

**“Fixpunkte des ‘antitotalitären Konsenses’”? The Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen  
memorials, Germany’s ‘double past’, and cultural memory in the Berlin Republic**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## Abstract

This thesis sheds light on the ways in which Germany's 'double' National Socialist and communist past has been represented and contested since 1998, taking the Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen memorials as case studies. It pays particular attention to the intersection between discourses on the 'double past' and the institutionalization of remembrance in reunified Germany, signalled by the passing into law of a Federal Memorials Concept (*Gedenkstättenkonzeption*) in 1999 that sought to align the memorials with a present-day 'anti-totalitarian consensus'. Whilst Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, having served as concentration camps during the Third Reich and then as Soviet internment camps from 1945-1950, have in a normative sense been co-opted into the 'anti-totalitarian' narrative, this thesis argues that it is necessary to at least partially uncouple the situation on the ground from the official position.

On the evidence of various cultural representations of the two memorials, it demonstrates that there is no single, uniform 'anti-totalitarian consensus' governing discourse on the double past. Instead, the thesis proposes a situational and relational model of discourse that attends to both the contexts and power relations within which the double past is negotiated. The four thematic chapters of the thesis address the situational question by each focusing on the embedment of the memorials in a specific cultural space. In the majority of these spaces, a Holocaust-centred culture of remembrance has obtained, despite federal rhetoric appearing to have moved closer to equation of National Socialism and communism throughout the 2000s, therefore pointing to factors besides policy directives emanating in Berlin shaping discourse on the memorials. Furthermore, by utilizing a Foucauldian model of discourse and concepts from Niklas Luhmann's theory of social systems, the thesis offers a more nuanced view of the relationship between institutionalization and responses to the memorials.

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## List of Abbreviations

ALS (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Lager Sachsenhausen 1945 – 1950 e. V.)

AS (Archiv Sachsenhausen)

BgR (Bürgerbündis gegen Rechts)

BPA-DOK (Zentrales Dokumentationssystem des Presse- und Informationsamtes der Bundesregierung)

BwA (Archiv der Gedenkstätte Buchenwald)

CDU (Christlich-Demokratische Union)

CSU (Christlich-Soziale Union)

DDR (Deutsche Demokratische Republik)

e. V. (eingetragener Verein)

eA (erhöhtes Anforderungsniveau)

FAZ (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*)

FDP (Freie Demokratische Partei)

FG (Freiheitsglocke)

FiBB (Förderverein für interkulturelle Bildung und Begegnung e. V.)

FRG (Federal Republic of Germany)

gA (grundlegendes Anforderungsniveau)

GDR (German Democratic Republic)

GULag (Glawnoje uprawlenije lagerei [Main Camp Administration])

IC-MEMO (International Committee of Memorial Museums in Remembrance of the Victims of Public Crimes)

ICTJ (International Centre for Transitional Justice)

IKBD (Internationales Komitee Buchenwald-Dora und Kommandos e. V.)

ISK (Internationales Sachsenhausen-Komitee)

KZ (Konzentrationslager)

LAG (Lagerarbeitsgemeinschaft Buchenwald-Dora e. V.)

MAZ (*Märkische Allgemeine*)

NKWD (Narodny komissariat wnutrennych del [People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs]; from 1946 Ministerstwo wnutrennych del [Ministry for Internal Affairs; MWD])

NMG (Nationale Mahn- und Gedenkstätte)

NSDAP (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei)

OdF (Opfer des Faschismus)

OGA (*Oranienburger Generalanzeiger*)

OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe)

PNN (*Potsdamer Neueste Nachrichten*)

SBZ (Sowjetisch Besetzte Zone)

SED (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands)

SMT (Sowjetisches Militärtribunal)

SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands)

Stadtarch. Orbg. (Stadtarchiv Oranienburg)

*Stasi* (Staatssicherheitsdienst)

SZ (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*)

TA (*Thüringer Allgemeine*)

TLZ (*Thüringische Landeszeitung*)

taz (*tageszeitung*)

ThILLM (Thüringer Institut für Lehrerfortbildung, Lehrplanentwicklung und Medien)

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)

UOKG (Union der Opfer Kommunistischer Gewaltherrschaft)

VOS (Gemeinschaft ehemaliger politischer Häftlinge – Victims of Stalinism e. V.)

