From the artist's point of view the artistic quality of the work of art is paramount:

“What matters is that one must produce fantastic art, it does not matter what tool one is using” (VAD3). Here the different interests of artists and funding bodies become obvious. Although artistic quality is important to the funding body it cannot be the only criterion. Artists, however, want to be judged solely on artistic quality.

A successful funding application might therefore raise questions concerning artistic quality and a badly written funding application would be regarded as incidental since it could actually be positive in terms of artistic outcome. By making this judgement, artists are acting against their own interests. While they would argue that administrative work takes them away from the production of works of art, it can also make their creation possible. Time invested in completing a funding application could, if successful, enable visual artists to produce works of art.

I would argue that this attitude explains why some funding applications are not as well put together as they might be, as was noted by the administrators in the previous chapter. From an outsider's point of view, artists appear to want to distance themselves from strategies that would make possible their survival as freelance artists. Artists acting against their own interests exemplify the relationship between themselves and the administrators. The funding bodies face difficulties in awarding grants, since they

have to encourage and train artists in completing the application forms correctly, as well as ensuring that funding criteria are fulfilled.

There is another problem with the relationship between administrators and artists, a misunderstanding that developed from the perception that “...often, laypeople<sup>109</sup> decide about art” (VA26). The quotation refers to the allocation of regional and local funding by Parliament. Artists do not take into account the fact that art administrators and specialist committees take funding decisions before ratification by regional Parliament. The term layperson, used by this artist, indicates someone with no professional or specialist knowledge (Thompson 1998: 501), which is not in fact the case for any of those involved in the decision-making process. It demonstrates once again that the artists only value expertise in terms of artistic quality and are unaware of the knowledge and background of the decision-makers.

Some artists extended this perception to the funding bodies themselves, asserting that administrators have little knowledge of the arts world. This is because administrators are rarely either art critics or art historians,<sup>110</sup> both of which professions reflect mainly on the quality of art. As long as this remains the key issue for artists’ themselves, these two professional groups will be considered to be far more important for the artists than the administrators managing the application process. The artists, feeling undervalued by society, have a similar disregard for the governmental bodies.

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<sup>109</sup> The term layperson here refers to people without professional or specialist knowledge of the arts.

<sup>110</sup> The Free State of Saxony appointed an art historian as Head of the Visual Arts Department in the Ministry of Art and Science. The artists saw this woman as an exception that was very much welcomed by their community.

One might argue that artists are ignorant of the decision-making process within the funding procedure but this ignorance is caused mainly by lack of information. The funding bodies disseminated the information but failed to engage or retain the artists' interest. The artists did not have in-depth knowledge or information about the work of the funding bodies and, conversely, the administrators were not well informed about individual artists. Most administrators had an interest in the visual arts, and some demonstrated a profound knowledge of the artists' community, but others were less well informed. In the communication process between artists and administrators, personal contact is the key and the basis on which decisions are made. Some in the older and middle groups of artists were unable to remember which funding programme they had applied for, or which funding body administered which programme, but nearly all remembered the individual they had communicated with.

All in all, the older and middle groups of artists noted that the situation had become more difficult for them after 1994 and admitted that they were confused about the new funding structure:

"Before [1994] there were different opportunities [for funding from different sources such as the federal level, the East German *Länder* and regional levels] to support projects in particular. This is more difficult now [but] I can not remember in detail, that I will honestly admit, all this structural stuff about arts funding, there I can only say very little...also I live in the present, I am not young anymore, I am not willing to overexert myself at this point" (VA28).

Often the statements about funding opportunities were confusing. Some of the older artists reflected on their experience of the newly developed funding structure in the Free State of Saxony in general, as well as commenting on the use of the funding. Vague statements about society as a whole, the system of government, and on how transformation had affected their lives, would often dominate their response to questions about the work of the funding bodies, as noted by one artist:

**“I think, the question of societal change has now reached a higher level and the whole process of Europeanisation is, when I look at it clearly, dominated by capital which those at the higher level [of government] are able to manipulate in order to keep the market economy alive and I have doubts about where the social element is... the rich are getting richer every day and one only has to look at how capital is distributed in Germany to know how things work...”(VA17)**

**In this quote general perceptions about the changes and the artists’ misunderstanding of them are repeated but attention needs to be drawn to the language used. Older artists, in particular, continue to use the language of the communist regime, referring to capital in the Marxist sense, as the driving force of capitalism, of far greater importance to society than other factors such as social affairs. These artists are echoing official GDR dogma, which saw capitalism as the enemy of the working class and this added to their general feeling of alienation and abandonment.**

**In a similar vein, some artists repeated the arguments that there is never enough funding, that funding cuts are ongoing and that money should be spent on artists instead of on administration. None of these statements is new or unique to eastern Germany but they represent a kind of common language which is used in all disciplines the world over to blame any government’s funding practice. The eastern German artists tended to compare their current plight in general to the situation before unification, but in this particularity they adapted quickly, picking up and using long-established grumbles about government from their western European colleagues. Undoubtedly, this pattern of general complaint and dissatisfaction was to some extent engendered by the artists’ general dejection. The older, and to a lesser extent the middle groups of artists felt aggrieved and, in this state of mind, made broader statements about the general situation, thus reinforcing their negative feelings.**

As demonstrated in chapter three, public support was available and processes became clearer between 1994 and 2000, but a failure of communication on the part of government and funding bodies meant that artists were not relieved of their general anxieties. Fulbrook (1997: 276) argued that, in the GDR, grumbling was one way of disagreeing with the political situation. I would argue that grumbling, as in mutterings of dissatisfaction or outright complaints, is still a common tool of expression among the older generation of artists. Their complaints are widespread and, while administration as a whole is under attack, they are difficult to particularise and disentangle in order to find solutions. Artists confronted administrators with generalities about the organisation of society but specific issues, such as their lack of structural knowledge, were hardly mentioned. Communication had come to a halt. Older artists appeared to have given up expecting an improvement in their circumstances; indeed, one commented that the younger artists should be the ones to deal with change and that it might take another generation to overcome the mood of dejection in the artists' community.

To sum up, in many cases artists in the older and middle groups were stuck in circumstances from which they were unable to escape. Their way of dealing with this was to complain and express their anger, grumbling about the new society. Often, they took on board the failure of the old system into their own careers, expressing feelings of depression. Public administration attempted to provide financial solutions to some of their practical problems, at least in part, by creating a special funding programme and introducing other support measures (health insurance and tax rebates), but was unable to meet their concerns.

The relationship between administration and artists reached an uneasy truce, in which the artists resigned themselves to a general feeling of being disadvantaged. The administrators were very aware of these feelings but felt unable to deal with them because it seemed that, in the period from 1994 to 2000, artists were seeking consolation and understanding rather than co-operating in a working relationship.

#### ***5.2.6 The Stasi debate and State artists' confrontation***

Artists' living and working conditions were at the root of their mood of dejection. There were, in addition, two important debates, the Stasi debate and the "State artist" controversy, about the individual position of artists in the GDR. Both debates began after unification and, by 1995, had reached the point where almost every artist who had produced art in the GDR felt the need to engage in the discussion and take sides in what was often confrontational argument. While the media had taken little interest in previous debates on, for example, funding matters, which were merely mentioned in passing or ignored entirely, these two debates took place in public and were to a large extent media-driven.

The older and middle groups of artists were the main subjects of the debate, which had an important impact on their living and working conditions. The artists' overriding feelings of being disadvantaged were highlighted by the debate.

While the content of the debates varied, the results, as far as the artists were concerned, were similar. An analysis of content and results of both debates follows, but their time frame is slightly different. The Stasi debate, which was mainly directed by the media,

took place throughout the 1990s but, by the end of 2000 when most Stasi files<sup>111</sup> had been studied, the debate came to an end. The state artist debate had reached a standoff by 1999 but it is impossible to say whether the end of the debate has been reached.

#### **5.2.6.1 Artists' involvement with the Stasi**

The Stasi debate addressed the involvement of East German artists with the GDR's secret police, asking which members of the artists' community had collaborated with or worked for the organisation. In the GDR, members of the secret police or their informants reported any activities that could be construed as being hostile to the state. The artists' community was one of the most intensely observed groups in the GDR. Once the Stasi had collapsed, most artists discovered that they had been observed for years. The extent of their hostility towards the state varied and was dependent on their own judgement.

Some artists found detailed descriptions of their personal circumstances, for instance of the contents of their wardrobes in their Stasi files and were unable to explain why this should be of interest to the secret police. Others discovered that their career had been systematically destroyed by the interventions of the Stasi, who had prevented access to contract work. The artists' community had tolerated Stasi activities since the founding of the GDR and had known that informants operated among them. Some were suspected of being informants but their identity remained secret. After unification, when restrictions on access to individual Stasi files were lifted, the secret identities were revealed. Most of the artists who discovered that they had been victims of the

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<sup>111</sup> "Stasi files" is an expression for the reports collected and archived by the Stasi about individuals in the GDR.

collusion between the state arts administration and the Stasi found this hard to believe.

One artist summarised the activities of the Stasi in this area of work:

“In collusion with the Stasi, the state art administrators were able to use their contract policy for the complete manipulation of potential artists - to make them feel uncertain, to misuse them, to destroy friendships, to arouse hope, to let them down, to issue demands, to isolate, to arrange the leaving of the country.” (Göschel, 1999: 592)

The exposure of Stasi employees or informants in the artists' community after unification was carried out insensitively, using the kind of direct methods previously used by the secret police itself. In Dresden, for example, a list giving the full names<sup>112</sup> of artist IMs<sup>113</sup> was distributed and, from the day of its publication, the artists' community knew the identity of informers in the GDR. The community was immediately divided between informant IMs and their victims and this had tragic consequences on both sides, as is shown in the case of Kettner,<sup>114</sup> the former rector of the Art Academy in Dresden.

Kettner worked for the Stasi from 1979 to 1989 and mainly wrote reports about students and teachers who were thinking of escaping or who had escaped to West Germany or who did not support the GDR regime. The Stasi used him as a source of information on the artists' community. Schraub describes Kettner's relationship with the Stasi as a “partnership of convenience with power” (Schaub, 1996: 752). This quotation summarises a complex relationship and applies to many of those who were

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<sup>112</sup> It was common practice to strike out the full names of informants when victims were reading their files in order to avoid further complications or acts of revenge. In the case of the list of names mentioned above these precautions had not been taken.

<sup>113</sup> IM, *Informeller Mitarbeiter* (informal collaborator) is a term used in the GDR to describe people who were working as informants for the secret police. They often delivered detailed reports including private information about colleagues, friends and partners to the STASI. The reports were used to gain in-depth knowledge about the behaviour of suspects or other people who were not following state ideology. After unification the archives of the STASI were opened to the public and when victims gained access to their files they often discovered that close friends had observed them for years. Some of the artists interviewed for this study were victims and one was an IM.

<sup>114</sup> Kettner, born in 1924, studied art at the Art Academy in Dresden and was rector of the Art Academy from 1979 to 1989. He died in 1993.



actively engaged with the Stasi. Often IMs were well respected among their colleagues and were not known to be close to the state. Kettner was an artistic authority and had never been regarded as an “SED zero”<sup>115</sup> when teaching at the art academy. The artists’ community was therefore deeply affected when it became obvious that he had been an IM. Schaub, (1996: 752) argues that, even after six years of German unification, the confusion, irritation and conflicting reactions caused by Kettner’s activities were still dominating argument and discussion among Dresden’s artists.

In the media the battle against informants, and the implications for the lives of their victims, made headlines. The rare instances of apologies by informers and the victims’ willingness to forgive were unable to change what had happened. Many artists were attempting to fight their own individual cases, either as informant or as victim. Some were trying to clear their names and many expressed difficulty in accepting what had been a secret for so long.

It is obvious that the implications of the debate on the lives of individual artists were immense but the revelations themselves also undermined the artists’ ability to come to terms with their past. As soon as the debate began to focus on Stasi membership alone, the opportunity for GDR arts policy to come to terms with its past was lost for the forthcoming years. Memories were written off and confined to the narrow parameters of the debate. According to Kaiser (1999: 456), discussion on the behaviour of artists in the consensus dictatorship, “*Konsensdiktatur DDR*”, was reduced to a debate on the Stasi. He argues that once the argument had escalated to become a permanent one all nuances and grey areas of the complex reality of life in the GDR were reduced to the

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<sup>115</sup> “SED zero” is an expression used for SED members who were supporting the leading ideology as

one question of cooperation with the Stasi. It prevented communication about individual scope for action and the position of artists within the GDR regime.

#### 5.2.6.2 The “State artists” debate

The Stasi debate was only one of two major controversies and the second debate about the “state artists”<sup>116</sup> produced a similar outcome and divided East German artists further into two different camps. While the Stasi debate divided the artists into perpetrators and victims, the “State artists” debate drew a dividing line between those classed as having been close to the GDR regime, and those who had been disadvantaged by the state. In this dispute those artists who had been born, studied and practised their art in the GDR but who had subsequently decided to move, or were (re)moved to Western Germany long before unification, accused some of their former eastern German colleagues of being state artists.

The former niche artists joined in the argument and turned against their GDR colleagues, accusing them of being state artists and of having been too close to power in the GDR. It was now up to those artists in the older and middle groups, who were unable to provide evidence of having worked within the niche culture, to prove that they had never been close to or in favour of the GDR regime.

The term “state artist” itself was only vaguely defined after unification and there were several interpretations. Rehberg (1999: 39) captures this well and merits a lengthy quotation:

“For some, a “state artist” was someone who had a good livelihood (for example with contract work) in the GDR, for others, it was someone who fulfilled all expectations of the ruling class and of the highest

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expected by the party but seemed unable to fulfil any tasks given. (Schraub, 1996: 752)

<sup>116</sup> The “state artists” debate was also called the “picture fight” (*Bilderstreit*) because it not only denounced state artists but also attacked GDR art in general.

echelon of the leadership without compromises, who stylistically and thematically tried to get close or someone who let himself/herself be used for any instrumentalisation (*Instrumentalisierung*). By that interpretation very few of the better quality artists could be termed state artists because subjugation and obligation on the one hand and qualitative weakness on the other were too close. But for a sociological interpretation of the connection this is less plausible. Those who had stood out with privileges, honours and contracts, who had attended the general assembly meetings of the committee [who chaired the meeting] or those who had been portrayed by official publications as representing artistic excellence, those who as "*Kulturschaffende*" served in the parliament or in other representative committees of the state and party, held a professorship or were rector of an art academy, those were "State artists".

In the debate it seemed that most people who used the term "State artist" had their own personal understanding and definition and assumed that others involved in the debate shared these views. This kind of assumption produced misunderstandings and confusion in an already heated debate. Yet, in the use of the term, opinions were united, as it had always been used pejoratively. The term retains a negative connotation because it had been used to describe artists who had worked under the umbrella of Nazi cultural policy.

The debate began as Baselitz,<sup>117</sup> who had been born in Saxony and became a well-established artist in West Germany, argued in an interview with an arts journal that there is no such thing as East German art, that so-called GDR art never existed and that East German artists who worked in the GDR were not artists at all (Baselitz, 1990: 54-72). The eastern German artists reacted with indignation, as we see from the following statement, written eight years after Baselitz' declaration: "Herr Baselitz is an arsehole. His narrow-mindedness is astonishing. And his best days are far gone. In earlier years, until the beginning of the 1970s, he painted wonderful pictures. Today, he serves the arts market, pigeon-hole Baselitz" (Triebisch 1999: 626).

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<sup>117</sup> Baselitz was born in "Deutschbaselitz", a former village in Saxony, and had studied art at the Berlin Academy. He left the GDR in 1957.

This forceful reaction eight years after the event demonstrates how insulted the eastern German artists' community felt by this assertion. They felt their own identity, which was most valuable to them, to be compromised and reacted with the same insulting language that Baselitz had himself used. As the quote demonstrates, the debate was neither sophisticated nor fair and its intellectual content was never to improve.

The debate revolved around the argument that GDR art was ideologically driven. In the opinion of some West German artists, their counterparts in East Germany had produced art that had suited the political aims of the GDR and they were therefore considered to have collaborated with the state. Baselitz went further than this, arguing that when art is ideologically driven it should not even be considered as bad art but as non-art.

The term "state artist" was first used by the media in an attempt to simplify a complex issue, rather than try to analyse the close relationship between the GDR state and its artists. Many artists had felt comfortable with the GDR government. This was reflected in their living and working conditions, which included a smooth-running system of contract work and social support through state-led sales promotion.

It might be argued that, at the time of unification, West German artists, especially those who had moved<sup>118</sup> from the East to the West, must have felt under pressure as the East German artists' community lost their former East German business partners and attempted to gain access to the already limited German arts market. Ruthe (1994) argues that Baselitz in particular must have felt so threatened by the productivity of his

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<sup>118</sup>Instead of "move", "emigrate" would appear to be a more appropriate expression here but this would not be correct because East Germans were regarded as Germans by the basic law of the Federal Republic. Also, the word "move" implies an explicit decision by the person leaving but in some cases artists were

colleagues in eastern Germany that he intended to block their access to the open arts markets by discrediting their work. In fact the move by some West German artists to rubbish East German art served this purpose well. The debate was not limited to the visual arts. Prominent writers such as Wolf and Müller, as well as some musicians, were also found to be "state artists".

At the beginning of the debate the response of the East German artists was restrained. They were disturbed by the comments but too busy with their changing working and living arrangements to be able to react on anything but an individual basis, some responding with impromptu comments. They participated in exhibitions and subsequently complained about the way their works had been displayed.

In the second half of the 1990s, some East German artists attempted to amend their personal histories by the use of convenient memory lapses. Kaiser notes that two of the most prominent visual artists of the GDR - Sitte, the former President of the Artists' Association and Womacka, known in the GDR for his ideologically driven paintings - rejected any accusation linking them with the state beyond what had been the norm in the system (Kaiser 1999: 457). Others argued that their appearance on the list of state artists had been a mistake. Some East German artists modified their biographies to such an extent that it appeared that they had never received contract work in the GDR at all. These artists employed such falsehoods because they realised that to be labelled a state artist could damage or even end their careers.

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expatriated and in other cases had to wait for years to get permission to leave the GDR. In any case it was up to the authorities to decide when a person could move.

The debate continued to develop throughout the 1990s, becoming heated on several occasions. One of the early flashpoints after the Baselitz statement came in 1993, when the National Gallery in Berlin was re-hung. Its remit was to unite the West German art of the National Gallery West with the East German art from the National Gallery East in a combined permanent exhibition. Space was limited and 16 works of art that had been on show in the National Gallery of the GDR, now the National Gallery East, were placed temporarily in the National Gallery West. The works on show had been allocated their places in the gallery before unification. Therefore work presented tended to uphold GDR ideology, or at least to present the different stages of GDR arts policy which had excluded niche artists. The niche artists protested, arguing that they felt they had once again been excluded from official recognition, this time by the new system. They were supported in their protest by their former East- and now West German colleagues and the media; art critics and art collectors too joined the debate. While some wanted to have it confirmed that GDR art consisted only of propaganda pieces, others attested the work of the East German painters' ambiguity and subversiveness. However, none of these opinions reflects reality, as Ruthe (1994) argues:

“The art of the GDR, the official art, valued integration. It is essential to bring the fund into its critical context. To retrospectively interpret paintings from artists with state contracts as subversive regime criticism is absurd. Conversely, it is also outrageous to turn every artist of the GDR into a state artist, only because he worked in the realist style.”

The debate grew more intense in discussions about the exhibition “Assignment art” (*Auftrag: Kunst*) in the Historical Museum in Berlin in 1995, and the exhibition “German pictures” (*Deutschlandbilder*) in Berlin in 1997. In 1998 the debate focused on the selection of artists who were to be commissioned to produce works of art for the newly refurbished Reichstag. Two out of the ten artists contracted were former GDR artists, one of whom was Heisig who had been the rector of the University of Graphic

and Book Art in Leipzig in the 1980s. One of his paintings had been exhibited at the controversial exhibition in the Historical Museum in Berlin in 1993. As soon as the names were published the arguments began. "Once a state artist [in the GDR], always a state artist [in Germany]" was one of the comments, and the East German writer Rathenow from Leipzig summed up Heisig's position as "*kreative Anbiederung und Weiterkriechen in den Schleimspuren der Macht*", creative bootlicking and crawling on the slimy path of power (Rathenow, 1999).

The debate reached its peak in 1999 when the largest exhibition of GDR art since unification, "The Rise and Fall of the Modern Era", opened in Weimar,<sup>119</sup> as one artist reported:

"Ten years after the fall of the Berlin wall in the nice month of May, the picture argument turned into a picture war, held on the contaminated site of the former *NS-Gauforum*<sup>120</sup> in the "Culture City Weimar". Until now the front lines had been drawn between those artists who had left or had wanted to leave the GDR and those who had decided to stay in the GDR. Faced with this "internment camp for collaborators" (according to the Leipzig artist Neo Rauch), the previous opponents developed a newly discovered feeling of solidarity in protest against the hanging of the paintings, two to three deep, on grey plastic sheeting." (Gillen, 1999: 589)

The quotation refers to the ongoing debate between the separate groups of artists, now apparently unified into issuing a declaration of solidarity to cover all East German artists. Such expressions of solidarity were however deceptive, as the artists were united only by self-interest, having a joint presence in one section of the exhibition.

The structure and the hanging of the exhibition as a whole are important here. It covered a period of over one hundred years and only one of its sections,

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<sup>119</sup> In 1999 Weimar was European City of Culture and hosted a varied cultural programme during this year. One of the highlights in the area of visual arts was the above-mentioned exhibition, which consisted of over 500 paintings from GDR artists.

<sup>120</sup> The exhibition was held in a building whose construction had begun under the Hitler regime. Construction work was completed under the supervision of the GDR authorities.

“official/unofficial art”, was dedicated to GDR art,<sup>121</sup> indeed this section contained only GDR art. It was itself divided into official and unofficial subsections and was presented in one space but in two separate rooms. The official art was shown in one large circular room. In a much smaller room close to the exit from the circular room the curator had constructed an artificial avenue of paintings, where unofficial works of art were shown. Much more space was left in between the unofficial paintings than between the official paintings in the larger hall. In both sections a selection of GDR artists was presented but East German artists regarded the division itself as a provocation. However, the debate raged around another phenomenon of the exhibition.

The method of hanging paintings in the section on official art was under attack. The curators had used a hanging method dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in which paintings are placed in close proximity to each other, sometimes with less than ten centimetres between them. Some paintings were left leaning against the wall and it was felt that the hanging created a warehouse atmosphere. The sheer quantity of paintings dominated the exhibition and it was hard to get a detailed view of an individual work.<sup>122</sup>

East German artists were annoyed by the exhibition, by the ensuing debate about the division into official and unofficial art and by the hanging arrangements. Many artists, as well as public organisations such as the Saxon Art Fund, which had lent pictures to the exhibition, felt deeply insulted and deceived by the curator (Preiss). The Berlin artist, Vent, noted: “We are already on the floor and then someone [the curator] comes

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<sup>121</sup> The exhibition was divided into several sections. It started with the impressionists, who were in turn followed by the new Weimar activists from 1902 –1918. The section that covered “avant-gardism and tradition in conflict” focused on the years 1918 to 1933. This was followed by a section showing the development of art in Nazi Germany and the last section dealt with GDR art as mentioned here.

<sup>122</sup> This was my personal impression during a visit to the exhibition.



and walks all over us. When will the denunciation stop in this country?" (Rautenberg, 1999)

Several East German artists felt that their paintings had been placed in the wrong section and/or that the hanging arrangements were inappropriate to their reputation. As a result, those affected complained more forcibly. For the first time two artists used the legal system to complain against the hanging arrangements of the exhibition, taking the curator to court. The judge found in their favour, arguing that the artists' reputations were under threat (Deutsche Presseagentur 1999) because of the hanging of the paintings. Some paintings were therefore re-arranged or even withdrawn from the exhibition. Yet legal success did not really satisfy the artists' community because it was unable to restore the reputation lost with the collapse of the GDR.

The arrangement of the exhibition, with its large section of official art and the much smaller section of unofficial art, might lead the audience to assume that this reflected the production of art in the GDR, i.e. that most of the art produced was of an official nature, supportive of the state, and only a small fraction was unofficial art produced by niche artists. This may never have been the intention of the curator. In fact he suggested in an interview that if he had a second chance to hang the exhibition he would no longer divide GDR art into official and unofficial. However, with the "state artists" debate raging in the background, the exhibition supported the argument that most East German art is worthless because, as Rautenberg (1999) points out, "it is a hanging which explains nothing, which does not produce connections, which shows poor imitation next to boldness, which does not take care of artists, origin and clients. What counts is the great mass of pictures."

The debate about GDR art was again simplified and, by attempting to focus on the two most obvious divisions, the curator became a victim of the ongoing discussion, repeating and emphasising the main argument that GDR art is not art as such but “mass” representation. Once again, the variety of GDR art was neglected rather than discussed. This debate would have been the means of enabling the older and middle groups of artists to deal with their past out of the public eye, instead of being forced to react to the means of representation. The exhibition itself amplified their feelings of disappointment, distress and depression.

As mentioned in the last quotation, one side effect of the exhibition was the debate over the quantity of GDR art. Researchers such as Rehberg, Kaiser and Tannert had already raised the issue of the quantity of paintings but this had not been a public debate. The exhibition introduced an awareness of the quantity of GDR paintings and art available in museums, art foundations such as the Art Fond of Saxony, and other former state institutions, in addition to the 500 paintings on show in the exhibition. Works of art are often put into storage and the organisations concerned would prefer to free up space than to maintain archives of GDR art. The researchers mentioned above, together with critics and art collectors, raised the question of the fate of these pieces of art, in view of their large quantity.

Eventually a consensus emerged that the works of art should ideally be collected and stored in one place. In the meantime, various interim solutions were tried out, for

example Schirmer,<sup>123</sup> the former Minister of Culture of the GDR, on his own initiative stored a collection of GDR art at Burg Besskow,<sup>124</sup> an old castle. By 2000, the East German Länder together remained unable to solve this problem; the Free State of Saxony therefore decided independently to store its part of the collection at a temporary site, the fortress Königstein, until a permanent solution was found.

Although no permanent solution had been found by the end of 2000, the *Länder* governments at least appeared willing to conserve most of their collections. This might be interpreted as a success for the older and middle groups of artists, some of whose works would be put into storage rather than destroyed. However, for artists in these two groups the solution personified the overall feeling that had dominated their life since unification: they felt utterly disappointed that part of their artistic career had been devalued and that they had effectively been labelled “state artists”.

Once the exhibition closed the debate calmed down and by the end of 2000 there had been no further attempts to get discussions going again. In a piece written to celebrate the millennium the debate was summed up by Beaucamp, the arts critic of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, in an article he pledged to a Berlin Museum:

“In the last ten years one has concentrated almost exclusively on thick compendia on the political conditions and complications in the East.... In remote corners of the East, in castles and in fortresses, then in the “*Entsorgungsschau*”, in the Weimar “*Gauforum*” of 1999 “mass art” from the GDR was exhibited. Yet, we were unable to study and maybe admire this art in a presentation worthy of a museum. After the “Wende”, were the veins of gold of GDR art destroyed on purpose? Discouraged and scattered were the rich Leipzig and Dresden schools of painting, the once blossoming Berlin sculpture of Cremer, Balden, Seitz and Grzimek and the highly developed arts of drawing and printing in the GDR.”

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<sup>123</sup> Schirmer was the last GDR Minister of Culture. He came to power in 1989 once the old guard had been replaced.

<sup>124</sup> In 1990 all works of art in East Germany financed by the central cultural fund of the GDR (Zentraler Kulturfond der DDR) were collected and stored at Burg Besskow. In 1992/93 the collection of art was divided between the five Länder and distributed to their new owners. Burg Besskow contained the

To sum up, Beaucamp reflects on the artistic loss that was the result of the Stasi and the “state artist” debates but he also comments on the creators of GDR art. After unification many former GDR artists had attempted to adapt to and deal with their new circumstances, for example many were busy defending themselves in the state artists debate or coming to terms with their roles as victims in the Stasi debate. Ten years after unification one can conclude that most artists had acquitted themselves well in both debates. Immediately after unification some artists had withdrawn from public debate, but they had been forced back into public life by the end of the 1990s, following the high-profile debates.

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collection of the Land Brandenburg and later the collection of the Land Mecklenburg/Vorpommern was added. The *Länder* Saxony and Thuringia stored their collections at castle Königstein in Saxony.

### **5.3 The "in between" situation of the middle group of artists**

The Stasi and the state artist debates influenced not only the older group of artists but also those who had just begun their careers in the GDR. Whereas the previous section analysed the situation of older artists in the transformation process and focused on their age-related experiences, this section analyses the special circumstances of the middle group of artists.

Based on the results of the analysis I argue that the middle group of artists faced different problems from their older colleagues, problems that were the result of their market position. However, some similarities with the situation of the older artists remained, for instance they had both been influenced and moulded by GDR arts policy, for the following reasons.

Many of the artists in the middle group had grown up in the GDR and their entire secondary school education and some of their university education had taken place there. Many had entered a highly elitist system in the art academy. Having been selected and trained by the old GDR artistic cadre, by entering the academy they had accepted their judgements of artistic competence. This would indicate that they were influenced to some extent by the ideologically driven system of values and norms of the GDR. They are effectively the GDR's children, since they are part of the generation that had experienced no other system than socialism. They had spent sufficient formative years under the GDR regime to be moulded by it.

In comparison with the older artists this group had not established careers within the GDR system. Most had undergone artistic education in evening classes followed by a

period of study at one of the five different art academies in the GDR. The middle group of artists reported that their education at the academy had had a major influence on them. Close interaction with teachers and lecturers was part of the curriculum and, because of the limited number of students, professors were able to invest much more time in each student than is usual today.

Most of the middle group of artists interviewed had entered art academy with the prospect of becoming a member of the GDR's artistic elite, which would have included benefiting from the GDR's social provisions for artists. For many, art took centre stage in their lives and they felt well supported and protected at the academy, as one artist reported: "In my opinion the Dresden Art Academy had a protective function and maybe it still has this today. People were hermetically sealed off from the outside. Interaction with the outside was limited – one is busy with oneself"(VA24).

They recognised that some Professors held outdated artistic values or had, in the words of one artist, "ossified" (VA6), and that in order to learn they had to accept the hierarchical order of the academy which some reported finding hard to get used to. "All the others [students and teachers] believed in the hierarchy, I did not and neither did my Professor. This is also related to the fact that as student and Professor have to work together for three years the relationship only works if the student is allocated to the Professor for better or for worse" (VA18).

Students were taught that the highest artistic quality is the ultimate aim of an artist's career and that when they leave the academy they should be talented and skilled, high-level artists (VA18). In the academy students were trained in figurative painting, one of

the core courses. Some students were concerned about whether some Professors would accept abstract paintings. In the old days a final examined presentation of art that did not feature people would have been marked as a fail, as one artist remembers being told by his Professor: "Kettner [the Professor] showed me [the student] a final presentation (Diplomarbeit), there were also etchings, with houses, old facades and entrance gates. And then he said that this would not be allowed to be presented at the final examination because there are no people"(VA29).

By the late 1980s these kinds of restrictions had already been relaxed and were abandoned soon after the wall came down. At the time of unification, therefore, art students had new expectations. As they completed their education at the academy during the first years of unification they found themselves at the centre of the transformation process itself and were forced to recognise that the decline of GDR art was a process that could not be halted.

They wanted to be seen to be separate from "the old guard" (VA13) and sometimes expressed doubts about the quality of the works of art produced in the GDR, as one artist reported: "It was at this time [after unification] that I realised what "GDR sculpture" was and that in the GDR there was no real sculpture at all, as horrible as that sounds" (VA11).

They also wanted to establish themselves in the new society, but because of their education they remained associated with the old system, which had, as they saw it, failed. They had to come to terms with this inner contradiction. While they wanted to abandon the old circumstances, they had to accept that they themselves had been

moulded by them. This process of self-analysis and personal development was ongoing throughout the 1990s; in this period of reflection each artist had to deal individually with his/her own situation. One artist summed up the views of his generation:

“...we never had the trauma of the time after the war, the paranoia of justification, the building of a human picture, the idealisation of one's own aims and goals. We grew up in a world full of anachronisms. Although we suffered under it and could not stand it, we had to laugh loudly about it too because it was so absurd...”(Sager, 1997: 30)

They were unable to abandon their history and education overnight. Although individual artists seemed to find the contradictions hard to accept, they also recognised that the changing circumstances offered the opportunity to start afresh. This group had nothing to lose professionally because their careers were not yet established. The younger of the artists in the middle group had witnessed the state artist and Stasi debates but were too young to have a personal stake in the outcome.

Not having had the experience of practising as artists in the GDR they were not as encumbered with ideological baggage as the older artists although they had expected to benefit from the working and living conditions their older colleagues had experienced. They had not yet benefited from the welfare aspects of GDR arts policy but they had assumed that they would in the future.

The research shows that the artists in this group were able to overcome the shock of the changes caused by unification because they generally regarded the mid-1990s as a time of opportunity “to make contacts in the arts market” (VA24), rather than as a threat, as one artist reported. Most graduates of the Dresden Art Academy started up their own initiatives and projects with the direct or indirect support of the academy. Some set up a shared studio in an old barn outside Dresden, others left Dresden for Berlin. Some continued their studies at other academies as exchange students, both in Germany and



abroad, and others used three-month scholarships to study different styles and techniques in the visual arts. Most often, contacts made in the arts market had either been pre-negotiated by former Academy tutors or else graduates had used official Academy contacts, as was the case with scholarships for example. At that time the support system of the Academy was working in favour of this group of artists. The outcome of these activities is difficult to measure but many reported that their new experiences had been important to them. One artist who went to study for six months at another art academy in the Netherlands noted:

“In total, these six months were very important to me because I was away from Germany, and I had never been away from home, not from Dresden and not at all from Germany... It was a great experience... and what was new was that I had to talk to people, I had to make the first contacts myself, which means you make the contact [to the other students] in order to show your work<sup>125</sup> ... and I realised that I was moving forward with my work ...”(VA24)

While the older artists struggled to adapt, the younger generation was optimistic about the future. Unfortunately, this optimism was short-lived and slowly died away as the Academy's support system ended. Often the new contacts did not develop sufficiently for the artists to be able to earn a living from them. At times artists in this group wanted to keep a distance from their elders and did not maintain their contacts.

Generally, these artists were more open-minded and also less disappointed with the new situation than their older colleagues had been but sometimes they expressed opinions one would have considered part of the (old) value system of former GDR artists. There was curiosity about the market and its mechanisms, but there was also fear, which resulted in restraint and a tendency not to engage, for example, in the distribution of their art.

This disengagement was clearly demonstrated when issues such as marketing, self-management and finance were mentioned in the interviews, which some knew little about. While the older artists refused to engage in marketing and finance, the middle group was aware that it was essential to be familiar with these issues but, in the words of one artist, “I just could not bring myself to go and promote myself. I could not do it.”(VA13) The research indicates the existence of a line which artists felt unable to cross, which was only partly related to a lack of information. This group displayed an unease and concern over the struggle with administration and paperwork in general, similar to that displayed by the older generation. Many in the middle group of artists hoped that someone else would do this kind of work for them. They also wanted to produce art of good quality. In some ways these artists had picked up the habits and values of the older generation, but were struggling against them because they realised that they would reduce their opportunities in life. In fact they faced a conflict of interests. In very simple terms, they knew what they had to do but could not bring themselves to do it. They therefore adopted an “in between” stance – something which must be difficult to bear since it causes internal anguish and no visible external advantage.

This problem of conflicting interests also caused financial difficulties for the middle group of artists. As we have seen, after unification some of the older artists were able to use the contacts made under the communist regime to survive. The middle group was too young to have established a system of contacts and was therefore largely prevented from entering the arts market. These artists therefore suffered from a lack of financial

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<sup>125</sup> Students at the Dresden Art Academy gathered together at formal lessons to talk about their work. They never had to organise a lesson themselves but were integrated into a set framework in the GDR.

security once the academy contacts had run out, but on the whole took a positive view, as one artist couple noted:

“I do not see our situation as completely negative at the moment. I mean, the biggest requirement, and that is the same for both of us, is that we are able to work [produce art]. We have no requirements otherwise. Well, we have a child and therefore one needs sometimes a little bit more but otherwise we do not have any requirements. All the other needs are reset. The main thing is that we have a studio that we can afford and in which we can work and as long as this works out I am prepared to take on other part-time jobs [to earn an income]”(VA1).

The aspirations of many in this group to remain working as full-time artists could not always be realised and most became dual career artists, a convenient way of maintaining their original profession while at the same time surviving financially. It meant also that they did not have to become involved in management issues when their main source of income came from employment in other art-related professions.

One could argue that at this stage the middle group had partially adapted to the standards of their West German counterparts. However, they continued to battle with values formed before unification and, although this may change over the coming years, I would argue that as long as the artists retain these they will be unable to change either their financial conditions or their status.

#### **5.4 The freedom of the younger generation**

The youngest group of artists went through the transformation process without the burden of an adult GDR history and with limited experience of the arts world. They were still at the beginning of their careers. Although they had grown up in the GDR, they had entered art academy after unification and had therefore accepted changes such as those taking place in the academy as normal. Because of their youth they were unable to compare GDR academies with other institutions.

The main line of questioning here was to analyse how the youngest group reacted to the demands and changes of the arts market as it affected their living and working conditions in eastern Germany and how this differed from that of the other groups of artists. The research was also intended to analyse whether artists of this generation associated themselves with the former value system and, if so, how this manifested itself?

The interviews indicated that not only were the younger artists much more energetic and less depressed and inward looking than their older colleagues but they were also optimistic about their own contribution to the creation of a flourishing arts market.

None of the artists from the older or middle groups had mentioned the possibility that they might themselves be able to influence the market. They considered it to be an immovable force outside their sphere of influence. The younger artists saw themselves as part of the market, taking a completely different approach to that adopted by their older colleagues.

In general, it seems obvious that the younger generation should be full of ideas and dreams about the future. This is neither exceptional in the arts world nor is it principally connected to the process of transformation. However, although this mood is strongly associated with youth in general, it is an approach new to the artists' community in eastern Germany, as demonstrated in the differences outlined here.

The difference in attitude may be observed in the way artists treated issues relating to management. While the older artists felt uncomfortable with administrative and managerial matters, the younger artists did not, but rather accepted them as part of their daily routine. They even began to sell their own art in the distinctive exhibition rooms of the Art Academy. One artist reported opening up his degree show to visitors in the Easter holidays when many tourists visit Dresden. The exhibition took place in the Art Academy, which is situated in the centre of the old town. He invited passing tourists to view his art and sold most of his paintings within three days (VA3). It has now become common practice for the work of students or graduates to be sold at exhibitions in the Academy; selling at public degree shows had previously been uncommon in the GDR.

However, the Dresden arts market is still far from thriving, thus some graduates of the Dresden Art Academy moved to Berlin because the booming capital city promised more opportunities as well as more competition, which the younger artists seemed keen to tackle. The question arises however why the group of younger artists did not attempt to influence the Dresden arts market if they were interested in shaping it?

Local circumstances may be responsible for the move to Berlin. Dresden had always been known as a conservative centre of the arts<sup>126</sup> and its arts market is still dominated by the old Dresden artists and their schools. There is little room for art that is yet to be established. Art dealers are still in the process of developing a reliable circle of customers, who in any case show less interest in the work of younger artists. However, the situation in Saxony as a whole varies. Leipzig has a reputation for being a more dynamic city,<sup>127</sup> attracting artists from elsewhere, and fewer graduates from the Leipzig Art Academy are leaving for Berlin. While these local differences are important for the younger artists' choice of workplace, they only touch on the process of transformation insofar as they impact on the speed of developments. One might assume that Dresden would be more reluctant than Leipzig to meet any demands for change put forward by the younger generation of artists.

Compared to the other two groups the younger artists seemed almost unaware of the artistic value system of the GDR but did express an interest and curiosity about it. References to this topic in the interviews demonstrated knowledge but not experience. They regarded the value system as historical background that might prove to be useful for their art, as noted by one artist who participated at a clearout of ideological literature at the Dresden Art Academy:

“...political issues suddenly became interesting as there was a kind of *Bildersturm* (picture storm)<sup>128</sup> where all books by Lenin and others were thrown away and I took them in my hands for the first time....I

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<sup>126</sup> The conservative image of Dresden goes back to the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century as Kings August II and III began to collect art and artefacts from all over the world for their museums. Since then the preservation of “old things” has always been a priority for the museum authorities. Dresden is known as a city of art but this refers mainly to the museum art collections and less to the contemporary art scene.

<sup>127</sup> Leipzig is known as a city of the bourgeoisie. It prospered as the bourgeoisie expanded with the development of trade and new technologies in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since then Leipzig has been associated with trade which brought movement and dynamism into the city.

<sup>128</sup> The term *Bildersturm* originally refers to the iconoclastic controversy first mentioned in Canon 36 of the Synod of Elvira (c. 305). Iconoclasm (image breaking) is defined as the opposition to the religious use of images. Veneration of pictures and statues symbolising sacred figures, Christian doctrine, and biblical events was an early feature of Christian worship. The humanity of Christ was increasingly

worked with them later in my art. I wanted to answer some of these questions: what remains of this in the heads [of the people]? What was it really like? Therefore I collected children's poems by Lenin (Reime) in Russia and used them in my art"(VA5).

The artist approached this issue at a distance, from the point of view of an outsider, and the quote demonstrates that he did not regard himself to have been involved or connected with the GDR past. Only the group of younger artists made this kind of observation, which contrasts with the older artists' observations and feelings about their past.

In the interviews the younger artists expressed optimism when asked about their future prospects. Yet, they also indicated that they regarded success in their profession as dependent on image, contacts and the quality of their art. One of the younger artists mentioned that he had been invited to participate in a high profile competition and, reflecting on possible success, he argued:

"...it would be a supra-regional signal, a possibility to show a work of art which will be recognised internationally, but whether it will be evaluated positively or negatively, I would make concessions on price. I could earn money through future projects that this one will encourage because I would gain enough prestige for future contracts..."(VA9).

The research has shown that image and contacts are essential for a successful artistic career and the younger artists' opinions underline this conclusion. Some regularly study conditions in the arts market and many are enthusiastic about building up contacts while still at the academy in order to secure their future prospects. While the middle group of artists either lost contact or distanced themselves from their academy contacts the younger group was keen to develop them as much as possible. The younger artists

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emphasised, and images and crucifixes became commonplace. Opponents of their use claimed they led to idolatry. Iconoclasm was also a feature of the Protestant Reformation. The Puritans were especially hostile to the use of religious images and some Protestants still consider their use idolatrous. Many pictures in churches were destroyed during the Reformation and the destruction reached its peak in 1566 in the Netherlands. The use of the term "Bildersturm" in the quote might be related to its original meaning in order to emphasise the importance of the event in the Art Academy.

demonstrated a willingness to plan ahead and develop their own careers while the other two groups of artists seemed to be largely driven by circumstance.

I would argue that this is again related to the difference in experience. The younger artists experienced change as a positive force. For instance, many knew that after unification student numbers in the academies would increase dramatically. Some students acknowledged that this had ensured their own entry, which might not have been possible under the GDR regime. While the older artists struggled with the transformation process and the collapse of their living and working conditions, the younger artists had nothing to lose as long as they were associated with the academy. Their positive attitude towards change is in contrast to the inward-looking, pessimistic perspective of the older artists. These two opposing positions may not be revised until the younger artists reach the current age of their older counterparts.

When comparing the group of younger artists with those of a similar age in other professions, prospects look less promising. Youth unemployment is high in eastern Germany and employment prospects are particularly bleak in rural areas. It is possible that the younger artists who have not yet entered the employment market might face disappointment when they do; the arts market is underdeveloped and public funding may decrease.



## 5.5 Conclusion

At the end of 2000, ten years after unification, politicians and some researchers regard the process of transformation as complete (Schröder 2000: 10). A great deal of change in legal, economic and social issues has taken place within that time. It might be argued that in the past ten years, as predicted from the beginning, Germany has become unified, that the eastern Germans have adapted to their new circumstances and that the differences between East and West Germans have disappeared.

However, in practice differences between eastern and western Germany are still apparent and continue to exist because of the legacy of the two different societal systems, as Schröder (2000: 254) argues: "Socialisation and moulding in different systems of society [GDR and FRG] continue to have an effect, to an unexpected degree. Mentalities and social self understanding, perceptions of the world and of people and the resulting attitudes about democracy and the societal system are far apart and are, at least in part, not compatible".

Schröder further argues that people's upbringing in the GDR continues to shape their opinions, mentalities and perceptions of the world ten years on from unification. The findings of this research support Schröder's argument. It has demonstrated that, in the case of the group of older artists and of some visual artists in the middle group, their GDR background continues to shape their behaviour. The artists' judgment of their living and working conditions relies heavily on past experience. Furthermore, I would argue that the GDR mentality moulded and formed the artists' current behaviour.

Taking all the difficulties into account, visual artists managed the changes to a greater or lesser degree, depending on their point of origin. The more of their artistic socialisation<sup>129</sup> that was spent under the old system, the more difficulty they encountered in the new artistic environment. Older artists compounded their feelings of disadvantage and failure by regarding their new working and living conditions as a further fall in status and recognition. In the second stage of the process of transformation they faced the prospect of continuing low income, which has forced this group of artists to retire on social benefits since their pensions do not cover living costs. The older artists realised that age can be a dominant factor in an artists' career and that to start again after the age of 40 is almost impossible.

The middle group of artists was referred to as the "GDR's children", since it was the first generation to experience GDR socialisation from birth to higher education. The artists of this generation regarded unification as an opportunity, although in the second stage of transformation they struggled to make the transition from the old to the new system. The young artists were the most optimistic, demonstrating energy and a conviction that they would succeed in becoming freelance artists. Compared to the other two groups the younger generation had a positive attitude to change and showed marked differences in attitude towards the conflicts of transformation. Of the three groups, they had spent the least time in the old system, gaining most of their artistic education under the new. They had adapted to the new way of life to the greatest extent.

To conclude, in the second stage of the process of transformation the chaos of the first stage disappeared and the art world settled into a new routine. Artists managed to

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<sup>129</sup> When referring to socialisation, only the artistic side is considered and childhood and upbringing, the

secure basic working and living conditions, partly with government help and partly through sales of their work, or other art-related work. The extent of their satisfaction with their working and living conditions varied according to the formative years spent in the GDR. The older artists had found it more difficult than the younger artists to adapt to the new conditions.

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time before entry to formal arts education, are not considered.

## **6 Practice and theory - the behaviour of Saxon visual artists and theories of change**

### **6.1 Introduction**

While previous chapters investigated how visual artists reacted to change in Saxony, this chapter will focus on the questions of how change occurred and why artists reacted as they did.

The aim of the research was to develop a theory grounded in the data through continuous analysis and in relation to academic literature applicable to the research questions. The previous two chapters analysed the findings of the research and results suggested a number of theoretical approaches, which point to three different paradigms.

1. The policy paradigm focuses on the relationship between visual artists' participation in the process of transformation and its implication for visual artists' living and working conditions after unification. It considers the special "elitist" role of visual artists before unification and their fall from grace after unification.
2. The psychological paradigm focuses on the characteristics of the individual artists' behaviour and deals with how this behaviour changed. It points towards key issues such as loss of self-esteem and the analysis of the reports of feelings of neglect, frustration, depression and confusion, as well as loss of status.
3. The sociological paradigm focuses on the visual artists as a group, and examines, for example, the structure of communication and the distribution of power among the visual artists' community before and after unification.