WVHA (Wirtschaftsverwaltungshauptamt)

# Ch. 1: Constructing and deconstructing the ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’

## *Introduction*

This thesis, which explores patterns of representing Germany’s ‘double’ National Socialist and communist pasts<sup>1</sup> at the Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen memorials, beings to an extent *in media res*. It sets out to nuance our understanding of discourse on the ‘short twentieth century’ in the Berlin Republic by examining debates on the ground at the memorials, but these debates in fact pre-date the move of the German capital from Bonn to Berlin. As early as 1994, the Buchenwald survivor Jorge Semprún was enjoining reunified Germany to lead the way in establishing a unified European memory of the double past.<sup>2</sup> At the memorials too, plans were already in place for documenting and commemorating their use as, variously, concentration camps during the Third Reich, Soviet internment camps (‘special camps’ or *Speziallager*) whilst Germany was under Allied occupation, and highly tendentious memorials to the ‘antifascist’ struggle against Nazism in East Germany. Why then begin an account of cultural discourse on the two memorials in 1998?<sup>3</sup>

There are, I argue, two good reasons for doing so. Firstly, 1998 marked a crucial juncture in the meaning assigned both to the memorials and to the double past more generally for German political culture. It was in 1998, after all, that the Bundestag formally laid out a vision for remembering National Socialism and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as well as a model of how this would relate to concepts of

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<sup>1</sup> Though the term ‘double past’ will appear in the remainder of the text without single quotation marks, these should be inferred. ‘Double past’ can be rendered in German as either ‘zweifache Vergangenheit’ or ‘doppelte Vergangenheit’. It should be noted however that ‘doppelte Vergangenheit’ more readily implies equivalence between the two pasts in question and is therefore more problematic.

<sup>2</sup> He stated this most clearly in his 1994 acceptance speech upon being awarded the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade. See Jorge Semprún, ‘Dank’, in *Friedenspreis des deutschen Buchhandels 1994*, pp. 7-14 (p. 13), [http://www.friedenspreis-des-deutschen-buchhandels.de/sixcms/media.php/1290/1994\\_sempr%FAAn.pdf](http://www.friedenspreis-des-deutschen-buchhandels.de/sixcms/media.php/1290/1994_sempr%FAAn.pdf) [accessed 03 Sept 2013].

<sup>3</sup> Though the formal move of the capital from Bonn to Berlin occurred in 1999, and was first approved by a narrow majority in the German parliament in 1991, this study takes 1998 as its starting point in recognition of the significance of the change in government that took place that year.

German identity in the present. This came in the form of recommendations issued by a federal commission of inquiry into East Germany, which had as part of its remit considered nationally viable forms of remembrance. Proclaiming an ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’ based on repudiation of Nazism and ‘real existing socialism’, it attached a normative discourse to sites such as Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen that presented the memorials as a kind of civilizing technology. One year later, a Federal Memorials Strategy (*Gedenkstättenkonzeption*) extended central funding to the sites on an indefinite basis, signaling the transition they had made in the course of the 1990s from the periphery to the centre of society. The point of departure for my study therefore dovetails with the institutionalization of memory on the double past, and the clear identification of the two memorials with a national culture of remembrance.