Each approach has a different strategy for analysing visual artists' behaviour in relation to their living and working conditions after German unification and each approach would be valuable on its own.

However, in this chapter the research findings will be discussed in relation to all three paradigms combined because they are inter-related. Furthermore, since this study aims

to analyse the complexity of change, I would argue that this might best be achieved using a multi-disciplinary approach. Therefore two different theoretical frameworks, the collective cultural shock model and the human change role model, have been chosen to illustrate the theories. Both theories use multi-disciplinary approaches and draw from fields such as policy studies, social psychology, sociology and organisational theory. Both frameworks will help to generalise the research and offer additional insights into its conclusions. Above all, they provide the link to a new theoretical approach, the Visual Artists Adaptation Model, which has been developed in this thesis and which aims to bring together the conclusions of chapters 4 and 5 and the two theoretical frameworks. As a result, a more abstract level is reached and the research is discussed within a broader perspective.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The introduction gives a brief overview of change as a phenomenon in society and explains change as a rationale for unification. In the second section, the theory of collective cultural shock as developed at the macro level will be applied to the research results, which mainly represent the micro level of society before and after unification. The third section focuses on change at the micro level, applying the research results to the human change role model commonly used in organisational development. The fourth section synthesises the findings from chapters four and five with sections two and three of this chapter into a new theoretical approach, the Visual Artists Adaptation Model, which may be used more widely to analyse artists' behaviour in eastern Germany.

### **6.1.1 *Change as a phenomenon in society***

It is easy enough to find an immediate definition for the term “change”, a substitution or succession of one thing for another, but because of its multiple usage it is not easy to define.

For centuries change as a noun has appeared in writing mainly as an explanation for the fact or act of changing. It has also been used to describe the transition to a qualitatively new determined otherness that could be different in extent, direction, internal regularity, duration and speed (Brockhaus 1996: 85). It has been defined as substitution of other conditions and circumstances in a variety of occasions and places and can be used as an expression of passing from life to death as well as for the act of giving and receiving reciprocally as exchange. The use of the term was broadened to include the description of a round in dancing in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and is also used for the act of substitution of one bowler or type of bowling for another in the course of a cricket match (Simpson, 2001).

Change in its many varieties of usage has been a well-researched phenomenon in some disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, policy, anthropology and psychology, which this thesis touches on. In academia the definition and the angle from which change is tackled has always been subject-related. Whilst in sociology social change, change of values and mobility are key issues, in psychology change connected to the individual is investigated.

One of the most striking explanations of change as it concerns this thesis can be found in literature related to philosophy because it is part of the definition of philosophy itself.

Change can be defined as “the profound disturbance of our everyday world view” (*“tiefgreifende Verunsicherungen unserer alltäglichen Weltorientierung”*), which is regarded as one way of reacting to problems of philosophy in general (Martens and Schnädelbach 1991: 23).

While in philosophy change is related to questions on our entire being, many theories of social change, one of the more sociologically oriented fields, start from a similar concept but focus on the process itself and deal with any change in social relations. In social change characteristics of human societies are investigated: customs and norms change, new inventions are applied, environmental changes force us to adapt, conflicts result in redistribution of power. The success or failure of different political systems, globalisation, democratisation, development and economic growth, are all rooted in these basic ideas of social change.

As in philosophy, these ideas were developed into theories of social change by various cultures and in different historical periods, and were adapted to fit current approaches.

In an extended body of literature three ideas are identified as being the most fundamental to change and are related to the topic under investigation here:

- “(1) the idea of decline or degeneration, or, in religious terms, the fall from an original state of grace, secondly,
- (2) the idea of cyclical change, a pattern of subsequent and recurring phases of growth and decline; and
- (3) the idea of continuous progress.” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2001)

The most influential concept of long-term change in western societies became the idea of progress, which, as in philosophy, had been developed mainly by the evolutionists, by Marx and by anthropologists such as Linton, White and Steward who proclaimed neo-evolutionist theories, widely known as acculturation theories (ibid).

In this study I neither follow one path of development nor define change using a discipline-oriented approach but I will apply components of the subject-related definitions and findings to my research results. Change is defined here as an interdisciplinary phenomenon with literary roots based in philosophy, sociology, anthropology, political science and psychology. In this study it is defined as a profound disturbance of our everyday view of the world and it is related to development, because the process of change always aims to develop things, attitudes and human beings.

### *6.1.2 Change as a rationale for unification*

In the transformation process in East Germany change disturbed everyday life and the research results confirm that this was certainly the effect it had on visual artists. Change was used as a rationale throughout the process of unification in two ways. First, change was the main reason for, and a phenomenon of, unification. For example, in the peaceful demonstrations of 1989, East Germans demanded an end to the pressure of GDR ideology. The GDR was heading for an economic disaster that made necessary the substitution of the old centralised system with a market economy system. Second, change was the link between old and new developments. Change became the most important element of unification because it operated in these two ways, both as a reason for unification and a link with it.

The idea of progress related mainly to social change proved a relevant underlying principle. The West German government directing and carrying out most of the formal changes to the legal, fiscal and economic system believed that development, and therefore progress, could only be achieved through the introduction of West German democracy in the former communist state. For the artists' community in Saxony this



meant that, for them, unification primarily involved adapting to new circumstances. Progress was achieved by changing rules of behaviour and by integration and acceptance of the new system. Change may therefore also be defined as a learning process and as a process of adaptation, which in turn may be defined as modifying something so as to suit new conditions. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2001)

This kind of basic understanding of unification allowed the artists limited scope for action. Only the one option, progress, was open to them. One might argue that it was possible to refuse this option but there were in fact limited alternatives because the old circumstances had already disappeared as a result of change. Artists were well aware that there was only one option available to them and reported that they felt the German government's policy of takeover had eliminated any chance of active participation within the process of unification.

As the research results show, change was welcomed by most of the artists. Yet, the extent of change exceeded all expectations. Many visual artists experienced change on several levels during unification. First, change was introduced at the macro or societal level because many aspects and relations of society needed to be re-arranged. For example, most organisations and institutions were either abolished, re-constituted and/or newly established. Second, the changes at the micro level affected visual artists, particularly in relation to their working and living conditions. On this level their community in Saxony had to deal with issues that concerned most other artists. Third, change at the individual level addressed artists' individual psychological conditions. Every artist was confronted by change to his/her personal working life.

On all three levels, change on this scale had previously occurred mainly during revolutions. Unification might be described as revolution, given its dimension and scale. Research and investigation of change in an area such as policy studies tends to focus on specific areas or fields and less on larger-scale societal events. For example, research usually analyses policy implications in one field such as health, culture or agriculture. In those studies, change as a phenomenon is clear and well defined. This is partly due to the research criteria commonly used in the social sciences, which are defined either at the micro or the macro level (Hong Lam Vu, 2001: 3). This polarised the theoretical horizon of the social sciences into two large schools of thought: the methodological individualisms that are represented in action focused research at the micro level and the methodological collectivism that is represented by systems theory at the macro level. Both schools offer different ways of looking at the situation, in this case looking at change as a result of German unification. Micro level research concentrates on change from a local perspective. It regards change as a complex phenomenon consisting of several parts. The macro perspective looks at change from a global or societal point of view. The investigation of visual artists' reaction to change would be classified as a micro level approach. Yet, since change is a phenomenon of German unification that could be investigated from both a macro and micro perspective, it is worth considering both in terms of theoretical background.

## **6.2 Changes on the macro level - the theory of collective cultural shock**

### ***6.2.1 Visual artists and cultural shock theory***

Research has demonstrated that to a great extent visual artists experienced change as shock, an experience that not only fundamentally affected their living and working conditions, but also changed the culture and way of life of society, leaving them struggling to regain professional confidence throughout the 1990s. The middle and older groups of visual artists in particular faced serious difficulties in the process of adaptation, feeling neglected, frustrated and in some cases depressed. As a result, their career development in the new society was delayed and the likelihood of rejuvenation in the near future is now regarded as unlikely.

Shock may be said to create a disturbing impression on the mind or emotions, usually produced by some unwelcome occurrence or perception, by pain, grief, or violent emotion and tending to occasion lasting depression (Simpson, 2001). In the case of the visual artists, change was not unexpected but, given its extent and results, it became an unwelcome occurrence. Furthermore, the usual definition of shock implies that the experience is short-lived. In the case of German unification it was present over a long period, continuing for several years.

Cultural shock is a familiar and much evidenced phenomenon (Feistinger and Fink 1998) and has been investigated by anthropologists (Bock 1970), economists (Nash 1967) and psychologists (Hofstede, 1980, 1997) as well as by a number of researchers interested in comparative research in the field of international relations.

The original definition of cultural shock was applied to individuals changing from one culture to another. It usually describes a state of distress or disorientation brought about by sudden subjection to an unfamiliar culture and covers the process of initial adjustment to an unfamiliar environment. The unfamiliar new culture evokes an "emotional, psychological, behavioural, cognitive and physiological impact on individuals" (Peterson 1995).

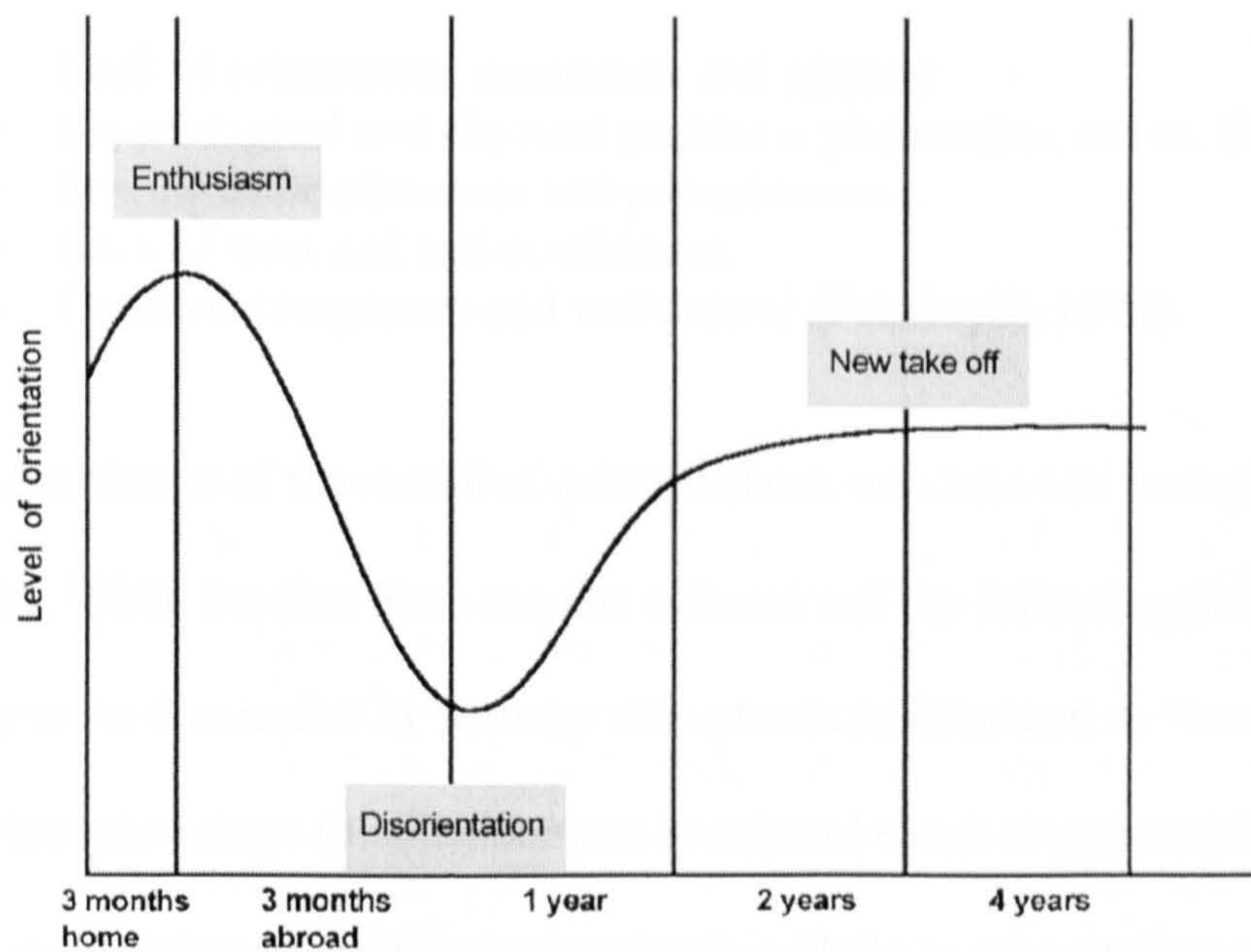
Cultural shock has been observed in people who spend a long time (more than three months) in another country and have to interact and communicate effectively with representatives of the foreign culture (Feistinger and Fink, 1998).

Weiland and Nowak (1999), for example, claim that the impact of the new culture on overseas students, as a result of the culture-crossing sojourn, is evidenced as a "culture shock phenomena". In this instance, the socialised individual from the home culture faces problems of adjustment to the requirements of a host culture. The implicit assumption in this claim is that the students have to become acculturated before they can fully adjust to becoming effective students.

Lysgaard (1955) and others observed different phases of cultural shock, in which an individual experiences different feelings and psychological states and where different intercultural requirements for coping with the foreign culture have to be made. The different stages are represented by Oberg's (1960: 79) "U" Curve, culture shock model (see graph 1). Oberg argued that prior learning or socialisation inhibits or disrupts the ability to cope in the new situation because of the mismatch between cues and

behavioural responses: it has been argued that this evokes the stress reaction shown in the model.

Graph 1: U Curve – cultural shock model



Source: Feistinger and Fink 1998: 304 and Hofstede 1991: 210 (Acculturation curve)

At the beginning of the stay abroad acculturation problems are likely to be overcompensated for by feelings of euphoria (enthusiasm) but relatively early in the course of the stay abroad problems become evident. This brings the curve indicating the level of orientation down to its lowest point (bottom of the U, disorientation). After a while, depending on the ability of the individual to cope, the curve rises again and a new take off becomes possible. At this point the individual has overcome the cultural shock.

During the different phases of cultural shock the individual has to deal with a profound disturbance of his/her view of the world (i.e. change) and has to develop his/her own way of coping with this highly stressful situation. Most people demonstrate a variety of symptoms during the process, as mentioned by different authors in the literature (Barna

1983, Bock 1970, Brislin and Yoshida 1994, Furnham and Bochner 1986, Hays 1972, Hofstede 1997, Lundstedt 1963, Nash, 1967, Oberg 1960, Torbiorn 1982), which are summarised here:

1. Lack of orientation, uneasiness and anxiety.
2. Psychological and physical problems (depression, stress, illnesses).
3. Feeling of helplessness and powerlessness.
4. Lack of trust and self-confidence.
5. Defensive responses and withdrawal (Feistinger, 1998).

The time frame of the model of cultural shock was between four and five years (see graph). While the first three months at home and the following three months abroad are likely to be dominated by feelings of euphoria (enthusiasm or “honeymoon stage”), the disorientation stage (disillusionment or cultural shock stage) could last as long as one year and reorientation (adjustment stage) is likely to take another two years before the take-off can be reached (mastery stage).

The “U” curve approach has been supported by other research, mostly empirical studies on cultural shock. In the rare cases in which a theoretical perspective has been applied to cross-cultural research, the “U curve Theory” of adjustment (UCT) has been one of the most consistently used (Black and Mendenhall 1991: 226), arguing that a continuing stay in a foreign country does not result in a constant decrease in acculturation problems or a constant increase in positive attitudes towards the foreign country (Thomas 1993: 386).

Visual artists experienced a similar situation of cultural shock, described in detail in chapters four and five. Certainly the visual artists reported a range of feelings such as the euphoric mood at the first stages of unification and feelings of helplessness and

powerlessness some time into the transformation process. This was accompanied by lack of trust and problems with self-confidence during the disorientation phase.

However, visual artists had to deal with different conditions from those commonly found in cultural shock:

1. The changes took place within the home environment and geographical boundaries did not have to be crossed.
2. The option of being able to return to familiar circumstances was not available to them as it would be for individuals going abroad and returning home.
3. Visual artists did not find themselves in an established culture; they experienced the decline of the old culture and the rise of a “new” culture.
4. They were not the only group who reported a shock-like experience. The unification shock was a phenomenon that was experienced by the whole population of East Germany. In this sense cultural shock was a collective experience.
5. Visual artists were unable to choose from a variety of different cultures and countries. Their only option was the German democratic model now established in eastern Germany.

### ***6.2.2 Visual artists and the theory of collective cultural shock***

These conditions suggest that in the case of German unification the framework of cultural shock needs to be expanded from the level of the individual to that of a broader approach incorporating societal change.

Feistinger and Fink (1998) extended the theory to the societal level and applied the model to the process of transition in eastern European countries. The expansion of the individual model to society as a whole is unique. Only Torbiorn (1982) has argued that such a phenomenon exists in one particular area of society, reporting findings for ethnic minorities.

Feistinger and Fink (1998: 302) argue:

“ In the case where an abrupt change of the political system influences the cultural context, the phenomenon of cultural shock may be found on a collective or societal level. In this case cultural shock is not initiated by the geographical change of going abroad but it is caused by influences on the existing social and cultural system. Cultural change as an effect of the breakdown of the political and economic system causes frictions. Thus, we expect a “collective culture shock” to exist”.

Feistinger and Fink collected together empirical evidence from published research reports on the level of the whole society in several countries including eastern Germany. Although they did not conduct fieldwork themselves, they referred to a number of studies based mainly either in international relations or in business studies. They argue that in the eastern European countries societal change from communism/socialism (communist, socialist values) to capitalism (western European values) is ongoing and that political and economic change influences the development of society and culture. A “communist heritage” is mentioned and attributed to the emerging societies.

Feistinger and Fink further argue that, since collective cultural shock is a social phenomenon, it is expected to endure far longer than individual cultural shock and they therefore applied a time frame of more than 60 years. The different stages suggested by the individual cultural shock theory might not change but the length of time each stage takes would increase. They concluded that the reason why change in social systems takes longer than the adaptation of an individual to a foreign culture is rooted in references to old behavioural patterns and values within existing work groups - the communist heritage.

One of the major findings in this research was the fact that reference was made to old behavioural norms and values which retained a strong influence on artists' lives after



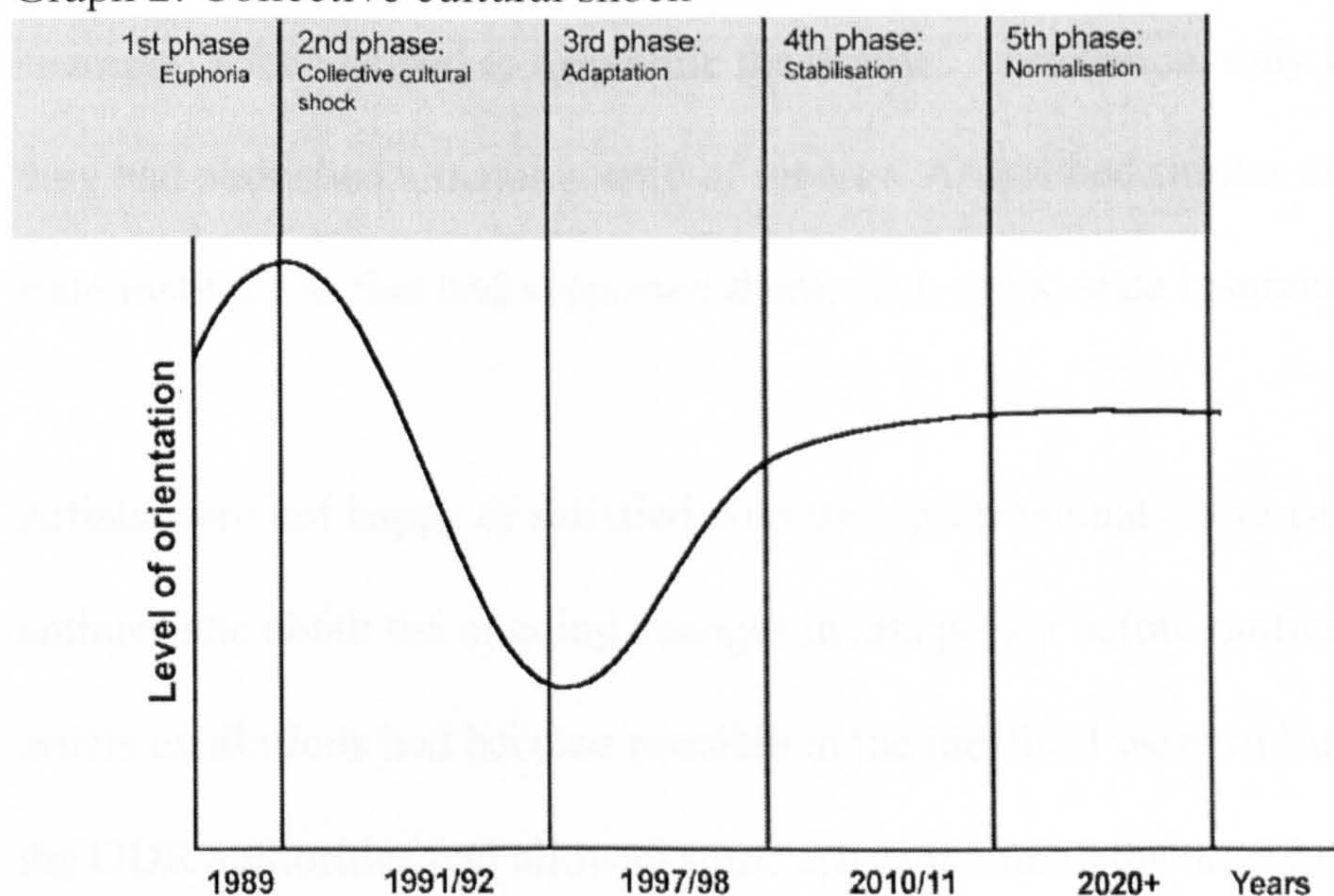
unification. Feistinger and Fink's reference to the communist heritage suggests similar reasons for behaviour. Their findings therefore support, at a macro level, the results of this micro level study of visual artists. This relates to one of the major findings of the research and a more detailed analysis of the conclusions in relation to the theory will be provided in the following section. The generalisations made in the case study will be tested in more detail against the theoretical implications using the theory of collective cultural shock as a frame of reference.

### 6.2.2.1 Visual artists and the phases of collective cultural shock

By adapting the model of individual cultural shock Feistinger and Fink identified five phases of development for their broader approach (see graph 2):

- 1<sup>st</sup> phase: euphoria
- 2<sup>nd</sup> phase: collective cultural shock
- 3<sup>rd</sup> phase mastering the collective cultural shock and adaptation; approaching the EU; Eastern enlargement and enforced economic cooperation
- 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> phases; stabilisation, membership of the EU; normalisation and catching up with European standards

Graph 2: Collective cultural shock



Source: Feistinger and Fink, 1998: 305

### **6.2.2.2 Phases one and two**

#### **1<sup>st</sup> phase: enthusiasm, euphoria, idealisation, illusion and unrealistic expectations**

The situation of visual artists in the 1980s was dominated by the desire for change, which many found exciting, although this was not voiced publicly at the time. Artists wanted their work to be viewed outside the communist block, and demanded also a reduction or removal of the ideological pressures imposed by the GDR authorities. These were the main reasons that motivated artists to speak out.

Artists argued from a “safe position”, since the GDR government would secure their living and working conditions as long they fulfilled its ideological requirements. They enjoyed a high social position within their own circle, based on mutual respect between themselves - especially those who were members of the Artists’ Association - and the state authorities.

Artists had argued for changes to the Artists’ Association but could not have imagined that it would result in the abolition and disappearance of the state as a whole. For example, artists helped to dismantle the Artists’ Association, only to realise later that they had abolished a major source of income. Artists had similar experiences with other state institutions that had supported them, such as the state insurance system.

Artists were not happy or satisfied with their professional circumstances but they were enthusiastic about the ongoing changes in arts policy before unification. For some artists exhibitions had become possible in the idealised western European countries and the GDR authorities had allowed some artists to attend the art fairs in Basel and Cologne. Artists saw this liberalisation of arts policy as a positive sign of change.

The general lack of information and the images presented by western television and radio, accessible in some parts of the GDR, produced high expectations. Forbidden or inaccessible consumer goods held a special fascination. The general view of western Europe as the “promised land” in terms of the availability of goods was also prevalent among artists.

During the “*Wende*” the artists’ enthusiasm reached its peak. Some spoke of overwhelmingly positive feelings, a stage Feisting and Fink describe as euphoria. For the artists, dreams had come true. Long-desired opportunities for travel became a reality. The western European arts market, previously only accessible to carefully selected artists, now became accessible to all. Negotiations with art dealers were possible without the interference of the former GDR art trade organisation. Only those artists with well-established connections were able to maintain an income through international sales. However, other resources were available to those without connections. The local and regional arts market was booming prior to monetary reform as art was regarded as a shrewd investment. Artists felt recognised and well received in the changing environment.

The enthusiasm for change, the glorified media image of the West before unification and the positive start-up conditions at the beginning of the unification process promised a glittering future for artists in the new society. Expectations, therefore, were high and in many cases exaggerated, thereby corresponding with the initial phase of the model of collective cultural shock.

This phase was not shaped by idealism and illusion for the visual artists alone. Feistinger and Fink suggest that all East Germans were in the euphoric stage at that point. Before unification, an image of democracy and the free market economy had been created that seemingly promised the ultimate satisfaction of all needs. As a consequence, unrealistic expectations for the new society developed. In the early days of unification promises were made and expectations built up. An example can be found in the CDU's election campaign promise of 1989, when Chancellor Kohl (1989) assured the East German population in a much quoted public speech that nobody would be worse off ("*niemandem wird es schlechter gehen*") because of unification. Before unification, the period of "*waiting for the supermarkets*" (Melich 1997: 32) encouraged the build-up of illusions. After unification, West German food retail chains moved into the eastern *Länder* and quickly provided the longed-for products of western consumer society. Often the variety, colour and the reintroduction of advertising caused overwhelmingly positive feelings for the glamorous side of the new society. Feistinger and Fink conclude that expectations were most exaggerated in the early years after the fall of communism and find that this corresponds to the initial euphoric phase of individual cultural shock.

## **2nd phase: collective cultural shock = disorientation**

The euphoric mood of the artists in the initial phase changed dramatically after monetary reform when many experienced a sudden crisis. Visual artists began to show symptoms of mistrust and suspicion. They felt forgotten and neglected by the state, hesitated to take action and demonstrated defensive behaviour.

These symptoms mainly occurred within the older generation. The amount of time spent in the communist system was inversely related to the ability to cope. The symptoms of the group of artists who had established their career in the GDR were more severe than those of their younger counterparts. Therefore, it is argued, the extent of shock and its consequences in terms of behaviour are age dependent.

The majority of artists reached the lowest point of orientation of the collective cultural shock in 1992/93 but in some individual cases this level was reached after 1994 when the longer-term changes became obvious.

Feistinger and Fink describe a similar situation for the whole population of Eastern Europe. They argue that in the second phase the increased expectations and unjustified idealisation of the new system created a crisis once it became evident that freedom did not necessarily lead to satisfaction and happiness. In this situation it was observed that orientation is reduced and clarity with regard to the frame of reference is limited. Here, similar symptoms to those predicted by the theory of individual cultural shock were identified.

In addition to the lack of orientation, mental and psychosomatic problems, a lack of trust in public institutions and damaged self-esteem were further symptoms of the period of crisis. Feistinger and Fink argue that further effects of this lack of orientation are passive and sometimes even apathetic behaviour and a hesitancy to take action.

Among others they quote a case study of a Russian enterprise in which passivity and the lack of initiative were investigated and it was concluded that the transitional process was regarded as a threat (Börner and Gebert 1997: 323). Lazarus (1991), in his model

of coping with potential threat, asserts that if individuals perceive a lack of control over a given situation and consider their own ability to act to be weak, then they take no action and tend to react with resignation, adaptation and a negation of reality. The consequence of this could be a repression of the reality of existing problems.<sup>130</sup> This seems to reinforce symptoms such as defensive mechanisms, withdrawal and resurgence of old values, which are listed as further symptoms of collective cultural shock. Feistinger and Fink (1998: 306) argue:

“In the early phases of transformation the cultural standard of “rigid dialectics” seemed to continue in the post-communist countries. This cultural standard is causing attitudes and behaviour that polarises between good or bad, right or wrong and similar oppositions. There is no recognition and acceptance of diverse perspectives (Rieger, 1991, Schroll-Machl, 1998). Already in communism this polarisation has been fostered by the respective propaganda and nowadays supports the surge of a “them-and-us” dichotomy. A tendency towards intolerance, a “new” alienation and xenophobia.”

In the case of eastern Germany many western observers fail to comprehend why ex-GDR political forces in the shape of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) have been regaining political ground in the 1990s and why nostalgic sentiments about the past could influence future behaviour. Melich (1997: 34) argues that in an environment of increasing confusion, frustration and mistrust, and with the existence of inefficient new institutions, the old “them-and-us” dichotomy, fostered by communist ideology, has become available as a last resort, even if it has shifted its alignment.

### **6.2.2.3 Cultural shock symptoms**

As described above visual artists have demonstrated what Feistinger and Fink call symptoms of collective cultural shock. In the following section, the argument is developed further by relating collective cultural shock symptoms to the research findings in more detail.

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<sup>130</sup> Feistinger and Fink quote Lazarus’ model of coping with potential threat, which has been used in a

## **1. Lack of orientation**

In 1990 artists were confronted by the collapse of the former network of contract work, organised mainly by the Artists' Association, and the realisation that this would not be replaced by subsidies or increased sales in the local, regional or international arts markets. Many had to alter their lifestyles; for example, full time artists became part time professionals. Artists expressed disappointment with the unsuccessful management of the new Artists' Association and galleries.

Many artists reported feelings of being neglected and abandoned because of the dramatic changes to their living and working conditions. For example, living and working costs, including working space, became unaffordable.

At the same time as the artists' community was reporting a lack of information, due to the failure of former communication systems, a wave of new information washed over them, circulated by businesses and public organisations. As a result artists felt even more confused and disorientated.

The outcome of the changes, together with unfulfilled expectations created a crisis that "reduced orientation and clarity about the frame of reference" (Feistinger and Fink) with its lowest point in 1992/93.

## **2. Lack of trust and self-confidence**

At this point the "U" curve model suggests that artists would have reached the lowest level of orientation with the resulting impaired self-confidence and reduced trust in

institutions of public life. The decline in status from full-time well-established artist to dual career artist and the loss of reputation and image due to the state artists' debate caused mistrust and suspicion of the state, especially by the older artists.

The state artists' debate associated the failure of the communist system with individual artists' careers. Artists were forced to realise that even if they had felt themselves in opposition to official GDR policies, western Europeans judged them to have been associated with the regime because of contract work completed for the state. Ideology had rebounded on them. Artists also felt forgotten and neglected, as the example of the pension scheme demonstrated. The hesitancy they displayed in making use of the funding now available might be seen simply as anxiety. I would argue that artists felt anxious about their ability to meet funding criteria and express a visual project adequately on paper, reflecting their lack of self-confidence.

Artists also faced the pressure of competition from their western European colleagues who, in some cases, demonstrated how well-off an artist could be at a certain age. The older generation of GDR artists was forced to recognise that they would never reach this level and in some cases this lowered self-confidence.

Artists tended to generalise about conditions in the new system and about policy decisions made by the newly elected government and by doing so expressed confusion and frustration. Their opinion of the new political and social system was low and the new government was blamed for missed opportunities. Yet anger was not vocal but remained contained. These findings correspond with Feistinger and Fink 1998: 304), who argue that studies show that apathy and mistrust towards policy increased: "the



population of the post-communist states express a surprisingly high degree of frustration, futility and alienation, especially from the political system.” (Mason 1991: 210).

### **3. Passivity, hesitance to take action and apathy**

Many artists decided to wait and see, hoping that the situation would develop in their favour. They had been used to waiting in the GDR, where problems were sometimes solved over time; taking action could have turned out to be dangerous if the state authorities disapproved. After unification this inactivity even led some artists to neglect to register for health insurance. Others hesitated before applying for social benefits or approaching galleries. Some artists admitted that they were too proud to apply for benefits or that they thought they would demean themselves if they had to actively offer their work to gallery owners. In terms of activity, one could argue that these artists were both passive and hesitant. One cause of this behaviour might again be lack of self-confidence, concealed beneath excessive pride or arrogance.

### **4. Defence mechanisms, withdrawal and resurgence of old values**

The speed of change left little space and time for reflection. The reaction of artists was to withdraw because, as one arts administrator mentioned in an interview, they were unable to cope. Even though the artists had settled into a routine after 1994 - in the second stage of unification - they had not yet recovered from the shock. New difficulties arose and thus the symptoms snowballed. The artists' withdrawal from official engagements reduced their opportunities for gathering information at first hand, which led to passivity and in some cases to apathy.

The artists felt themselves under attack during the state artists debate and as a result put up individual defence mechanisms to protect their careers. Some rejected any accusation of links with the GDR state beyond what had been accepted as the norm. Others argued that administrative errors had been made and amended their career profiles, denying that they had produced any contract work in the GDR.

The necessity for this defensive behaviour pushed artists into a corner from which they found it difficult to escape. Instead, they withdrew, or attempted to find reassurance in the old value system. Some continued to regard the idea of socialism as a worthwhile concept. The older artists, when comparing the old and new systems, used the “them-and-us” dichotomy to a great extent in the interviews. Many expressed themselves in the ideological terminology introduced by the communist regime. In addition, their belief that external forces had been forced upon them implied an expectation that the new system itself would ultimately fail.

As argued in previous chapters, the cultural value system of the GDR remained despite the introduction of West German democracy. These findings primarily apply to the group of older visual artists but the research also found that the middle group of artists showed some similar symptoms, especially in the early days of unification. The concept of collective cultural shock does not apply to the group of young artists because they did not draw on either artistic education or career experience in the GDR.

The symptoms of collective cultural shock can overlap and are dependent on the state of transformation in individual countries. Feistinger and Fink (1998: 306) assert that the cultural gap, the distance between the old and new system, is relevant within the

process as well as the state of acculturation. They argue that the prospect of integration into the European Union strengthens countries that have progressed far. EU membership will stabilise and increase orientation on a collective level and create trust and confidence.

Feistinger and Fink (1998: 306) have therefore added three further phases to describe the process of integration in those eastern European countries, which are associated to the EU: 3<sup>rd</sup> phase: mastering the collective cultural shock and adaptation; approaching the European Union (EU); eastern enlargement and enforced economic cooperation; 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> phases: stabilisation, membership of the EU; normalisation and catching up with European standards.

The European Commission envisages that some countries, for example Poland, Hungary, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Slovenia, will meet conditions of entry to the EU earlier than countries such as Bulgaria and Romania. The first wave of new members will develop a pre-accession strategy to EU entry that will ensure a new take-off within the EU.

As a result of unification, Eastern Germany gained entry to the EU as the first former eastern bloc state. One could argue that, because of this, eastern Germany should be well advanced in the process of transformation and may have reached phase three or four of the model.

Feistinger and Fink's model does not take account of the special situation of East Germany but it does provide a generally applicable outlook on future developments.

Leaving aside the focus on EU membership, the characteristics of the third phase (mastering the collective cultural shock plus adaptation) and the fourth and fifth phases (stabilisation and normalisation) were assumed by them to take place in future years, and so far no evidence is available to suggest that the last three stages of the model have been reached in eastern Germany.

#### **6.2.2.4 Phase three – mastering the collective cultural shock and adaptation**

The third phase covers 1991/92 to 1997/98. Within these seven years artists would have been expected to prepare for the new take-off. In this phase the level of orientation was predicted to increase, albeit more slowly than it had decreased between 1989 and 1991/92. Artists were expected to develop mechanisms to support their adaptation to change. The research findings demonstrate that artists attempted to increase their level of orientation despite the evident symptoms of shock.

Artists experienced both increases and decreases in their level of orientation during this phase. The symptoms of phase two still dominated their behaviour and again the relationship with age needs to be considered. As mentioned in the previous chapter, older artists tended to have a negative perception of the situation and had greater difficulty in motivating themselves to work on rejuvenating their careers. The middle group showed a much greater willingness to begin again, although their instincts were contradictory. On the one hand they wanted to leave behind the old GDR traditions in which they had been educated, on the other they had to accept that their lives had been shaped by these same traditions.

After 1994 artists' living and working conditions became less chaotic and it became possible to accept the reality of the situation for the first time since unification. This increased the level of orientation considerably. Artists began to adapt to the change from full-time to dual or multi-career artists.

Artists started to build up new systems of information and communication. They relied less on colleagues, now considered to be competitors, and instead some began to explore the information networks of the co-operative industries and of private business.

Yet, these positive examples changed little of the overall mood, especially among the older artists. Feistinger and Fink (1998: 303) argue that the level of motivation rises when the level of orientation increases. At the time of the interviews, levels of motivation among the older artists were still low. They had adapted to the new situation insofar as they had accepted its presence but had little confidence that they would be able to influence their own lives to any great extent. They complained, expressing feelings of disappointment and negativity. Many regarded themselves as forgotten and neglected.

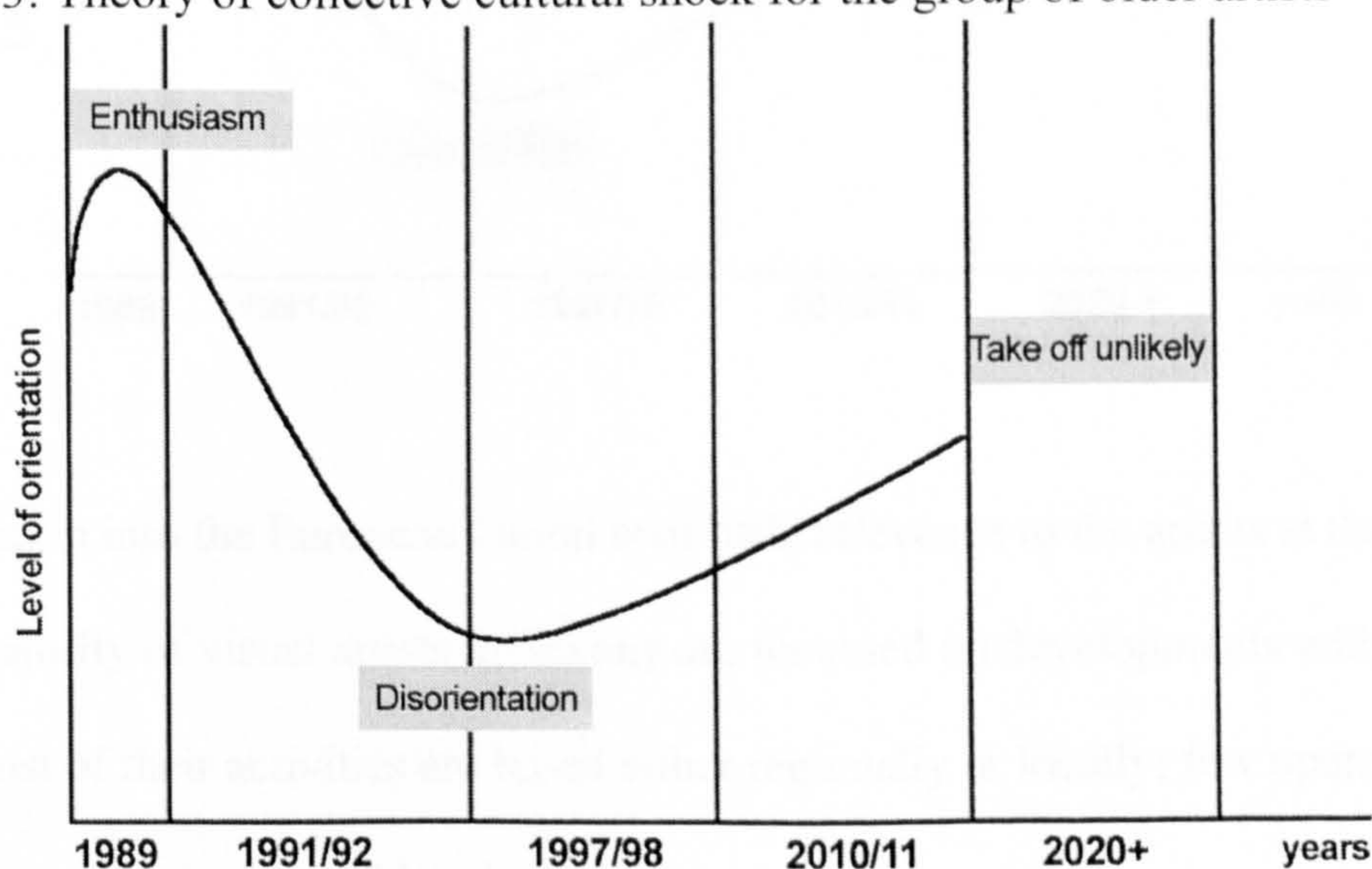
Some had not given up hope completely and had pointed to other artists who had won fame late in their careers, but this was a distant dream. The older artists believed that they had been far better off under the communist regime, when they had been able to make a comfortable living, for example from contract work. They also realised that their reputation and influence had declined as the importance of the arts in society, and the power of artists themselves, had changed after unification.

### 6.2.2.5 Phases four and five: stabilisation and normalisation

As the level of orientation increases the possibility of stabilisation and normalisation also increases. It has been estimated that the new take-off, which I define as the point at which cultural shock is overcome and people regard themselves as well placed within society, is due to take place at the end of phase four/beginning of phase five - in 2010/11 according to Feistinger and Fink's time frame. It is difficult to make accurate predictions of the validity of these projected time frames because the process is still continuing.

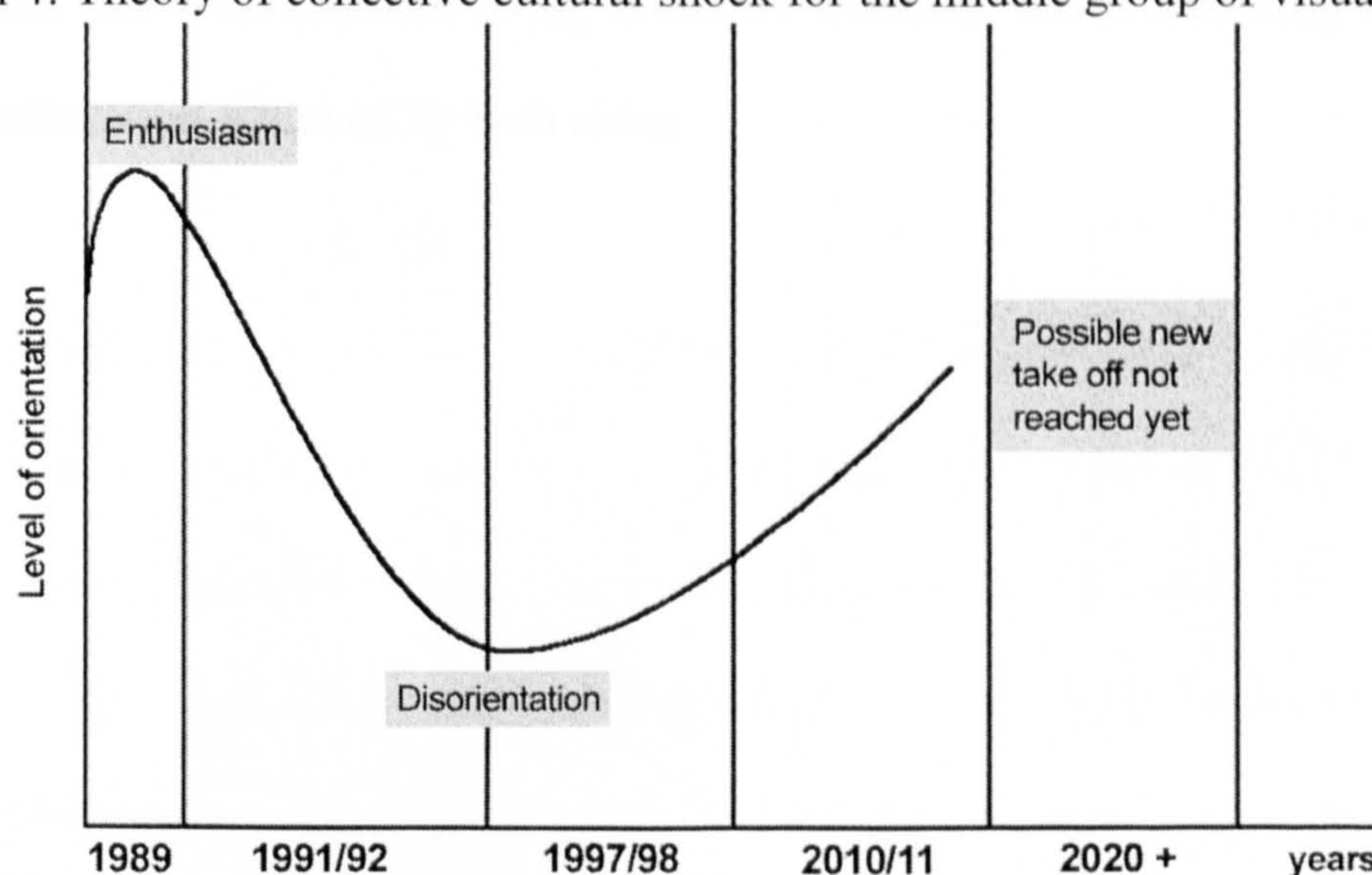
In the case of the artists, data is available until the end of the third phase, the last interviews having taken place in 1999. With regard to the research conclusions, the older artists may never reach the fourth and fifth phases and it is thought likely that they will remain in phase three. By the time phases four and five are likely to be reached this group of artists will be in retirement and a new take-off is therefore out of the question.

Graph 3: Theory of collective cultural shock for the group of older artists



However, according to the research, it is likely that most of the middle group of artists will reach the new take-off within the next few years. I would argue that they will continue to struggle over the next ten years because their living and working conditions will depend not only on themselves but also on external factors, such as support from arts organisations in the private and public sectors. Their conditions will also depend on regional arts policy (i.e. to what extent regional government is willing and able to support artists in the future) and on increased capacity in the regional arts market, which is still in recession. In addition, the majority of the middle group of visual artists will be aged between 40 and 50 years by 2010/11 and by this time they should be established within their profession.

Graph 4: Theory of collective cultural shock for the middle group of visual artists



Integration into the European Union is of little relevance to the artists at the moment.

The majority of visual artists in Saxony are focussed on developments within the region and most of their activities are based either regionally or locally; few operate at European or international level.

Feistinger and Fink argue that the EU might take on a paternal responsibility and facilitate collective acculturation. In the case of the visual artists, western German members of the arts world in charge of cultural organisations in Saxony today have done just this. Their relationship with the artists has been shown to be diverse and difficult because of its one-way nature. However, understanding is on the increase because adaptation and acculturation is an issue for both partners, East and West Germans. The West Germans are having to adapt, not only to the habits of East German artists, who appear reserved and introverted and are unlikely to use any meeting with potential buyers as a marketing event, but also to a society less sophisticated in terms of its infrastructure, education and communication. The relationship between East Germans and West Germans living in eastern Germany varies according to the degree of acculturation achieved by both sides.