Secondly, the sites themselves had professionalized in the eight years between unification and the coming to power of a ‘Red-Green’ Social Democrat-Green coalition under Gerhard Schröder. New museological concepts that established a framework for handling the multiple pasts had explicitly called for a reorientation of the memorials around scientific standards and the practices of museums of contemporary history, though without losing sight of their unique commemorative and humanitarian functions. Likewise, new lobby groups had emerged in response to the discovery of mass graves at both sites containing prisoners of the *Speziallager*, and advocated the extension of commemoration to include these victims (the existence of the *Speziallager* had been suppressed in the GDR). Other survivors’ organisations, particularly communist-dominated groups that were sympathetic to the now discredited GDR model of remembrance, mobilized in support of pre-existing traditions. Not infrequently these groups would refuse outright to acknowledge prisoners of the *Speziallager* as victims, believing that to do so would risk relativizing National Socialist crimes that some inmates at the post-war camps, albeit a tiny minority, had indeed been involved in. Repertoires of commemorative practice and interpretations of the double past had thus begun to crystallize by the turn of the millennium.

There is of course a politics to these discrepancies in interpretation, as control of history was clearly viewed as a means of legitimization in the present. Caroline Pearce neatly sums up the implicit political (and ethical) equations behind debates on the double past since 1990 as follows:

‘The postunification period has seen recurring and unresolved debates on how to remember the Nazi and GDR pasts in the attempt to shape a unified narrative on

German history. The challenge is firstly which elements of both pasts to preserve in official memory, and secondly how to represent them without conflation, relativization, or hierarchization.<sup>4</sup>

By definition, then, the debates revolved around control of official memory. This is an elucidating insight into how the narration of the past depends to a great extent on latter-day power relations. To my mind however, the opposition between past and present does not get to the heart of how a given narrative on the double past is arrived at, or indeed how and why it either obtains or shifts over time. Consequently, the principle aim of this thesis is to look behind the rhetoric of the ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’ and pay greater attention to the *situational* and *relational* dimensions of discourse on Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen.

Concentrating on situational factors allows us to question the role played by the sites and spaces in which discourse is produced and communicates with other discourses. This is crucial, first of all, since the protagonists involved in debates over the memorials differ from space to space. I place debates on Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen in four discrete contexts: the memorial sites (as a type of public space), the locales of Weimar and Oranienburg, the regional states of Brandenburg and Thuringia, and the trans-national sphere. In addition, the drivers behind remembrance are not necessarily the same at federal level as they are at local or national level. We should be wary of overstressing the anti-totalitarian consensus as an underlying structure that determines the shape of remembrance away from Berlin.

Nonetheless, we cannot entirely disconnect discourse on the memorials since 1998 from the normative framework of institutionalized remembrance. I suggest thinking in terms of plural relations however, and therefore ask which relations are most influential in shaping discourses. As I have intimated above, attending to situational factors is one way of determining this. A second way is to assess how the ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’ has shaped engagement with the memorials. Rather than solely mapping this engagement against the ‘anti-totalitarian’ model on a spectrum between differentiation and equation though, we also need to establish whether it situates itself within or outside of this consensus – that is, does it identify and align itself with an overarching ‘federal’ model of civic governance? I work with a Foucauldian concept of

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<sup>4</sup> Caroline Pearce, ‘An Unequal Balance? Memorializing Germany’s “Double Past” since 1990’, in *The GDR Remembered: Representations of the East German State since 1989*, ed. by Nick Hodgin and Caroline Pearce (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011), pp. 172-198 (p. 173).

the *dispositif*, which has been helpfully modified and applied to the place of museums in broader patterns of cultural production through Tony Bennett's model of the 'exhibitionary complex' (see below for a fuller elaboration of the concept). Though I point to certain ways in which the institutionalization of remembrance has re-networked discourse and practice at the memorials, on the whole they do not act as straightforward 'Fixpunkte des antitotalitären Konsenses'.