### **6.3 Changes at the micro level - the human change role model (HCRM)**

#### ***6.3.1 Visual artists and organisational development***

The previous section focused on how visual artists as a micro level group dealt with change introduced in society as a whole, at the macro level. This section focuses purely on the local perspective (micro level) and aims to provide a more in-depth examination of how change occurs and how visual artists reacted to it. One of the main findings of this thesis is that adaptation, as the expected behavioural outcome of change, is dependent to a great extent on the use of the cultural values that visual artists had developed in the GDR. Those visual artists who primarily applied these values to the transformation process in a comparison of “the old” with “the new”, faced more difficulty and adapted to a lesser extent than their colleagues.

The Human Change Role Model (HCRM) explores the same issues and lends itself to an analysis of the phenomenon of change. It builds on the foundations of change theory and originates from the field of Organisational Development. Change is likely to be successfully implemented when cultural influences<sup>131</sup> are taken into account. It asserts that a block to successful implementation of structural change programmes is the vulnerability of such initiatives to powerful cultural influences. If already-existing cultural patterns are inconsistent with new values and cultural implications of systemic change initiatives, then defensiveness, withdrawal, and distortion of important

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<sup>131</sup> The term culture as in cultural pattern, cultural influences, cultural factors and cultural values has entered organisational management theories and culture is therefore defined in its broadest sense. It implies that rituals, climate, values and behaviours bind together into a coherent whole (Schein 1992: 10). This approach would make it nearly impossible to use because of its broad coverage. Applied to organisations the term is more formally defined: “Culture is a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems.” (Schein 1992: 12)

information may result and these effects can powerfully inhibit an organisation's ability to implement successful, durable systemic change (Argyris, 1992). Moreover, another result of these effects is that organisational learning - learning that could focus attention on these effects as potential problems - is likely to be prevented. Therefore culture and cultural values were acknowledged to have a potential causal role in the success or failure of organisation change and the re-design of cultural systems. This is accepted as an integral aspect of change management.

Although artists are not formally organised into groups or organisations, they may be regarded as a group in the sense that they share aims and ideas as regards the production of works of art, and they work in similar circumstances. Organisational development theory provides a general explanation of change that can be applied to the situation of the visual artists as a group. The Human Change Role Model is based on change theories that have been developed since the 1950s to explain change at the micro level of society. While organisational development theories such as HCRM can be used as management tools to successfully implement organisational change, I use the framework of this model to analyse the reaction of visual artists to change. In this thesis, therefore, the theory informs the analysis of change and transformation rather than attempting to implement change in organisations. It contributes to the understanding of how visual artists responded to the changes to their working and living conditions.

A body of literature has developed in the area of organisational management over the last fifty years. HCRM is one of the most widespread theories within "the art of organisation development" (Schein). The majority of consultants, managers and

psychologists working in organisational development use theories of change to plan, introduce and implement change in organisations. Many of these theories originated in the USA and some refer to Lewin's<sup>132</sup> change theory, which will be discussed here. Some of these theories are widely known, for example, Total Quality Management (TQM) and Dannemiller-Tyson Interactive Strategic Planning (Dannemiller and Jacobs 1992), offering common approaches to the implementation of structural or managerial change in larger organisations.

As the findings in chapters four and five demonstrate, from the mid-1990s visual artists had to broaden their learning capacities as a pre-condition to successful adaptation to the continuing changes at the social, economic and political levels. While the younger visual artists were willing to accept such a challenge, the older and middle groups resisted, showing frustration and depression. It is argued, therefore, that their willingness and ability to learn may not have been sufficient to result in a successful adaptation.

Lewin's change theory, as interpreted by Schein, provides a detailed analysis of how change occurs in a learning process. In organisational development, change is often equated to learning. The use of learning instead of change implies the existence of a clearly defined direction and goal, as is the case in organisational development when

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<sup>132</sup> Lewin is universally recognized as the founder of modern social psychology. He pioneered the use of theory, using experimentation to test hypothesis. He placed an everlasting significance on an entire discipline - group dynamics and action research. While at the University of Berlin, Lewin "found many of the department's courses in the grand tradition of Wundtian psychology irrelevant and dull" (Hothersall, 1995: 239). His thinking was changing to emphasize social psychological problems. He is well known for his term "life space" and his work on group dynamics, as well as t-groups. Lewin's commitment to applying psychology to the problems of society led to the development of the M.I.T. Research Center for Group Dynamics. "He wanted to reach beyond the mere description of group life and to investigate the conditions and forces which bring about change or resist it" (Marrow, 1969: 178). Lewin believed in the field approach. For change to take place, the total situation has to be taken into

those experiencing change are aware of the direction and aims of the change process. In the case of German unification successful change infers adaptation and in this sense a goal known to those experiencing unification exists. The findings of this thesis demonstrate that visual artists are aware of what society expects of them but the research also indicates that this assumption is no guarantee for successful adaptation. Since the process of transformation is unfinished, and taking into account the lack of alternatives to adaptation available to artists, the term 'change' is used here in preference to 'learning' to describe the individual change process. Although Schein/Lewin suggest the use of the term learning, change expresses the visual artists' perceived need for alternative outcomes better, even though in reality there are no alternatives to successful adaptation in the case of German unification.

### ***6.3.2 The Schein/Lewin Human Change Role Model***

The implementation of change involved visual artists in Saxony as a group and as individuals in a profound psychological process. Schein uses Lewin's change theory to explain that human change is a profound psychological dynamic process that involves painful unlearning without loss of ego identity and difficult relearning, as one cognitively attempts to restructure one's thoughts, perceptions, feelings and attitudes. (Schein, 1995: 2).

Lewin's change model is divided into three steps: unfreezing, changing and refreezing. Schein explains how these three stages are implemented and refines the theory further, dividing it into the following sub-headings. The process of **unfreezing** consists of three

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account. If isolated facts are used, a misrepresented picture could develop. Lewin authored over 80 articles and eight books on a wide range of issues in psychology.

phases: 1 disconfirmation, 2 induction of survival anxiety, 3 creation of psychological safety. It is then followed by **change**, the second stage, which is divided into two different stages: 4 cognitive redefinition and identification with a role model, and as a last stage: 5 change needs **refreezing**.

In this thesis Schein's interpretation of Lewin's change theory will be used as a framework in order to analyse how artists reacted as they did and to search for possible behavioural causes.

### **6.3.2.1 Unfreezing**

The concept of unfreezing aims to prepare a degree of readiness and to generate a motivation to change. It is based on the observation that stability of human behaviour is supported by a "quasi-stationary equilibria" that is sustained by a large force field of driving and restraining forces (Schein, 1995: 2). For change to occur, the driving and restraining forces need to be altered to move the equilibrium which implies a set-up of complex psychological conditions. Thereby it is important that both forces are altered. Otherwise, as Schein (1995: 2) argues, just adding a driving force towards change often produces an immediate counterforce to maintain the equilibrium. The move of restraining forces is considered to be harder to achieve<sup>133</sup> because, as Schein argues, there were often personal psychological defences or group norms embedded in the organisational or community culture.

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<sup>133</sup> This assumption was encountered after the work of cognitive psychologists (Tavistock group) on perceptual defences (denial, splitting and projection) had been incorporated into the theory.

In the case of the visual artists in Saxony, the process of unfreezing began before unification and reached its peak with unification. The “quasi-stationary equilibria” of individual artists was threatened during the changeover. Driving and restraining forces co-existed. Driving forces are seen as the will and the existential need to get established in the new society. Restraining forces have been identified as the old values and norms of the communist regime and its reputation as well as the financial security available in the GDR, analysed in-depth below.

### **1. Disconfirmation**

In the last years of the GDR's existence visual artists were dissatisfied with their working and living conditions. They not only wanted a reduction in ideological pressure but also wanted more freedom and access to Western European countries. Some artists expressed their discontent, for example, by withdrawing into internal exile and into the artists' niches. Schein made similar observations and argued that all forms of change begin with some form of dissatisfaction or frustration and in the same sense Senge (1990) argues that disconfirming information is a pre-requisite for change. Expectations or hopes are disconfirmed and therefore disconfirmation functioned as a primary driving force in the quasi-stationary equilibrium. Disconfirmation as a prerequisite for unification thus existed. During the process of unification, cultural shock affected the artists' community and disconfirmed expectations and hopes - in this sense artists were ready for change.

With unification, visual artists were confronted by a complex new situation that was more or less imposed on them. As explained earlier, the artists expressed feelings of having been left out and complained that their participation had been neglected.

However, visual artists realised from the beginning of unification that the changes would have an important impact on their lives. They had to accept that information would be the key to establishing an artistic career in the unified Germany. Information is unavoidable because their existence as artists was under threat. Schein argues that any change needs motivation and that disconfirmation is insufficient. Information could be ignored or irrelevant and its validity denied. Motivation for change depends on acceptance of information or, as Schein argues, it should be connected to something we care about. This would produce **survival anxiety**, the feeling that if one does not change one will fail to achieve particular goals or ideas. In the case of the visual artists survival anxiety developed in its original sense.

## **2. Induction of guilt or survival anxiety**

Most aspects of the artists' familiar working and living conditions were due to change after unification. In addition, artists experienced a change in their relationship with government. While they had been close to power before, in the new society art and its producers were of minor importance to everyday politics. Art lost its main function as mediator between past and future and between ideology and the people. Artists struggled to adapt to these new circumstances and did not want to lose face. The hostile reaction of some artists to the state artists debate was discussed in the previous chapter. Visual artists altered their curriculum vitae to fit the new conditions and unsuitable experiences were forgotten or neglected. For some, their mistrust of market mechanisms and tools such as marketing, and their negative opinion of state administration, resulted in further difficulties. Most human beings need to assume that they are doing their best at all times; it may even be a real loss of face to accept or even embrace errors (Michael, 1973, 1992). Schein argues that survival anxiety is often

prevented by **learning anxiety** and that adapting poorly or failing to meet our creative potential often looks more desirable than risking failure and loss of self-esteem in the learning process. Learning anxiety leads to the maintenance of the equilibrium by defensive avoidance of the disconfirming information. Dealing with learning anxiety is seen as the key to producing change. In this sense, the older visual artists showed signs of learning anxiety and tried to maintain the equilibrium instead of being forced to change by survival anxiety.

However, during unification most East Germans found and accepted that change involved loss of face and/or embraced errors, since in the GDR they had scant information about West Germany, so that after its collapse no-one really knew what the new system would be like. After unification there was an increase in the amount of information (both useful and useless) available and as a result people became confused and disorientated. Failure in the new Western European context was likely. At unification the collective mood was in favour of change and, as the failure was collective, it left room for individuals to accept this failure because it was the same for everyone. When millions behave foolishly it becomes normal and is accepted more easily.

Artists had been participating in this general learning experience but, as I argued earlier, the resistance to change or learning anxiety provided difficulties for the older group in particular. Some artists reached unification at an age at which, in modern society, they might expect to be passing on information to the younger generation, rather than learning themselves. Therefore it can be argued that learning threatened older artists because they were unprepared for the experience and learning anxiety could have developed as a result. However, this learning approach has been questioned



in Western societies for a number of years and has been exchanged for the life-long learning approach, which suits Schein's approach but was uncommon among the older visual artists as it had not been practised in the GDR.

### **3. Creation of psychological safety or overcoming of learning anxiety**

According to Schein, one way of dealing with learning anxiety is to create psychological safety. When one feels safe, disconfirmation information will be accepted, survival anxiety will be felt and change can take place. In organisation management there are a variety of methods, which help to create psychological safety, such as working in groups, providing positive visions and providing online coaching.

The large scale of change following unification would have made it impossible to apply the recommended methods of the theory to the creation of psychological safety, which would have required an overall entity such as an organisation. It was impossible to apply such a methodology to a population of 17 million, even though it might have speeded up the process of unification in the longer term.

The Schein/Lewin model is focused on organisations and cannot serve society as a whole. Instead everyone, including visual artists, had to find their own path through the unification process. Help was provided financially via employment schemes and funding opportunities but psychological sensitivity was often ruled out by the speed of events. Many older artists felt insecure, wrongly treated and misunderstood. Unification provided conditions for both types of anxiety and the ideal method of overcoming learning anxiety in order to develop survival anxiety lacked the provision of psychological safety for the older generation of artists. The middle group of artists

faced slightly different conditions, receiving protection of sorts in the environment of Dresden's Art Academy.

### **6.3.2.2 Change**

The previous sections focused on the conditions of change for visual artists. This section focuses on the explanation given to visual artists or developed by visual artists themselves in order to understand what happened to them. Schein/Lewin argued that the created motivation for change needs explanation. Those involved needed to know about the process itself. It is not enough to provide the right conditions for change, explanations for how it occurred and self-reflection are equally important. Lewin explains this process using the following terms.

#### **4. Cognitive Redefinition**

As explained above, for many older artists the process of change had stopped at the third phase of unfreezing. In contrast, most of the artists in the middle group were motivated and more open to new information. The Art Academy provided partial psychological safety and protection. Schein argues that individuals at such a stage are not only motivated and open, they also seek to incorporate experience into their world view. This process is known as redefinition, reframing or frame breaking. According to Schein redefinition could occur by taking in information with one of the following three impacts:

1. semantic redefinition attaches new meanings to old words.
2. cognitive broadening discovers that a concept could be more broadly interpreted than had been assumed previously.
3. new standards of judgment or evaluation are reached when it is understood that anchors of judgment and comparison are not absolute and different anchors are used, resulting in a shift in the scale of judgment.

The middle group of visual artists in particular practised these three different forms of redefinition. The language of the old regime was still in use with the “them-and-us dichotomy” mentioned in the previous section but individual expressions, such as, for example, socialist realism and figurative art, were discussed within a broader framework and some older terms were used with a new meaning. For example, SED ideology had defined capitalism as the concept of the enemy and the party launched a campaign against non-realistic art, i.e. formalism (Jordan and Weedon, 1995: 104), which in the 1950 and 1960s was considered to be an expression of capitalist society; after unification, as artists experienced different aspects of capitalism for themselves, the meaning of the term was broadened.

Yet, even though cognitive redefinition took place to some extent, research results demonstrate that the value system of most of the older artists had been only insignificantly affected by this change. For example, they argued that the state artists debate had misinterpreted the term “socialist realism” and they were unable to take into account new or different meanings of the term because they had merged meaning and value which, once connected, are difficult to separate. In many cases some desirable values and norms of the new society, such as for example wealth, speed and money, were impossible to match with the old value system, which had been measured mainly by the extent of ideological freedom. As mentioned previously, if already existing cultural patterns are inconsistent with new values then defensiveness, withdrawal and distortion of important information may result and therefore adaptation to change is threatened. In the case of the visual artists this could be seen as one reason why the expected adaptation could not succeed to the extent that they would have liked.

### **5. Imitation and positive or defensive identification with a role model**

Visual artists were concerned that German unification was the only option on offer. However, this option incorporated opportunities for imitation and identification as introduced by Schein. He argues that redefinition could be best introduced by either learning through positive or defensive identification with some available positive or negative role model, or by learning through a trial and error process based on scanning the environment for new concepts. The question posed here would be how information reaches people. Examples of how psychological safety and redefinition can be facilitated are positive identification (Schein, 1995: 5) and mentoring, also known as the big brother approach. Defensive identification would occur when people are held in a hostile environment.

The most obvious possible identification for artists from Eastern Germany was at first thought to be that of their West German counterparts and the artists who had left the GDR to settle in western Germany before the collapse of the communist regime. According to the research results it was possible for East German visual artists to identify with their colleagues in western Germany both positively and negatively.

Positive identification became a pattern of behaviour for the group of artists that were able to take the opportunity to re-establish and enhance their former connections and sales relationships in the new society. Their orientation was focused on western colleagues and how they had managed to maintain an established position in Germany

and abroad. Although some attempted to copy this behaviour, others could not approve of the general appearance and demeanour of their West German colleagues. Many eastern German artists felt disappointed by the behaviour of their colleagues, describing them as arrogant and money oriented, and they were bewildered by the overwhelming self-confidence and showmanship of their West German colleagues. The older group of artists exhibited a defensive attitude. This was partly due to the verbal attacks of former GDR artists who had left the country before the fall of the iron curtain and who the Eastern German artists had considered to be their allies. In the state artists debate, those artists now resident in the West turned their backs on the eastern German artists. As mentioned earlier, this caused some eastern German artists to rewrite their past in an attempt to fit into the new value system by disproving close relationships to the SED or the Stasi.

#### **6. Scanning: insight or trial and error learning**

This study did not identify any artists who avoided role model identification completely. However, due to their preference for individualism, some middle-aged artists successfully redefined themselves by using trial and error in their attempt to adapt to the new circumstances. They searched or scanned for information by reading, travelling, or talking to people. Schein (1995: 5) argues the best and most stable solution for individuals will be the one that people invent for themselves. He further argues that once cognitive redefinition has taken place, the new mental categories are tested with new behaviour which leads to a period of trial and error and either reinforces the new categories or starts a new cycle of disconfirmation and search. According to Schein it is assumed that those artists are most likely to become successfully established in the near future as they themselves had done the inventing.

### **6.3.2.3 Refreezing**

At this stage the middle generation of visual artists will have changed and the next stage, the refreezing stage, will be evident if the process of successful adaptation to the new circumstances is to be completed. However, at this stage the time frame is open ended. It is assumed that the model applied here will work up to its final stage for the middle group of artists but evidence of the last phase cannot yet be provided.

In the ideal case change has occurred and, in order to stabilise it, outcomes “must be refrozen” (Schein 1995: 6). Therefore one of the basic conditions is that the new behaviour must fit the individual’s personality, otherwise new rounds of disconfirmations would start up. “The final step in any given change process is refreezing, which refers to the necessity for the new behaviour and set of cognitions to be reinforced, to produce once again confirming data. If such new confirmation is not forthcoming, the search and coping process continues” (Schein, 1992: 302).

Schein (1995: 6) distinguishes between personal and relational refreezing. He suggests that for personal refreezing to occur, it would be best to avoid identification and encourage scanning. It gives individuals the chance to develop solutions themselves. For relational refreezing he recommends training the entire group possessing the norms supporting the old behaviour. As an example Schein quotes from Lewin’s classic studies: “The attempt to change eating habits by using an educational program that teaches housewives how to use meats such as liver and kidneys, and then sends them back into a community in which the norms are that only poor folks who can’t afford good meat would use such poor meat.” As a solution Lewin introduced collectively a

new set of standards for judging what was regarded as “ok” meat. Housewives were encouraged to reveal their implicit norms and therefore change was possible.

In the case of visual artists it is also likely that the process will continue to run for several more cycles before successful adaptation can be achieved. The possibility that artists would not adapt to western German standards and norms and that they would develop a unique way of dealing with their new circumstances is unlikely because the influence of the overriding role model has reached nearly every societal niche.

At the beginning of the research carried out for this study it was assumed that the level of adaptation might be low because of the relative isolation of visual artists and because their information flow is slow and likely to be interrupted. This has only been confirmed for the older group of artists. The middle group of artists proceeded as far as stage 5 and 6 of the model. After ten years of the process of transformation, adaptation continues. Artists have reached different levels of adaptation.

## **6.4 Change at macro and micro level - the Visual Artists Adaptation Model**

### ***6.4.1 Differences and similarities of the collective cultural shock and the human change role model***

In the preceding sections, the question of how, and to some extent why, artists' behaviour changed was answered by consulting two frameworks enabling slightly different approaches to the situation of East German visual artists. Both suggested possible scenarios for the future development of the behaviour of visual artists.

The frameworks originated in different academic disciplines and backgrounds. The collective cultural shock model exploits findings from anthropology and sociology while the human change role model relies mainly on organisational psychology and management theories. Differences in both approaches are obvious from the start. While the collective cultural shock (CCS) approach covers the macro level of society as a whole, the human change role model (HCRM) focuses on the micro level, on groups and individuals in a more or less closed environment, for example in organisations. Yet, despite the obvious differences, both theories summarise peoples' behaviour in situations of change. Their observations are similar and their findings complement each other in relation to the behaviour of the visual artists.

### ***6.4.2 Visual Artists Adaptation Model***

This complementarity is taken as a starting point in developing a new theory to analyse the behaviour of visual artists. As a result, both approaches have been synthesised into a new approach, the Visual Artists Adaptation Model (VAAM), which attempts to



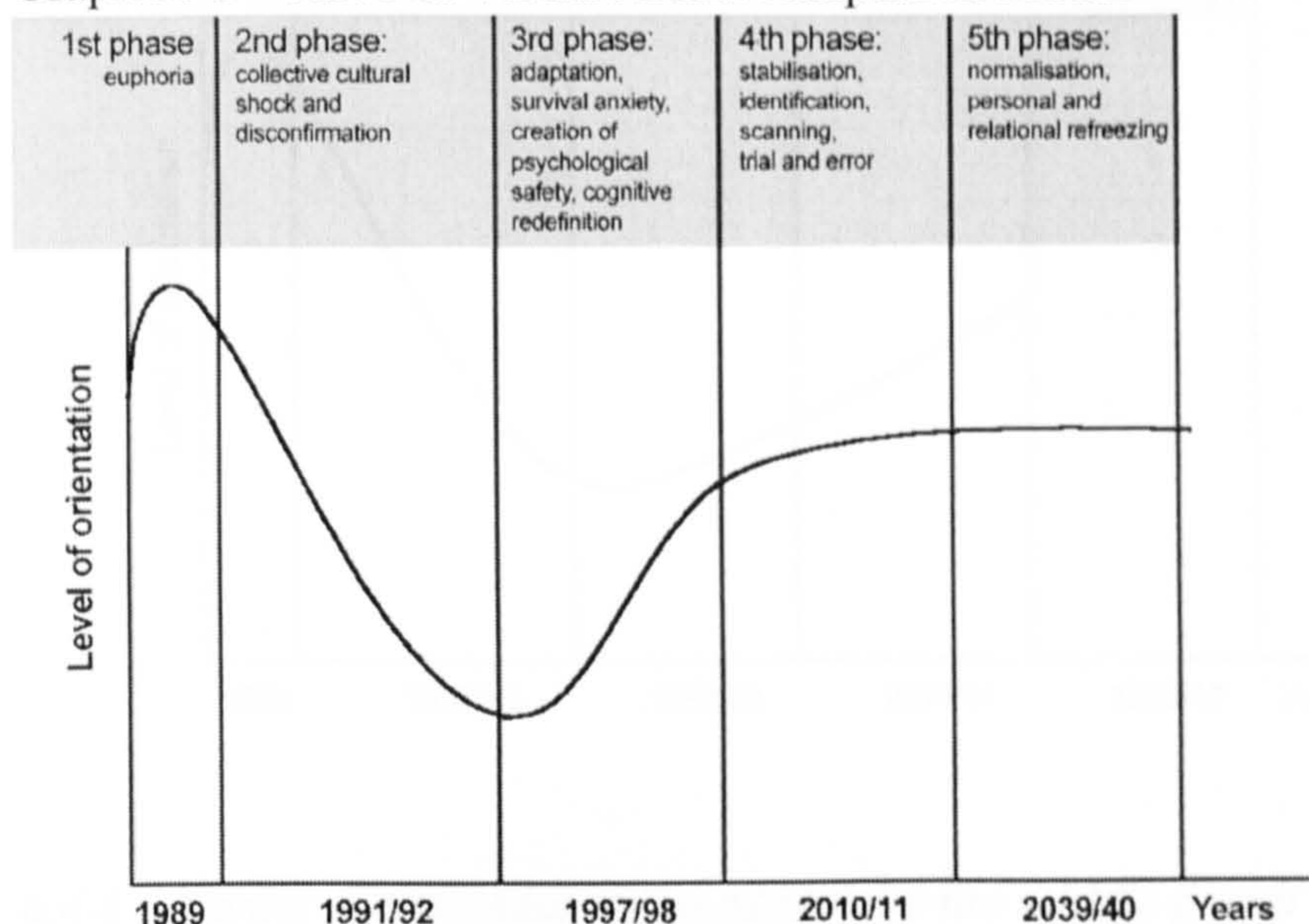
answer the question of how change occurred and how visual artists in eastern Germany after unification understood change.

In the Visual Artists Adaptation Model both frameworks are amalgamated with the research findings. While the collective cultural shock model provides the framework of the U curve as well as the timescale for the new model, the addition of the human change role model (see graph 5) adds further analysis and depth to the model, particularly from the second phase onwards. The first phase of “euphoria” was not considered in the human change role model because it is not seen as a necessary condition for implementing change.

However, in the Visual Artists Adaptation Model, the first phase of “euphoria” is important, taking into account the extraordinary conditions of systemic change. It caused a high level of decline in the level of orientation in the second phase when compared to an ordinary situation of change or planned change. In the second phase, disconfirmation is added to the symptoms of collective cultural shock. The third phase deals with adaptation itself. Learning anxiety conflicts with survival anxiety. When survival anxiety is successfully established and a psychologically safe situation is created, adaptation becomes possible and cognitive redefinition can follow. This phase is the key stage in the process because the individual and/or the group decide at this point whether adaptation will be successful or not. Once the majority of people have gone through this stage, adaptation will be reflected at the macro level. In the fourth phase the process of change is about to stabilise and therefore identification, scanning and trial and error are possible options for improving the situation before the final stage is reached when the new situation is refrozen, completing the change and normalising

life. This represents the ideal case life cycle of the Visual Artists Adaptation Model, which can be evaluated fully on completion of the full time frame.

Graph 5: U - curve of Visual Artists Adaptation Model

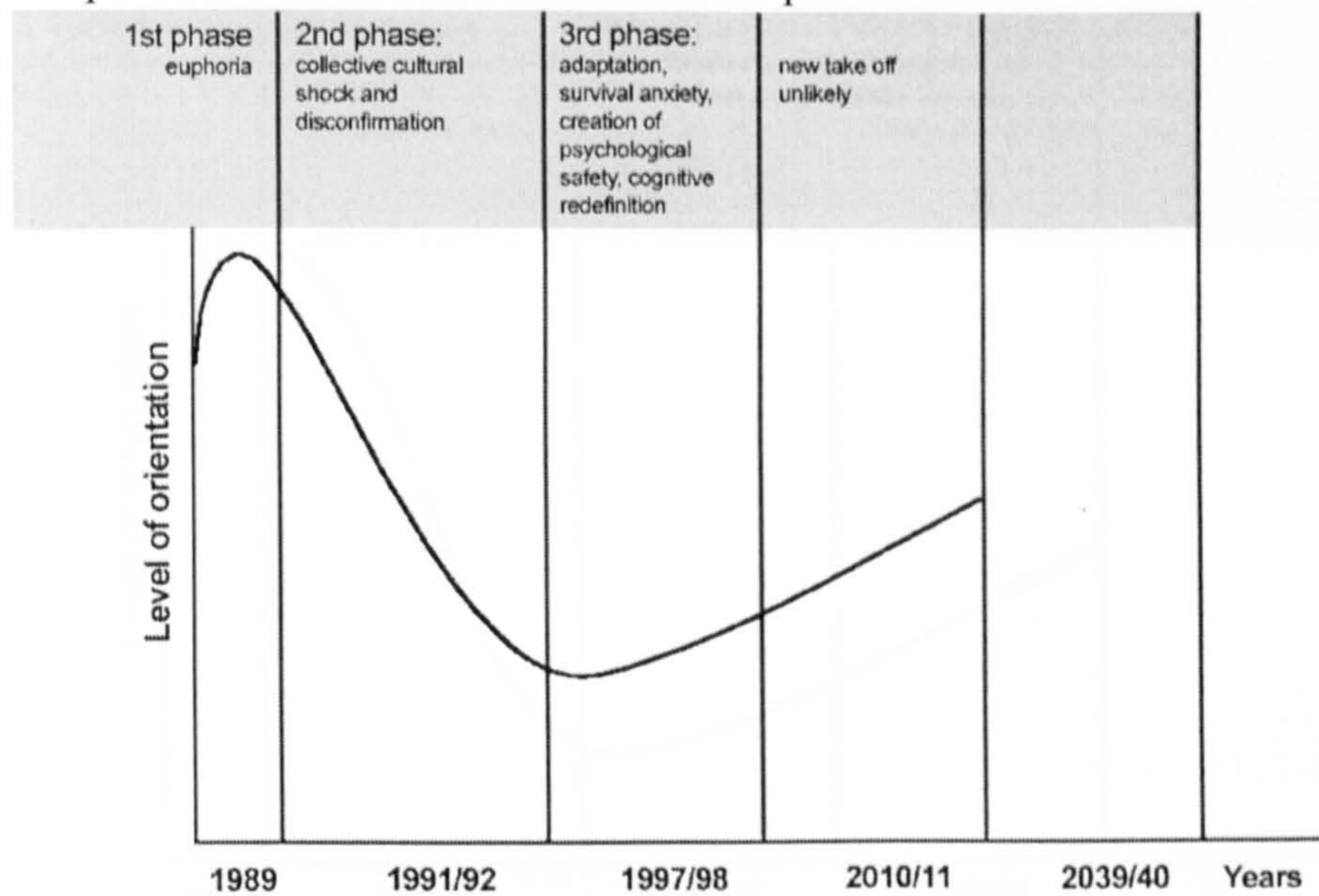


Both frameworks have been adjusted to take account of the research findings on the different groups of visual artists and this will be considered in the synthesis by adapting the ideal case scenario.

#### 6.4.3 *Visual Artists Adaptation Model for the older group of visual artists*

In this study it has been argued that the group of older visual artists will not reach the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> phase of the Visual Artists Adaptation Model because, as the evidence of the third phase in the collective cultural shock model suggests, a new take-off is unlikely as learning anxiety (fear of failure) continues to weaken survival anxiety (condition for adaptation). In addition, in many cases a safe psychological situation can neither be provided by the visual artists themselves nor by the state authorities or other organisations. The process of adaptation has slowed and, as predicted by the Human Change Role Model, artists appear to move in circles in phase three (see graph 6).

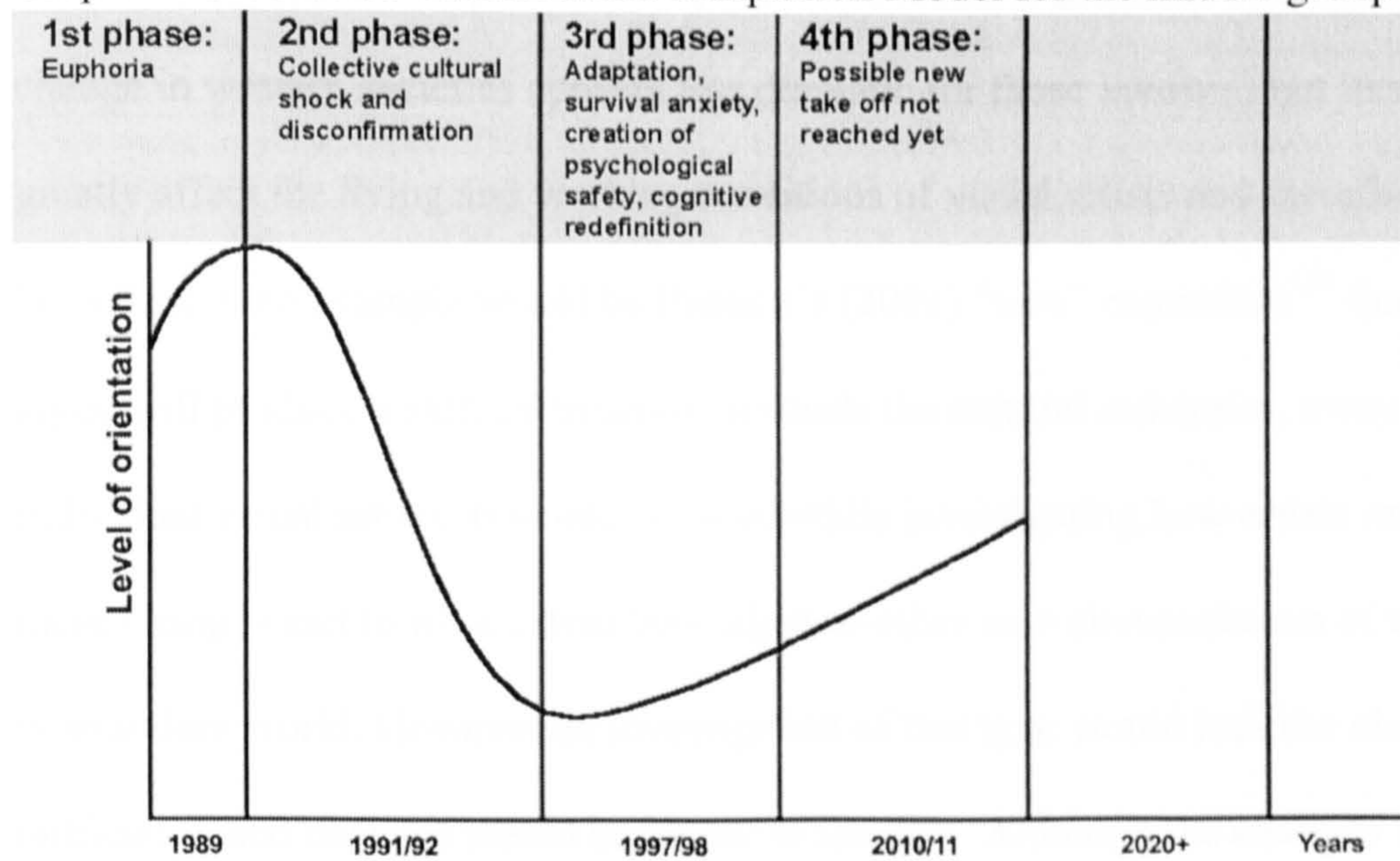
Graph 6: U curve of Visual Artists Adaptation Model for older visual artists



#### 6.4.4 *Visual Artists Adaptation Model for the middle group of visual artists*

The situation was different for the middle group of artists who were managing adaptation better than their older colleagues, even if they themselves were not satisfied with their progress. Within the time frame of the collective cultural shock model, this group of artists reached the third phase at the same time as the older artists. However, compared with the older artists, the middle group's survival anxiety had developed more strongly and the pressure from learning anxiety, though still in existence, was much reduced. Despite possessing a fully developed set of values and norms, they had a stronger sense of the need to further develop their careers and were thus more receptive to engaging with the new circumstances. To some extent the Arts Academy provided psychological safety. The evidence points to the likelihood of a new take-off (see graph 7). Artists will be able to overcome learning anxiety if their working and living conditions continue to improve. A number of factors, for example, a thriving regional and local arts market offering sales opportunities, and/or increased state arts funding, would contribute to this improvement.

Graph 7: U-curve of Visual Artists Adaptation Model for the middle group of artists



#### 6.4.5 Application of the Visual Artists Adaptation Model to other areas

Any theory aims for a level of generality. This model has been developed to analyse the special situation of visual artists dealing with change in Saxony during the period of German unification. The theory has only been applied to developments in one German *Land* but it is argued that similar developments have taken place in the other four *Länder* of eastern Germany, particularly as far as visual artists are concerned. The Visual Artists Adaptation Model would provide explanations for the behaviour of visual artists in the other regions affected by German unification. The model did not start life as a hypothesis in this research but rather developed as a result of it. It could therefore act as a research hypothesis for future use in similar areas.

The Visual Artists Adaptation Model may also be applied to other similar groups, for example other artists or freelance professionals such as journalists in eastern Germany, to analyse behaviour during the process of transformation. It may also be of interest in the analysis of artistic behaviour in Western societies because change is not only an issue of unification: societies are changing significantly, although usually change takes

place over a longer time period. Compared with the changes following unification, change in western societies appears less dramatic for those involved but its results greatly affect the living and working conditions of visual artists and therefore their behaviour. One example would be Bennett's (2001) "new" capitalism<sup>134</sup> that I would argue will produce a shift of creativity towards the cultural industries, away from individual visual artists. It would be worthwhile investigating how artists respond to these changes and to what extent they adapt to other new circumstances of the postmodern world. However an investigation of this type would lack the clear terms of unification and changes would be harder to identify. Although the changes would be of a different nature, I would expect the traditional visual artist to display similar difficulties in adapting.

As Bennett (2001: 192) argues, over the last centuries rationales of cultural pessimism developed rapidly at a societal level while there was also an increase in depression at the individual level. Signs of depression were found among visual artists in Saxony as a result of unification. Following Bennett's argument it would not be surprising if depression and cultural pessimism were integrated into the development of visual artists in Western European Societies, as a result of changes towards the new capitalism.

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<sup>134</sup> "New" capitalism refers to the emergence of a distinctive new phase of global capitalism. Bennett (2001: 145) argues that "new" capitalism is a product of the United States and has been vigorously exported to all who could be persuaded or compelled to adopt it. The shift of creativity towards the cultural industries is based on the logic that most of the product must primarily be profitable. Creativity as a condition in the arts is going to be governed by market forces.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has explained how change occurred, and analysed how and why visual artists reacted to it as they did, using two theories from different academic disciplines to generalise the research findings. It has suggested that change, defined as the profound disturbance of our worldview, is embedded in a complex psychological process. This process was analysed retrospectively in the case of the visual artists of Saxony. The chapter argues that visual artists displayed symptoms such as lack of orientation, depression, defensive responses and lack of self-confidence that suggested that they experienced cultural shock in their own country. Using the collective cultural shock model, it is argued that visual artists lived through five stages of adaptation (euphoria, collective culture shock, adaptation, stabilisation and normalisation) during the process of transformation.

Using the human change role model, this chapter demonstrates that successful adaptation is linked to psychological conditions such as survival anxiety and the provision of psychological safety. In the case of the group of the older visual artists it was suggested that neither condition was able to develop and as a result adaptation was delayed and career rejuvenation and restart was therefore seen as unlikely. However, the middle group of visual artists largely mastered the successful completion of stages one and two, where survival anxiety acted as the driving force and the Art Academy of Dresden provided conditions of psychological safety. This group has now reached stage three, which increases the likelihood of a successful adaptation in the near future. A final assessment of the situation will be possible when the behaviour of the visual artists has stabilised and when the living and working conditions of the visual artists have normalised, which is expected to take place over the following 10 years.

This chapter has generalised the research findings with the development of the Visual Artists Adaptation Model, which synthesises the findings and the two theoretical frameworks. The research results are combined with the Human Change Role Model and the Collective Cultural Shock Model to provide further insights into the three components and a new theoretical model. This new theoretical approach aims to provide a framework for further analysis of the condition and behaviour of visual artists or other art-related groups experiencing change in the emerging democracies. It suggests that the behaviour of visual artists is not simply informed by present developments; instead the past to a great extent shapes the reactions of visual artists to current developments. In this way, the model indicates that a visual arts policy must take into account the vulnerability of the visual artists community towards change. If conditions such as psychological safety are not provided, it is likely that further policy change connected to a process of transformation will fail.

## 7 Visual artists, values and ideology

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the causes and consequences of visual artists' behavioural responses to changes to their living and working conditions after unification. Previous chapters have demonstrated that successful adaptation to capitalism by the older and middle groups of visual artists was obstructed by their continued comparison of the old GDR situation with the new circumstances of advanced capitalism after unification.

This chapter argues that the persistent use of values and norms developed in the GDR was one of the main causes of delay and failure to adapt of the older group of visual artists after unification. It is argued that in many cases life in the GDR had made a permanent impression on the older visual artists' orientations and expectations and therefore the impact of socialisation is clearly visible.

Usually, socialisation in the GDR was inseparable from the Marxist-Leninist ideology that acted as part of the so-called aim culture. Lenches (1993: 15) had called this an essence of communism.<sup>135</sup> In the course of the research, the connection between visual artists' values and GDR ideology and the artists' relationship to power had become more and more prominent. It is argued in this chapter that the basic ideas of Marxist-Leninist ideology and its attendant conflicts are the main obstacles to the successful adaptation of the older visual artists, from the point of view of value judgements, and

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<sup>135</sup> The term "communism" is used by some researchers to describe what would be referred to as "socialism" in the German and in some of the British literature concerning this topic. While for some the term socialism is related to the socialist movement in capitalist societies, which is different from the communist movement and from the development of the "Warsaw pact states", German researchers use the term socialism to describe the former "Communist" societies. In this thesis use of the word "socialism" follows the German model.



the development of their living and working conditions. Therefore it is argued that ideology was interwoven into the career development of visual artists in Saxony.

This chapter is in three sections. The first analyses the special role of values in the development of individual visual artists and it introduces successful GDR socialisation as a cause for resistance to adaptation after unification. The second section discusses the ideological impact of Marxist-Leninist ideology on the visual artists' value system. This leads on to the concluding argument in section three, which revisits and discusses the major themes of the chapter.

## **7.2 Values, socialisation theory and visual artists**

### **7.2.1 Values**

It has already been argued that the more time spent in artistic socialisation<sup>136</sup> in the new system relative to their total artistic career the more adapted the visual artists appear to be to the new environment. Conversely the more of their socialisation was spent in the socialist system the more resistant they appear to be to advanced capitalism. It is argued that the cause of this behaviour is influenced by the system of values developed by visual artists in their lifetime.

So far, values and their impact on the living and working conditions of visual artists have been discussed as research findings. The meaning of values, and their relationship to socialisation, will be analysed in this section, which explores the link between values themselves, their relationship to social change and visual artists' behaviour.

In academic literature, the term value incorporates a range of meanings "from the economists' 'utility generating property' or 'valuation revealed in a preferential choice' to the sociologists' 'world view', 'taken for granted belief' or 'the normative standards by which human beings are influenced in their choice among the alternative courses of action which they perceive'" (Young 1977: 2). The definition used in this study follows the commonly accepted social science approach of Kluckhohn (1967: 395), who defines value as a concept, as something desirable that implies that it is a moral standard on which reality is measured.

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<sup>136</sup> Socialisation is defined as the totality or sum of all processes which are reflected in the make up of the personality. It includes all experiences of the historical, material, social and cultural environment. Artistic socialisation is meant to include all processes that are experienced while an artist's career is built up.

Arzheimer and Klein (2000: 37) argue that values as elements of the cultural system of society belong to the macro level and therefore they exist to some extent independently from their individual representatives. For thinking and actions at the micro level of society, values become relevant when the individual acquires a positive attitude (*Wertorientierung*) towards this value, which usually happens during socialisation. This process of internalisation ensures that values become part of the individual system of convictions. Arzheimer and Klein argue that values deserve a special position within this system of convictions.

Firstly, values are very stable. While attitudes can change quickly, values once acquired are usually kept for a lifetime. This has been reported by many social scientists.

Bourdieu (1977: 30) for example argues in relation to cultural inheritance that cultural orientations learnt early in life are unconscious, taken for granted, hard to change and powerful in shaping responses to later experience. Similar observations were made during the interviews. Visual artists reported that the basic structures (*Grundstrukturen*) of their worldview (*Weltanschauungen*) were the same as they had been ten or twenty years ago and were still valid today. One visual artist notes:

Values (*Weltanschauung*) that had been important to me before unification are still important to me today, for example in my political values nothing has changed. I am still red and green.... What has changed are the conditions. It is more tiring than before because it is something entirely different fighting against money [present situation] instead of against ideology [past experience] (VA12: 8)

Secondly, values are most important in forming attitudes. They structure attitudes since they operate as standards by which to judge unknown objects, people and events.

Converse (1964: 208) argues that attitudes that are developed out of experience with unknown objects and that are in contradiction to values will be transformed in a way that removes the contradiction between value and attitude.

As was mentioned earlier, most of the older visual artists reported that some values (see Table 4) that they had regarded as important in the GDR, and with which they had felt comfortable and secure, were lost after unification. One example of such a value was solidarity among members of the artists' community and in society in general. They expressed concern at this development as well as at problems arising with the introduction of competition as opposed to solidarity.

Yet, this was not their only concern. Visual artists observed with disquiet the exchange of "old" values for "new" values. The introduction of "capital" as the most important value had replaced or reduced the importance of some of the values mentioned above after unification. Phrases such as "Capital controls the state" or "Everything focuses on money" were used to describe the new situation.

**Table 4: List of values that had either been lost or were of less importance today than they had been in the GDR, as identified in the interviews:**

1. Humanity and fairness in relation to social security for visual artists
2. Recognition of visual artists as full and worthwhile professionals. Art is understood to be a "natural part of the state"
3. Excellence in the arts is the first priority for every visual artist
4. Participation in decision-making related to the arts via the Artists' Association
5. Solidarity and communication (exchange of information) in the artists' community

The recognition that their preferred values were no longer generally accepted in society, and that they had been replaced after unification, did not erase the "old" values from the visual artists' worldview. Instead, artists felt that values such as solidarity remained worthwhile, even though the new society failed to uphold them. In many cases visual artists regarded this as a tragic loss. This example shows that, in the case of unification, societal values may change but the individual conception and desirability of such values remains unchanged.

### **7.2.2 Socialisation theory**

These findings are not unique. The impact of values on change has been widely discussed on a broader scale in several sociological studies, such as Inglehart (1997) who investigated change in 43 countries and Arzheimer/Klein (2000) who researched political values in Germany. Inglehart developed an approach, now known widely as socialisation theory, which corresponds with the findings of this study and puts its conclusions into a broader perspective. Socialisation theory not only establishes the relationship between values and social change, but also argues that economic, cultural and political changes together form a coherent pattern and that the causal linkage tends to be reciprocal (Inglehart, 1997: 5). Inglehart points out that without mutually supportive political, economic and cultural systems, the survival of society could not be assured. In his work he follows Marx and Weber's modernisation theory, which argued that a causal linkage between economy, culture<sup>137</sup> and politics is essential for the survival of society. The individual visual artist and his/her values are part of this broader development but, as demonstrated above, some of the visual artists' values remained stable despite societal changes in many areas, including their own.

Inglehart argues within his socialisation hypothesis and the theory of intergenerational value change that the relationship between socio-economic environment and value priorities is not one of immediate adjustment. He refers to a substantial time lag that is present because, to a large extent, one's basic values reflect the conditions that prevailed during one's pre-adult years. He agrees with Bourdieu, Arzheimer and Klein about the stability of adults' cognitive organisation and sees this as the main obstacle to

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<sup>137</sup> According to Inglehart (1997: 55) culture is understood in this case to be the subjective component of a society's equipment for coping with its environment: the values, attitudes, beliefs, skills and knowledge of its people.

change within the same generation. He is convinced that abandoning one's most central beliefs produces uncertainty and anxiety.

The research for this study shows that visual artists experienced a high level of uncertainty after unification. Their central systems of belief were threatened but did not change to any large extent and instead remained as they were. In fact, in most cases the older visual artists developed resistance to change.

“Old” values might therefore act to build up resentment of change but change at the macro level will still have an impact on the belief system of society in the long run.

Inglehart's socialisation theory (1997: 65) appreciates the influence of change on the system of values of individuals in general, in line with modernisation theory. He argues:

“Normally, culture changes slowly; but it does eventually respond to a changing environment. Changes in the socio-economic environment help reshape individual-level beliefs, attitudes, and values through their impact on the life experience of individuals. Cultures do not change overnight. Once they have matured, people tend to retain whatever worldview they have learned. Consequently, the impact of major changes in the environment tend to be most significant on those generations that spent their formative years under the new conditions.”

Inglehart suggested that those who had spent most of their formative years in the “old” society would find it most difficult to change their belief system towards the “new” society. This is the case for most of the older visual artists. It was argued in chapter 6 that it was unlikely that the older group of visual artists would be able to re-start their careers. The research findings show that most visual artists are still working professionally although they have had to make cutbacks in their living standards. Ten years after unification they work as dual career artists and earn their income in arts-related professions. Limits on their adaptation were self-imposed because the “old” values were used to compare the old situation with the new. However, “old” values (see

Table 4) no longer existed in the “new” society and therefore the new system was judged to have produced a society less suitable to visual artists’ living and working conditions. The young group of artists had no difficulties in adapting because they did not make such comparisons. The visual artists between 30 and 40 years of age, the middle group of artists, had been educated in the GDR but, because the early years of their career development took place during the period of transformation, they accepted the need for change as essential to their future career development. However, they did struggle, and took personally the conflict between the old and the new, and in some cases this led to low self-esteem and unsatisfactory career development.