Thirdly, and as a complement to the Foucauldian approach, I apply the concept of autopoiesis taken from Niklas Luhmann's theory of social systems to developments at the memorials. This way, I can avoid unduly prioritizing the postulate of a hegemonic 'collective' or 'cultural' memory (and by extension a legitimate version of history) as the organizing force behind debates on the past. Luhmann suggests departing from regulatory ideas or structures in an analysis of society<sup>5</sup> and focuses instead on communication between systems. Systems are not essentialized entities but are formed via the 'order from noise' principal. That is, systems are created out of the disjuncture between their external environment and the (less complex) way in which they render this. In the act of reducing complexity, systems establish a self-referential 'code' or logic that underlies subsequent systemic operations. Applied to the situation at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, the concept of autopoietic reproduction allows us to probe the 'codes' behind different discourses on the double past – theorized as systems in their own right – and their role in shaping these discourses over time. Thus, we can look beyond shifts in the 'institutionalized' position as the primary driver behind continuity and change since 1998.

Furthermore, given the number of structural similarities between Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, they are ideally suited to a comparative analysis that teases out general and context-specific trends. Not only did the same tripartite division into concentration camp, *Speziallager* and GDR-era memorial apply to the two sites; both were subject to re-conceptualisation after unification, and this was overseen in both cases by academic, Western-dominated Historians' Commissions (*Historikerkommissionen*). The resultant museological concepts are similar (though certainly not identical) and the debates surrounding the re-conceptualisation processes have hinged on the same questions. On the other hand, different stakeholder groups are engaged with each memorial, and they exist in different local and regional cultural constellations.

Writing in 2002, Bill Niven speculated that it would require a full ten years

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<sup>5</sup> Niklas Luhmann, *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1997), p. 35.

before one could judge with any certainty whether or not the concepts implemented at the memorials to the double past had been successful in negotiating the potential pitfalls of relativisation and hierarchization<sup>6</sup> mentioned by Pearce. Thus, 2013 represents a useful juncture at which to take stock on developments in the intervening decade. Though a case can certainly be made for looking beyond these two case studies<sup>7</sup> in order to produce a more complete picture of remembrance – they are by no means the only memorials with a ‘double’ past – I would nonetheless argue it is more useful to return to these prominent sites and hone in on their position relative to the institutionalized discourse. Given that both Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald serve a range of publics, from the more parochial to the positively global, they act as seismographs of the ‘official’ federal position and of the challenges mounted against it too.

The conclusion that this thesis reaches is that there has indeed been considerable deviation from the normative federal position at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. Though totalitarianist rhetoric has crept into the official federal line from the latter half of the 2000s onwards, and is enacted at or using the memorials by conservative politicians in particular, this contrasts with the continuity of a Holocaust-centred commemorative paradigm in discourses on-site, in the locales, and in Thuringia. Only in Brandenburg has there been a comparable trend towards supporting a totalitarian position on of the double past, but as we will see in chapter four, this was not simply an example of following federal precedent. By employing a multi-pillared theoretical model, I am able to shed light on what has driven each of these trends and connect this to specific contexts. In short, this thesis offers a differentiated analysis of the double past and can with some justification question whether the ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’ will ever become in reality what it is normatively supposed to be: a cornerstone of German identity, civic governance, and cultural policy.

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<sup>6</sup> Bill Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (London/New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 45.

<sup>7</sup> See for instance Andrew H. Beattie, ‘Between histories and memories: Torgau’s Memorial Museum for Germany’s short twentieth century’, *Museum and Society*, 8, 1 (2010), 37-55.

## ***History of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen***

Today the National Socialist concentration camps are widely regarded as a ‘Chiffre für die verabscheuungswürdigen Verbrechen des Nationalsozialismus insgesamt’.<sup>8</sup> Wolfgang Sofsky, in his pioneering sociological analysis, describes them as a microcosm of the National Socialist state’s absolute power over its perceived enemies.<sup>9</sup> Evocative though this image is, it rather masks the more complex reality of the camp system’s organizational structure, the conditions faced by prisoners there and the function they fulfilled.<sup>10</sup> The opening of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, for instance, marked a second phase in the camps’ development. Many of the camps that had been set up in the aftermath of the Nazis’ seizure of power in 1933 were so-called ‘wilde Konzentrationslager’ and came under the jurisdiction of, variously, the local police, the SA, and the SS. Yet the camps established from mid-1936 onwards, by which time Himmler was Chief of German Police, belonged to a formalized camp system administered by the Inspektion der Konzentrationslager (IKL).