The older group of visual artists regard the new values as inapplicable to them. For example, they reported that after unification the majority of people in eastern Germany regarded money as of most importance. Since money had been of minor importance in the GDR, most of the visual artists suggested that economic values were not of primary importance to them. Their priority remains the production of excellent art, achievable through hard work, discipline and application, as promoted in the GDR. Solidarity among colleagues and the value of humanity in general (see Table 4) were also regarded as important for the present and the past. Furthermore, after unification visual artists missed the respect which they had hitherto enjoyed as valuable members of society. In the GDR the belief in values such as humanity, solidarity and excellence were rewarded with financial security, respect and the freedom and ability to survive as professional visual artists.

As demonstrated earlier, all of these values are of reduced importance today. Yet the older visual artists remain attached to these “old” values which represent their

expectation of what should also be of importance to the new society. According to Inglehart's socialisation theory, the older visual artists will not abandon their "old" belief system and only the following generation will be able to adapt their beliefs to new societal values.

The likelihood that the older visual artists' system of belief will remain stable may be seen on a larger scale for the majority of older East Germans. Similar findings in research focussed on Germany as a whole provide evidence for this. Arzheimer and Klein (2000), in their comparative investigation of political values in eastern and western Germany, argue that the differences between eastern and western Germans are the result of long lasting and stable values, acquired in the process of socialisation. Along with these findings, and other similar research results by Fuchs/Roller/Wessels (1997) and Kasse/Bauer-Kasse (1998), I would argue that in terms of validity the socialisation hypothesis has replaced the congruence hypothesis (there are no major differences between eastern and western Germans), which was the dominant theory in the early stages of unification. The discussion about the development of political culture in the unified Germany is indeed now dominated by Inglehart's socialisation hypothesis. Most of the research carried out in the 1990s, which tended to support the socialisation hypothesis, targeted the whole population and aimed mainly to investigate political values.

To sum up, the research findings of this study support the socialisation hypothesis to a great extent. They provide an example in support of socialisation theory and further evidence to mainstream value-oriented research in eastern Germany. The research suggests that the theory is applicable to smaller sub-groups of the population such as



visual artists, as well as to a whole population, as demonstrated in the studies mentioned above. It also provides evidence that, despite visual artists commonly being regarded as members of a unique or special group, they have in fact experienced similar challenges to their beliefs and values as has everyone else.

## **7.3 Ideology**

### ***7.3.1 Aim culture and socialisation***

While the previous section provided a link between socialisation and the ability to change systems of belief, this section will investigate further which values were produced by what kind of socialisation. To answer this question it should be noted that GDR socialisation links the values of older visual artists with Marxist-Leninist ideology, which was dominant in the GDR. I will argue that parts of that ideology were so successfully integrated into the value system that they obstructed adaptation to change after unification. In the case of the visual artists, GDR ideology continues to exert an influence on their behaviour and therefore still has a significant impact on their living and working conditions today.

When the concept of the so-called “dual culture” of GDR society is introduced and compared with the value judgements of visual artists, as suggested by Bürklin (1993: 141), the link between Marxist-Leninist ideology and the content of visual artists’ values is made clear. Bürklin argues that the official political aim culture of the GDR delivers the key to the value system of the East Germans.

The aim culture together with its antithesis, the niche culture, forms the dual cultural system of the GDR. The aim culture of the GDR was established as the basis of the modern industrial state in which values such as achievement and discipline, rooted in German/Prussian/protestant ideology, were allied with the aims of egalitarian socialism, social justice and Marxist-Leninist ideology. It includes the Utopian view of the creation and promotion of a new (and better) type of human being. Many of the visual

artists' convictions are consistent with the content of the aim culture (see Table 4). Excellence implies achievement. Humanity, fairness and solidarity are attributes that describe the Utopian society achieved under communism, according to Marxism-Leninism. This mixture was represented in the values of visual artists after unification, implying that ideas absorbed during socialisation under the GDR regime continued to hold after unification.

Yet it is commonly known that the GDR was not driven by the official aim culture alone. In the 1980s, in particular, a niche culture, more informal and privately oriented, was in existence. Sontheimer (1990: 73) argues that the niche culture could not exist independently of the aim culture and it was therefore influenced by the indoctrination of the GDR regime. Therefore, in this study, niche culture is added to Bürklin's aim culture approach and both are regarded as key content carriers of the value systems of the visual artists.

In the interviews the visual artists reported making more use of the "niche culture" while their involvement with the aim culture varied with each individual. Yet all accepted that financial security was provided only through the structure of the aim culture. At the same time, many artists argued that they were exposed to ideological pressure through any involvement with state and party authorities. Operating in the niche culture lessened the pressure on them. It offered access to unofficial information, space to meet colleagues in an informal environment and opportunities to engage in alternative artistic events, such as performances for a limited audience. Many of the artists felt more at home in the niche culture but one has to bear in mind that the state continued to provide financial security. Therefore their careers were commonly

dominated by life in the so-called “dual culture society” (*gesellschaftliche Doppelkultur*). While the aim culture was regarded as representing the state, the niche culture was seen as an alternative which provided a forum for opposition to official policies.

Although visual artists made a strong case for the division of the two cultures, their core values were the same, although a distinction needs to be made between the ways these values were developed. The aim culture was laid down as official policy. The party and state officials were then responsible for its implementation and took the lead in its development. In the niche culture, visual artists relied heavily on the aim culture, either by reacting positively to its ideas or by declaring their opposition to it. However, by making any response at all, they were inevitably identifying themselves with it.

For many, this identification developed gradually over a number of years and its extent differed from person to person. It was present as a result of art education but its roots can be identified in family upbringing and in earlier schooling. Because of the totalitarian character of the GDR, an engagement with Marxism-Leninism, which provided the chief ideological source of the aim culture, began in childhood. The secondary school curriculum ensured that every pupil received a basic grounding in the ideology through subjects such as history and “citizenship”. Later, in higher education, this was taken further. Every student, regardless of subject of study (e.g. visual arts, the physical sciences or sports science), was required to participate in three core courses of Marxism-Leninism during their time of study - usually a period of three years. Neither did the GDR propaganda machine bypass the artists’ community. Taking into account

the intensity of this indoctrination, it is not surprising that the values of visual artists were steeped in the dominant ideology.

### **7.3.2 Marxist-Leninist ideology**

A brief analysis of the ideology of Marxism-Leninism<sup>138</sup> in the GDR will provide further information, shedding light on the position of visual artists before unification so as to explain their retention of the old value system after unification.

Shil (1968: 66) argues that ideology is an example of a positive and normative belief system, but that an ideology is distinct from values in the way that it usually meets the following eight criteria. The explicit nature of their formulation is different from other belief systems; ideologies contain a wish to rally people to a particular positive or normative belief. They carry a desire to be distinct from other belief systems, past or present. They reject innovation and the intolerant nature of their precepts is distinctive. Ideologies are known for the effective way in which they are promulgated and for the adherence they demand. Finally, ideologies are distinctive from other belief systems in the way they associate with institutions responsible for reinforcing and putting into effect the belief system in question.

Marxism-Leninism meets most of these criteria. According to Hahn, Kosing and Rupprecht, (1983: 24) Marxism-Leninist consists of three parts:

1. Dialectic and historical materialism (Marxist Philosophy, which was augmented by Lenin's work at a later stage) was understood as the general theoretical and methodological condition.

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<sup>138</sup> Note that Marxist-Leninist ideology should not be mistaken for Marx's theory of ideology, outlined in its basic form in the "German ideology" that describes ideology as "false consciousness" and regards ideology as a view of human thoughts in terms of metaphysical abstractions. Marx would probably never have regarded his deterministic view of the workings of society as ideology nor had any GDR officials declared Marxism-Leninism as an ideology.

2. Political economy (Science of societal proportion of production (“*Produktionsverhältnisse*”) investigates economic laws that guide distribution, exchange and consumption of material goods in society. This was regarded as the core of Marxism-Leninism because it offered a detailed explanation for the historical necessity of the transformation from capitalism to socialism and asserted the historical role of the proletariat.
3. Scientific communism (Science of the class struggle of the proletariat, of the socialist revolution, of the general laws of the construction of socialism and communism, of the revolutionary process of the world and of the leading role of the Marxist-Leninist party within this process).

These three areas of Marxism-Leninism form the unified body of the ideology that claims universal validity. The SED created its own version of Marxism-Leninism under the auspices of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and propagated it in the GDR. Hallberg (1996: 7) argues that the GDR state had rested not on wealth, force or accident but on the bedrock of ideology. Marxism-Leninism was an essential part<sup>139</sup> of the state that had been put in place by the SED in 1949.

The GDR’s version of the ideology permeated everyday life and Shil’s criteria of the distinctive features of ideology, as opposed to other belief systems, was tested in reality. One cannot doubt the explicit nature of the formulation nor its wish to rally people to its belief. Marxism-Leninism made an explicit distinction between itself and capitalism, as well as any other ideologies. A well-known example of the public rejection of innovation was contained in a speech by Hager in 1988, in which he declared that “if the neighbours change their wallpaper [the Soviet Union had announced the beginnings of perestroika] then this did not mean that the GDR would have to decorate too”. The GDR state did not miss any opportunity to proclaim the

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<sup>139</sup> Lenches (1993: 15) identified four main elements of communism:

1. The communist party itself (SED and the model party, the CPDSU, in the Soviet Union), with its unlimited monopoly of power and claims to possess knowledge about the inevitable course of history and the workers’ part in it.
2. Marxist-Leninist ideology
3. Indoctrination of the population with the most current of “scientific” Marxist-Leninist ideology

virtues of Marxist-Leninist ideology and, in the 1980s, its leaders impressively demonstrated their determination to cling to power, using the secret police and other control mechanisms to quell protests.

The main idea of introducing this complex concept at the macro level was to ensure the leading position of the SED in society. At the micro level, the aim was to relieve individuals of immediate worries and chaos in the socio-economic domain. The state took care of any problems and the ideology was able to provide answers to day-to-day questions. Consequently, the party or the state would take full responsibility for many aspects of daily life. It provided visual artists not only with contracts and studio and living space but also offered a philosophy with a well-ordered and easily understood framework. Kupferberg (1999: 40) argues: “This all embracing, state-financed ‘scholarship-system’, following the individual from the cradle to grave, would, as Marx said, bring about the perfect conditions for creativity, as it would allow the individual to fish in the morning, write novels or scientific tracts in the afternoon and do criticism in the evening.”

This ironic quote sums up the utopian nature of the ideology but also points out the totalitarian character of the regime. The notion of taking care of the needs of the population from the cradle to the grave allowed little room for other ideas, which is another reason why the ideological framework successfully engaged the visual artists.

As mentioned above, in some cases the relationship between values and ideology (e.g. aim culture) were quite obvious. In other cases the connection only became evident

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4. The “Nomenklatura”, which describes those who rule in the name of communism.

when one engaged more deeply with Marxist-Leninist ideology. The following example was often used in the GDR to demonstrate the historical necessity of transformation. The association of values and ideology is not made directly here but is concealed within the broader implications of economic development as a deterministic one-way option. Visual artists regarded development as a constant struggle to improve, which implies a linear progression.

The continuous development of society from feudalism via capitalism to communism as the final goal was described in Marx's *Economic Formations* (1858; 1965) and further illustrated by Lenin<sup>140</sup> (1983: 178). The countries of Eastern Europe acted as practical examples for this theory in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Major societal changes, such as the step from one formation to the next, would take place according to Marx and Engel's laws of development, which were based on changes from a quantitative to a new qualitative level. As soon as a certain quantitative level of change was reached, qualitative change could occur. The change from capitalism to socialism/communism was seen as one of the major leaps from a quantitative to a new qualitative level. This approach implies that there is continuous step-by-step development and that the change from capitalism to socialism is a historical necessity in the transformation process.

Therefore unification was a change that the ideology of the GDR had predicted to be impossible. In this sense the change might be interpreted as a step backwards in the

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<sup>140</sup> Lenin (1983: 302) argues that every society is a volume of societal conditions and its character is defined by conditions of production. These conditions of production follow a historic type that is valid for a certain period of time, a formation. The change from one formation to another follows the law of the dialectic of the forces of production and the relations of production. The law states that when the dialectic relation of both of the above reaches a certain amount of quantitative force it changes into a new qualitative state.



deterministic development towards communism, or even the end of the development itself, since development was believed to be a continuous path towards the final goal of a communist society.

These ideas - of the theory itself and of its failure - would not have been discussed by artists on a daily basis, before or after unification. Prior to unification many artists were barely aware of these theories, although they would have come across them at some point in their lives, either through the education system or through family and friends. Yet visual artists had taken these ideas on board and they had become part of their beliefs. This was most obvious given the fact that many older visual artists did not reject the idea of socialism at all. After unification, visual artists did not see themselves as harbouring nostalgic feelings, but were still convinced that socialism, if applied more sensitively than had been the case in the GDR, represented a fairer model for social justice. In this sense, the goal of the aim culture, the new human being, also known as “the socialist personality”, was still regarded as worthwhile. Any new societal models or approaches would be measured against this goal. The continuous trajectory of a deterministic, one-way, positive and outward-looking development is still seen as most desirable.

Comparing their living and working conditions before and after unification, visual artists felt that their convictions had been proved correct. During this time they experienced the collapse of their living and working environment and saw that their pre-unification way of life was unlikely to continue. Artists perceived this as regressive from the point of view of career development and reported that they had not understood that profit and capital would be the dominant forces in the new society. Not only did

these ideas belong to a former period of development, but they also neglected the status of visual artists as a powerful group in society.

The slogan “profit first” had often been used by SED party officials to portray capitalist society as inhuman and exploitative (*“Ausbeutergesellschaft”*), using Marxist terminology. On unification, eastern Germany had become part of the previously demonised, inhuman capitalist society that was now dominating everyday life.

Although many artists welcomed the new opportunities offered by the changes, their opinions of the new life were generally based on values developed under the communist regime, which usually carried with them negative connotations of the new society.

### ***7.3.3 Ideology, truth and power***

The relationship between the values of visual artists and Marxist-Leninist ideology was strengthened by the special role assigned to them in the GDR. As mediators between the people, the community and the societal and ideological aims of the state, they were responsible for the visualisation of progress. The artists and their works had to visualise the path to communism through aesthetic principles. This role incorporated a commitment to power that brought with it corresponding societal status.

This commitment to power was further strengthened by the fact that the ideology had been declared to be the “official truth”, and the scientific and uncontested law of GDR society that organises all aspects of society and cultural life (Goldfarb, 1994: 66). In addition, there was an element of morality woven into the official truth. Jäger (2001: 1) argues that truth, morality and power converged in the GDR and Schorlemmer (1994: 143) takes this argument a step further by asserting that morality and power were

identical, so that attacking or questioning power meant engaging in an immoral act. The visual artists were connected to this combination of ideology, power, truth and morality through their role as mediators. They remained close to those in power, though in the shadows, and therefore the supply requirement of the arts and artists was undisputed. It was impossible to achieve this unique position again in the new society.

Delivering the most insightful account of the relationship between ideology and power in the socialist system, Havel (1989: 20) argues that ideology acted as the main guarantee for the inner coexistence of power. Ideology gave the structure of power a kind of “methaphysical order” that connected all the different parts into a coherent whole. It developed a codex of regulations and reference points for communication and interaction. For the individual, intellect and conscience were delegated to their political superiors and power was identified as the centre of truth. The question of ideology was therefore always a question of power (Havel 1989: 12).

In the case of many visual artists this delegation of power and intellect expressed itself in different ways. Some identified themselves publicly with the ideas, others denied them and withdrew from public involvement in political activity. A smaller group acted against them by participating in the movement “walking through the institutions”. Yet all artists accepted the exceptional status of the arts in the GDR. They enjoyed economically stable and secure living and working conditions and were well respected in their communities. Most of the artists participated actively, fulfilling the special mediating role as the social representative of the arts to the people. By so doing they implicitly accepted their status and with it acknowledged power as the “metaphysical order” of the ideology.

After unification the close relationship between power, ideology, truth and morality vanished but what survived were remnants of the visual artists' ideological convictions. These unchanged beliefs and values conflicted with the new circumstances of advanced capitalism. As a result, feelings of anger, frustration, depression and neglect dominated the visual artists' community. These feelings provided the conditions for the older visual artists to resist adaptation and thus delay or make impossible a re-start to their careers. In this sense Marxist-Leninist ideology was carried over and applied to the new situation after unification. Ideology became a kind of destiny for the older group of visual artists. In terms of development, visual artists once again found themselves in a society that only recognised one option. Unsuccessful adaptation might also be interpreted as rejection of this one-way option. Interestingly, visual artists showed resentment about the fact that there was only one way of development. It appears likely that they would have welcomed other options, such as a more socialist society that would take their convictions into account and restore their reputations and social position.

## **7.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has analysed the main cause for the delayed and obstructed adaptation of the older group of visual artists after unification. It has been argued that GDR socialisation of visual artists left a permanent impression on their behaviour after unification. Thus adaptation was more or less unsuccessful because the new living and working conditions were judged by the values and norms developed earlier in the GDR. This is seen as the primary reason for the struggle by the older visual artists to restart their careers in the new circumstances.

It has been argued that values are not only very stable and important for any individual's course of action, but that they are also internalised during the process of socialisation. The findings on visual artists correspond to Inglehart's socialisation theory, which suggests that, at the macro level, cultural, economic and political changes form a coherent pattern. Yet in the development of the relationship between environment and value priorities there is a time lag that tends to last at least one generation. Therefore value change could not be expected from the older generation, i.e. the older group of visual artists.

Furthermore, it has been argued that the findings of this study concerning the process and the content of socialisation could be applied more widely to eastern German society as a whole, as well as to other similar smaller sub-groups of society, for example within the artists' community.

In the second section of this chapter the content of values was explored further. In drawing on the two main cultures, the aim culture and the niche culture of GDR

socialisation, values were found to be part of the successful indoctrination of Marxist-Leninist ideology. Visual artists' socialisation was dominated by the "taking care mentality" of the state, which dispensed ideology on a day-to-day basis. The infiltration of values by ideology occurred slowly over many years and was explored in different ways. Values such as excellence and solidarity were directly related to the overall model of the "socialist personality". A more indirect relationship was that between the artists' belief of how society functions and ideology as represented by the steps of economic determinism.

In the final part of the section on ideology, the relationship between values and ideology was discussed in relation to power and truth. Because of the special role played by visual artists as mediators between the aim culture, the community and the people, they accepted ideology as the metaphysical order and power as a necessity. In return, they enjoyed a unique status ensuring significant reputation and secure living and working conditions. After unification, their unchanged values came into conflict with the new circumstances and laid the foundation for unsuccessful adaptation.

## **8 Conclusion**

### **8.1 Introduction**

The aim of this study has been to analyse both the changes in visual artists' living and working conditions and the ways in which visual artists reacted to these changes after German unification. It has sought to explore aspects of the interface between the state, the individual visual artists and the visual artists' community in a society undergoing transformation and has discussed the impact of change on the existence of such a relationship. Most importantly, it has provided an opportunity to examine the behaviour of visual artists and the causes of this behaviour in relation to the process of transformation from a socialist to a capitalist society.

Before unification, studies of change were conducted in the two Germanys but a joint investigation of both systems then seemed very unlikely. As a result of unification, researchers were given a unique opportunity to investigate change while the process of transformation from one system to another was actually taking place. At such times in history the need for research tends to take a back seat as the transformation itself takes up all available resources. In addition, any focus on the impact of change on visual artists' conditions and behaviour, and their relation to arts policy, has always been rare, compared with the attention given to biographical research on individual artists. This thesis has attempted to redress the balance, and to make a case for the study of change in the behaviour and conditions affecting visual artists. Requests from the interviewees, and other related visual arts organisations, for dissemination of the research findings demonstrates that there is a demand for interdisciplinary research of this type in Saxony.

At the time when research for this study began, the reactions of visual artists to German unification were both under-researched and under-theorised. This was unsurprising, given that the process was still ongoing and that research takes time to germinate. Five years on, in 2001, the situation has not changed to any great extent. Few of the reports published by 2001 on the development of visual artists and the visual arts in the GDR (Feist 1996, Rehberg and Kaiser 1999, Göschen 2001, Offner 2000, Raum 2000) have taken into account what happened after German unification. In the first study of its kind in Saxony, Mühler and Wilsdorf (2001) published the results of their research on the social situation of artists. In this quantitative study the 1,787 artists who completed their questionnaire reported low incomes and a lack of information on state funding opportunities at local, regional, national and European levels. In addition, only 53% of the respondents had made financial provision for retirement and old age. These findings, which covered artists of all fields, lend support to the findings of the present study on visual artists.

The body of literature (Schröder 2000, Kahn 2000, Glaessner 2000, Hettlage/Lenz 2000), which focuses on the reactions of the East German people as a whole to unification has been rising steadily. This study, with its focus on the changing situation of visual artists, contributes not only to research on the arts world, but also enhances the general body of research on the changes in eastern Germany since unification.

In the conclusion to this thesis I will reflect upon the main themes to emerge from the study and some of their wider implications. The chapter is structured around the three main issues raised in Chapter One. Firstly, what does the research here reveal about



how visual artists responded to the challenge of German unification, i.e. to changes in their conditions and in visual arts policy? Secondly, what has the study contributed to the understanding of why visual artists' reacted as they did? Thirdly, what has the study contributed to the general understanding of individuals in the process of change? The chapter concludes with a discussion of the cultural policy implications of the research.

## **8.2 How has this study contributed to an understanding of visual artists' responses to the challenge of German unification?**

This study of change employed an interdisciplinary approach and combined sociology, psychology, history and cultural studies in order to analyse visual artists' responses to the challenge of German unification. While the government defined the aim of the process of transformation and pre-determined its outcome to be complete adaptation to the capitalist system, visual artists were struggling to accept these developments. The results of the research have revealed that initial expectations - that visual artists would adapt rapidly to their new living and working conditions - were not fulfilled. In fact, visual artists wavered between acceptance of and resistance to the new system, as suggested by the thesis title. Although the administrative transformation of the state was completed by 1998, the process of change is still ongoing. Unification left visual artists in a state of shock: a state they have been recovering from since 1990.

This is, of course, not surprising when one considers that visual artists had to face a complete change in their living and working conditions. When eastern German art sales collapsed in 1989, the costs of living and working increased substantially from the level, which had existed in the former GDR. In addition, artists realised that to break into the international arts market they would need both an established international reputation and personal recommendations, neither of which many were able to provide. The local and regional arts markets were unable to generate sufficient sales to finance the majority of visual artists by means of the arts trade alone. Despite attempts by the federal and regional governments to secure their living and working conditions, especially in the early years of unification, funding programmes were not designed to cover all the living costs of visual artists, as had been the case in the GDR. As a result,

many visual artists had to seek out other sources of income, for example from art-related work.

By the second stage of the unification process (from 1994 to 2000) it became obvious that no common response from the artists' community was forthcoming. Instead, the research findings show that artists' levels of adaptation and therefore their reaction to change differ, depending on the time and circumstances of their socialisation. For the purposes of this study, therefore, artists were divided into three different age groups. The group of older visual artists, who were 40 or over at the time of the interview, considered the changes to be unfavourable, regarding them as bringing about a decline in status and recognition. They reported feelings of failure and hardship. The middle group, on the threshold of their profession, saw unification as an opportunity, but they too had to struggle for balance while crossing the line between the old system and the new. The younger generation of visual artists, who were still in artistic education at the time of unification, reacted positively to change, believing that they themselves would succeed as freelance visual artists. This study argues that the more time spent in artistic socialisation in the old system, the less adapted artists will be to their new artistic environment. This means that the older artists take longer to adapt because they continue to look back at the past – comparing old experiences in the GDR with advanced capitalism post-unification.

In the academic literature similar reactions to change have been modelled using the Theory of Collective Cultural Shock and the Human Change Role Model. While the Theory of Cultural Shock offers a frame of reference for change in a broader sense by applying the phenomenon of cultural shock usually experienced by people travelling

abroad, to post-communist societies, the Human Change Role Model allows an in-depth examination of how change occurs and how it is implemented within organisations. In this thesis, both these theoretical approaches have been synthesised into a new model - the Visual Artists Adaptation Model. This combines both approaches with the responses of visual artists to German unification. It analyses the process of change experienced by visual artists in five stages (1. euphoria, 2. shock and disconfirmation, 3 adaptation, 4. stabilisation, 5. normalisation). In an ideal case scenario, the result of adaptation should be a career re-start, which can be achieved once visual artists manage to overcome cultural shock. It is argued here that adaptation is delayed when learning anxiety conflicts with survival anxiety and when a psychologically safe situation fails to be provided. This proved to be the case for the group of older visual artists.

The study of change raises important issues for social scientists, art historians and anthropologists concerning values, norms, ideology, power, meaning and interpretation. Previous chapters have suggested how change prompted the reconstruction of professional and divisive identities among visual artists. It is in this way that this thesis has sought to bring abstract theories to bear on the mundane drama of the everyday life of visual artists.

### **8.3 Does this study contribute to an understanding of why the older visual artists reacted as they did?**

The second goal of this study was to consider why older visual artists were reluctant to adapt to the changes following German unification. As suggested earlier, the older artists tended to judge their new living and working conditions in the light of previous experience. It is argued here that artists make this comparison using the set of values and norms developed during their artistic socialisation in the GDR. These values and norms had evolved in various ways over the years due to successful indoctrination with Marxist-Leninist ideology. While visual artists had had to mediate between the aim culture, the community and the people of the GDR, they had accepted ideology as the metaphysical order determined by those in positions of power. The GDR's aim to create a better human being was not achieved but the idea behind it survived, and visual artists now bemoan the loss of humanity, fairness, solidarity and an overall decline in their status and reputation in the new society.

Inglehart's socialisation theory suggests that cultural, economic and political changes form a coherent pattern but in the development of the relationship between environment and value priorities a time lag occurs that tends to last one generation. In this study the older visual artists represent this generation, clinging to the "old" values as the key to resistance to adaptation. They highlight the importance of value analysis in studies of change as they sustain "old" convictions in the new society and secure their survival by being seemingly immune to disturbances to their everyday view of the world.

#### **8.4 What has the study contributed to a general understanding of the behaviour of human beings in the process of change?**

The intention of this study was to investigate the reactions of the visual artists' community to change. In the introduction it was argued that it is hard to classify visual artists as a professional group. In fact the artists' community prefers to think of itself as a collection of individuals rather than as a group. This makes group allocation difficult. However, because the "individual" status of a visual artist means that he/she spends most of his/her time in the studio and has to make a conscious effort to communicate with others (different, say, from the situation in an office), we are given the opportunity to study change away from the everyday politics of group dynamics. However, visual artists also participate in community life and, even though they may appear to be solitary figures, they contribute to public debate as individuals and through their work. In terms of this research, visual artists represent a group, are part of society and reflect that society within their work. This study could therefore make some general contribution to the theory of change.

The findings of the study, with its focus on visual artists, contribute to the theory of change in two ways. Firstly, the Visual Artists Adaptation Model analyses the behaviour of visual artists in the process of transformation and has potential for future application to visual artists and other groups in other German regions, as well as in other Eastern European countries where similar conditions apply. The model provides a framework for an in-depth analysis of research data and suggests directions for future research on the causes of reactions to change. Secondly, the relationship between values, ideology and power, as examined in chapter 7, provides a case study on the importance of values. The research shows that values can prevent or delay change in

one generation following societal transformation. Value analysis can also help identify future areas of conflict between the state administration and those groups relying at least in part on state support during the process of transformation. In addition, this study shows that a “new start” is only possible when people’s “old” convictions, values and norms, which form part of their tradition and history, are taken into consideration when implementing the new conditions.

## **8.5 What next?**

The findings and discussions of the thesis have given rise to issues that need to be addressed and taken into account for the benefit of future cultural policy developments. What are the implications of the research being reported here? As argued in the previous section, change has been defined as adaptation, in which West German meanings and values were given priority in eastern Germany after unification. As a result of this, the older group of visual artists was unable to reflect and come to terms with the past. Their individual histories and that of the GDR were denied, as had been the case with Fascism in the post-war period. As the analysis of the causes of visual artists' reactions to unification showed, values are internalised over years of artistic socialisation and are very stable. In order to improve the situation and circumstances of the older visual artists, these values need to be acknowledged and fed into the concerns of the artists' community during the transformation process. This might not only encourage communication, but would also make it easier for the older visual artists to come to terms with their past. Visual artists would be able to re-establish their sovereignty, which might then encourage them to enter into a dialogue - for example with the state administration about alternative funding routes in arts policy - rather than resort to confrontation.

However, the development of such a dialogue is uncommon in the artists' community. Most discussion is related to the works of art themselves and little is exchanged about past, present or future issues and opinions. Every artist develops his/her own understanding of what it is to be an artist and interprets developments in arts policy from an individual point of view, but the potential of the artists' community as a group to be able to shape the development of their profession has been underestimated since



German unification. Visual artists will continue to face new challenges which will question the future role of their profession while at the same time coming to terms with their past. Some of the challenges lie with the continuing weakness and decline of the East German arts market and with cuts in state funding that are likely at a time of recession in the German economy. Is it the responsibility of the visual artists themselves to develop and guide their profession through the transformation process?

The artists' dialogue with the state administration is as important as internal communication within the artists' community, as it can contribute to the improvement of the situation of visual artists by making sure their concerns are heard. After unification Saxon arts policy focused on improving living and working conditions by providing a network of funding programmes, but artists reported difficulties in understanding their structure, criteria and procedures. Poor communication between the two sides widened the gap in understanding between administrators and visual artists. Communication is a key issue in achieving better understanding between the two parties - a common problem for arts policy in the process of transformation.

Arts policy in a transforming society faces not only the challenge of change, but also has to take on responsibility for the immediate past, and make reference to it in the policy of the present. In this way, arts policy can contribute to the development of a dialogue between visual artists and state visual arts administration. This would not be based on a position of privilege arising out of a dominant culture but would take into account the fact that successful change could incorporate "old" values. Policy has been interwoven with attitudes, norms, values and feelings, particularly in relation to power. In the case of the visual artists in Saxony, the burdens of transformation have been

compounded by the particular feelings of a misunderstood group of professionals as well as by shortfalls in communication.

The analysis of visual artists' conditions has raised a number of key issues related to the general understanding of transformation. In eastern Germany, transformation has focused on adaptation and any resistance has been seen as failure. However, the behaviour of older visual artists in this transformation process has highlighted the need for an open debate on the past, the present and the future, to which all should be able to contribute. Time and resources are also necessary requirements. Adaptation as the sole option of change should be redefined in a debate that welcomes the input of visual artists even if they are guided by "old" values. Transformation has given the state arts administration additional responsibilities. Questions of arts funding lead on to general questions for society and democracy as a whole. Should funding only be provided to those who have successfully integrated into this new society? Is it worthwhile investing in the older generation of artists who are nearing retirement, or should they be abandoned by society? Can democracy afford to deconstruct the generational agreement in a process of transformation? These questions point to a wider conflict, which is introduced when the concerns of the actors undergoing the transformation are taken into account. The older visual artists called adaptation a one-way option. The concept of fast-track unification has denied visual artists the opportunity to make their own particular contribution to the debate on issues familiar to them - namely creativity and innovation.

In the introduction visual artists were referred to as messengers, carriers and developers of cultural policies. This study has shown that the concerns and behaviour of visual artists, varying as they do from adaptation to resistance, inform policy development. It

argues that a better understanding (on the part of the state art administration) of visual artists' opinions and values may improve communication and may therefore be reflected in policy development. While cultural policy research usually focuses on the relationship between actors (such as artists), their products and society, this study has shifted attention towards the artists themselves, their concerns and their behaviour within this relationship. This shift has highlighted a different aspect and revealed that cultural policy research is investigating not merely a complex system of information exchange, but that it deals with individuals who bring all their experience, concerns, values and norms into this relationship. It shows that cultural policy research needs to reach out and draw from other academic disciplines - such as history, the social sciences, business studies and psychology, all of which focus on people and could have a multi-disciplinary approach to research.

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## Appendix

### A. Arts policy in the GDR – a selection of events

This list mainly refers to events relating to chapter 2 on GDR arts policy (Feist, 1996: 890f.)

#### 1945

17/18 June Trade Union no. 17 (responsible for art and literature) founded within the FDGB.

3 July The league of culture was set up.

#### 1946

3-5 February First KPD meeting on culture; topic: the renewal of German culture

21-22 April SPD and KPD unified into SED in the Soviet Occupation Zone

25 August First German Art Exhibition in Dresden after the war (the literature mentions another art exhibition in Berlin which took place in the same year and which also claims to have been the first art exhibition after the war). In the course of the year the first art academies re-open in Weimar and in Burg Giebichenstein, those in Berlin, Dresden and Leipzig re-open in the following year.

#### 1947

28/29 January Cultural meeting of the SED

April First issue of *Bildende Kunst*, a monthly visual arts journal, is published

20-24 September Second SED party meeting

#### 1948

5-7 May First SED cultural meeting

19 and 24 November The daily newspaper *Tägliche Rundschau*, publishes an article on “formalistic tendencies in German painting” by Alexander Dymshitz

#### 1949

2 September Founding of the *Kulturfonds*

10 September - 31 October Second art exhibition in Dresden

October

07 October Founding of the GDR

October The last issue of *Bildende Kunst* is published

#### 1950

24 March Opening of the German Academy of Art in Berlin

17/18 June First meeting of the Association of Visual Artists and setting up organisation

20-24 July Third SED party meeting, agreement to set up the “party of new type”

#### 1951

20/21 January The second attack against formalism is initiated by Orlov’s article “ways and tortuous paths of modern art”

31 August The state commission of art (*Stakuko*) starts to work

#### 1952

7-9 June Second meeting of the Association of Visual Artists in Berlin

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 23 July                        | Parliament decides on administrative reform. The old structure of the <i>Länder</i> is rearranged into 15 districts ( <i>Bezirke</i> ).                           |
| <b>1953</b>                    |   |
| January                        | Publication of the first issue of a new journal (with the old name) <i>Bildende Kunst</i>   |
| 1 March - 25 May               | The third art exhibition in Dresden   |
| 29/30 April                    | Artists' representatives from the whole of Germany meet ( <i>Gesamtdeutscher Künstlerkongress</i> )   |
| 17 June                        | Workers' strikes turn into uprising. Demonstrations take place in many towns in the GDR. The state ends the counterrevolutionary activities by force.             |
| <b>1954</b>                    |   |
| 7 January                      | The Ministry of Culture starts its work   |
| <b>1955</b>                    |   |
| 26-29 January                  | Third meeting of the Association of Visual Artists in a factory (VEB EAW) in Berlin/Treptow   |
| <b>1956</b>                    |   |
| 14-25 February                 | 20th CPDSU party meeting, Khrushchev's speech about the re-stalinisation of the Soviet Union  |
| 11 November                    | Soviet troops suppress the Hungarian uprising   |
| 29 November                    | Wolfgang Harich imprisoned and start of legal proceedings against GDR artists and intellectuals   |
| <b>1957</b>                    |   |
| 23/24 October                  | SED cultural conference; topic: the ideological fight for socialist culture   |
| <b>1958</b>                    |   |
| 10-16 July                     | 5 <sup>th</sup> SED party congress  |
| 28 September - 25 January 1959 | Fourth art exhibition in Dresden  |
| <b>1959</b>                    |   |
| 24/25 April                    | First Bitterfelder conference, slogan: "seize your pen, mate"   |
| 1-5 December                   | Fourth meeting of the Association of Visual Artists in Leipzig  |
| <b>1960</b>                    |   |
| 27-29 April                    | Cultural conference of the SED central committee  |
| <b>1961</b>                    |   |
| 13 August                      | Borders of Berlin occupation zone closed and start of building of the Berlin Wall   |
| 17-31 October                  | 22nd CPDSU party meeting introduces new party programme of de-stalinisation; following the meeting, the use of Stalin's name is abolished in the GDR              |
| <b>1962</b>                    |   |
| 22 September - 6 March 1963    | Fifth German art exhibition in Dresden  |
| <b>1963</b>                    |   |
| 15-21 January                  | Sixth SED party meeting. Alfred Kurella, Head of the Cultural Department on the Central Committee had to give up his post to Kurt Hager                           |
| 25/26 March                    | Meeting of politburo of the SED central committee and Ministerial Council with artists and writers, Kurt Hager speaks about the arts' relationship with the party |

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| <b>1964</b>                 |  |
| 24-26 March                 | Fifth meeting of the Association of Visual Artists in Berlin   |
| March                       | Department 20 at Stasi headquarters becomes responsible for cultural affairs including visual arts   |
| 24/25 April                 | Second Bitterfelder conference, introduction of the new economic system of planning and leading into the cultural arena  |
| <b>1965</b>                 |  |
| 15-18 December              | Eleventh meeting of the SED central committee; topic: ideological questions of cultural policy in the GDR. The meeting became known as the "demolition of the artists' community". |
| <b>1966</b>                 |  |
| 2-6 May                     | International conference on SED cultural policy at the Department of Art History at the University in Leipzig  |
| <b>1967</b>                 |  |
| 17-22 April                 | Eighth SED party conference, Walter Ulbricht speaks about unsatisfactory developments in the visual arts   |
| 1 October - 4 February 1968 | Sixth German art exhibition in Dresden   |
| <b>1968</b>                 |  |
| 21 August                   | Troops of the Warsaw Pact move into Prague to crush the Czech reform movement  |
| <b>1969</b>                 |  |
| 28/29 April                 | Tenth meeting of the SED central committee, Kurt Hager speaks about the basic questions of spiritual life in socialism   |
| <b>1970</b>                 |  |
| 28-30 April                 | Sixth meeting of the Association of Visual Artists, renaming of the association into Association of Visual Artists of the GDR ( <i>VBK-DDR</i> )                                   |
| <b>1971</b>                 |  |
| 3 May                       | 16th meeting of the SED central committee, Erich Honecker becomes First Secretary of the SED Central Committee   |
| 15-19 June                  | Eighth SED party conference, policy of separate development of the socialist GDR from the imperialist FRG announced  |
| <b>1972</b>                 |  |
| 6/7 July                    | Sixth meeting of the SED central committee, announcement of broad and varied themes, styles and materials in art   |
| 5 October - 25 March 1973   | Seventh GDR art exhibition in Dresden  |
| <b>1973</b>                 |  |
| 21 June                     | Contract about the basis of the relationship between the FRG and the GDR ( <i>Grundlagenvertrag</i> ) comes into force   |
| 18 September                | GDR becomes a member of the United Nations   |
| <b>1974</b>                 |  |
| January                     | First exhibition of the EP Gallery in Berlin   |
| 2 May                       | Opening of embassies of the FRG in Berlin (East) and of the GDR in Bonn  |
| 28-30 May                   | Seventh meeting of VBK-DDR in Karl-Marx-Stadt  |
| 1 October                   | Founding of the art and antiquities trade association (later   |

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
|                            | renamed <i>Staatlicher Kunsthandel der DDR</i> )  |
| <b>1975</b>                |   |
| 12 April                   | Opening of exhibition by Sitte in the Hamburg Art Association   |
| 30 September - 31 December | International art exhibition "Thirty successful years" (" <i>30 siegreiche Jahre</i> ") in Berlin   |
| <b>1976</b>                |   |
| 18-22 May                  | Ninth SED party conference  |
| 31 May                     | Opening of the exhibition "Young artists of the GDR" in Berlin  |
| 16 November                | Wolf Biermann forced to emigrate  |
| <b>1977</b>                |   |
| 30 May                     | Opening of the gallery "Clara Mosch" in Karl-Marx-Stadt   |
| June                       | Opening of the sixth documenta in Kassel, including for the first time participation by GDR artists   |
| 1 October - 2 April        | Eighth Art exhibition of the GDR in Dresden   |
| <b>1978</b>                |   |
| 26 November                | Opening of the Matteuer-exhibition in Hamburg   |
| <b>1978</b>                |   |
| 21- 23 November            | Eighth congress of VBK-DDR in Berlin  |
| <b>1979</b>                |   |
| 22 June                    | Honecker meets with the leaders of all artists associations; topic: the cultural policy of the party is realised successfully                 |
| <b>1980</b>                |   |
| 22 March                   | Opening of a Tübke exhibition in Hannover   |
| 6 December                 | Cremer exhibition opens in Duisburg   |
| <b>1981</b>                |   |
| 11-16 April                | Tenth party conference of the SED   |
| 4 December                 | Opening of the Magnus exhibition at the gallery <i>Arkade</i> in Berlin, followed by the closure of the gallery                               |
| 13 December                | Declaration of state of emergency in Poland   |
| <b>1982</b>                |   |
| 9 June                     | Opening of the Biennale in Venice; GDR artists participate for the first time   |
| 2 October - 2 April        | Ninth art exhibition of the GDR in Dresden  |
| <b>1983</b>                |   |
| <b>1983</b>                |   |
| 15-17 November             | Ninth congress of the VBK-DDR in Berlin   |
| <b>1984</b>                |   |
| 7 June                     | Opening of the exhibition " <i>Durchblick</i> " with works by 41 GDR artists in Oberhausen/FRG, collected by the Ludwig Institute for GDR Art |
| <b>1986</b>                |   |
| 17-21 April                | Eleventh SED party conference   |
| 6 May                      | Contract of cultural exchange between the GDR and FRG signed  |
| 13 November                | Opening of the exhibition " <i>Menschenbilder - Kunst der DDR</i> " in Bonn   |
| <b>1987</b>                |   |
| 3 October - 3 April        | Tenth art exhibition of the GDR in Dresden  |
| <b>1988</b>                |   |
| <b>1988</b>                |   |
| 19 November                | The Soviet journal <i>Sputnik</i> is banned   |



## **B. The path to German Unity – list of selected events from 1989 to 2000**

### **1989**

- 30 September Opening of the Austrian-Hungarian border to GDR refugees  
2 October 20,000 people demonstrate for reforms in Leipzig  
9 October 70,000 demonstrate in Leipzig: authorities do not intervene  
18 October Honecker removed from office  
4 November One million East Germans demonstrate in East Berlin  
9 November GDR borders to the FRG are opened  
27 November Demonstrators in Leipzig demand unification  
28 November Chancellor Kohl announces a ten-point plan for unification  
3 December The Politbüro and SED central committee resign  
19/20 December Kohl and Modrow, the new GDR Prime Minister agree to begin negotiations on an inter-German partnership  
31 December 343,854 East Germans emigrated to the FRG in 1989 while 40,000 had emigrated in 1988

### **1990**

- 15 January Crowds occupy Stasi headquarters in East Berlin  
31 January 58,043 East Germans emigrate to the FRG in January  
21 February The People's Chamber, the GDR's Parliament, formally commits itself to unification  
18 March - The first free national elections to the Peoples Chamber see a landslide victory for the Conservative Alliance  
6 May Local elections are held in the GDR. The CDU continues to be the strongest party  
1 July The monetary, economic and social union between the FRG and the GDR comes into force  
22 July The People's Chamber passes a law creating federal states (Länder)  
31 August The FRG and the GDR sign the Treaty of Unification.  
3 October Germany is united  
14 October Elections are held in the Free State of Saxony. The CDU is the largest party and gains 92 seats while the SPD has 32 seats, the PDS 17, the B'90/Greens 10 and the Liberals 9 seats  
2 December The first all-German elections to the German Bundestag (644 seats) result in victory for the CDU-FDP coalition

### **1991**

- 16/17 January Chancellor Kohl is re-elected and presents his new cabinet. Three of the ministers are from the new federal states.  
8 March The *Aufschwung Ost* programme injects DM24 billion into the eastern German economy over two years  
1 July Tax increases come into effect in order to finance the joint economic recovery programme in eastern Germany

### **1992**

- 2 January A new Law permits all citizens to examine their own Stasi files. More than 200 km shelf length of files have survived and are administered by an independent authority, the

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
|                                | <b>“Gauck Behörde”</b>  |
| 6 April<br>1993                | The Saxon constitution comes into force   |
| 12 January                     | The charges against Honecker, the former General Secretary of the SED are dropped. He leaves for Chile where he dies in 1994  |
| 13 March                       | The Federal Government and the 16 federal states agree on a “Solidarity Pact” to help finance economic recovery in the new federal states. On the strength of a new fiscal equalisation scheme between the federal states, the five new <i>Länder</i> will receive DM52 billion annually.   |
| 22 April                       | Founding of the Cultural Foundation of Saxony   |
| 12 October                     | The federal government decides to move to Berlin by the year 2000. Eight out of the 18 ministries are to remain in Bonn.  |
| <b>1994</b>                    |   |
| 20 January                     | “The cultural area law” is established in Saxony  |
| 1 September                    | The last Russian troops leave Germany   |
| 16 October                     | Chancellor Kohl’s governing coalition is returned in the Bundestag elections. The PDS, the successor to the SED, obtains 4,4% of the votes and by winning four seats directly, achieves entry to Parliament.  |
| 11 November                    | The second regional elections result in another victory for the CDU and Biedenkopf is re-elected President of the Free State of Saxony.   |
| 31 December                    | Within four years, the privatisation work of the <i>Treuhandgesellschaft</i> has established a foundation for a new beginning in the new federal states along market economy lines. Over 14,500 enterprises have been privatised or shut down. Those tasks still outstanding are handled by a successor organisation, the Federal Office for Unification-related Special Tasks (BVS), which is also responsible for the administration of the assets of the political parties and mass organisations of the former GDR. |
| <b>1995</b>                    | A net sum of DM489 billion of public funds has been transferred to the East German Länder between unification and 1994. A further DM 155 billion was transferred in 1995.   |
| 27 January - 17 April          | Exhibition “ <i>Auftrag Kunst</i> ” (“Assignment art”), Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin   |
| <b>1996</b>                    |   |
| 18 January                     | Funding programme for studio extensions ( <i>Um-und Ausbau</i> ) in Dresden came into effect  |
| <b>1997</b>                    |   |
| 01 January                     | Revised edition of the funding programme for visual arts from the SMWK came into effect   |
| <b>1998</b>                    |   |
| 15 September - 19 January 1998 | “ <i>Deutschlandbilder</i> ” exhibition, Martin Grobius Bau, Berlin   |

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| 27 September       | Bundestag elections. The newly elected Parliament convenes in Berlin. Gerhard Schröder (SPD) replaces Helmut Kohl (CDU) as Federal Chancellor  |
| 27 October         | Creation of post of State Minister for Media and Cultural Affairs at federal government level, changed in 2001 to Federal Government Commissioner for Cultural and Media Affairs ( <i>Bundesbeauftragter</i> ) |
| <b>1999</b>        |  |
| 12 January         | Conference about the past, present and future of the Saxon cultural area law ( <i>Kulturraumkonferenz</i> ) in Dresden   |
| 9 May - 9 November | “The Rise and Fall of the Modern Era” ( <i>“Aufstieg und Fall der Moderne”</i> ) exhibition, Kunstsammlungen Weimar  |
| 19 September       | CDU is re-elected with 76 seats in the parliament of Saxony, the PDS gains 30 seats while the SDP receives 14 seats.   |
| <b>2000</b>        |  |
| 3 October          | Ten years of German unity  |