Sachsenhausen, which Himmler himself proclaimed to be the model of a new, modern concentration camp, epitomized the formalization that was taking place. Opening in summer 1936, it was Oranienburg’s second concentration camp, following KZ Oranienburg, located in a local brewery and in existence between March 1933 and April 1934. Comparisons between the two camps are instructive. At KZ-Oranienburg, 34.6% of the prisoners were interned for between one and four weeks, and were subject to work as a corrective measure. KZ Sachsenhausen, by contrast, was enlarged several times and became a

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<sup>8</sup> Ulrich Herbert, Karin Orth, Christoph Dieckmann, ‘Einleitung’ in *Die nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager: Einleitung und Struktur*, ed. By *idem.*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2002), pp. 17-40 (p. 18).

<sup>9</sup> Wolfgang Sofsky, *Die Ordnung des Terrors: Das Konzentrationslager*, 6<sup>th</sup> edn. (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> For overviews of the concentration camps, see, for Buchenwald, Harry Stein, ‘Buchenwald – Stammlager’, in *Der Ort des Terrors: Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, ed. By Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel, vol. 3: Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2006), pp. 301-356; for Sachsenhausen, Hermann Kaienburg, ‘Sachsenhausen – Stammlager’, in *ibid.*, pp. 17-72.

permanent feature of the National Socialist state.<sup>11</sup> From 1938, the IKL had its seat in a building belonging to the camp complex, making Sachsenhausen the administrative centre of the camp system. KZ Buchenwald, opened in mid-July 1937, typified the new model of a self-contained camp complex, constructed around two separate areas for the prisoner camp and the SS and combining military institutions with sites of slave labour, detention and murder in an architectural ensemble.<sup>12</sup>

Neither camp was hidden from its surrounding locale. The municipality of Weimar in fact objected to the name KZ-Ettersberg initially given to Buchenwald, fearing that it may tarnish the Ettersberg's existing association with the town's classical heritage. As a consequence the camp's definite name was altered to KZ-Buchenwald/Post Weimar several weeks later. In 1935, the year after KZ Oranienburg was closed, three hundred-strong SS Death's Head Formation units were stationed in the town, using the baroque palace as a 'Militärquartier'.<sup>13</sup> Later, it was possible to see into the main camp at Sachsenhausen from houses in the neighbouring Jägerstraße (now Straße der Nationen).<sup>14</sup> Though prisoners recall isolated gestures of solidarity from locals, others remember receiving a far more hostile reception. Leon Szalet, for instance, describes how he and other Polish prisoners were pelted with stones and heckled upon arriving at Oranienburg.<sup>15</sup> Whatever their attitudes towards the camp and its occupants, locals – contrary to protestations after the end of the war – certainly knew about the camps and were aware of what went on there. Indeed, before crematoria were installed at Buchenwald in mid-1940, bodies of prisoners were brought to the town to be cremated in Weimar's municipal crematorium.<sup>16</sup>

Everyday life in the camps, though from the very beginning characterized by arbitrary and excessive use of violence as far as the prisoners were concerned, changed over time. Initially, the camps were used as an instrument of political

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<sup>11</sup> Günter Morsch, 'Oranienburg – Sachsenhausen, Sachsenhausen – Oranienburg', in *Die nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, ed. by Herbert et al, vol. 1, pp. 111-134 (pp. 117-118).

<sup>12</sup> Stein, 'Buchenwald – Stammlager', p. 303.

<sup>13</sup> Johannes Tuchel, 'Die Systematisierung der Gewalt: Vom KZ Oranienburg zum KZ Sachsenhausen', in *Konzentrationslager Oranienburg*, ed. by Günter Morsch (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1994), pp. 117-128 (p. 119).

<sup>14</sup> See Andrea Riedle, 'Die Stadt und das Lager: Oranienburg und das KZ Sachsenhausen', *Gedenkstätten Rundbrief*, 114, 8 (2003), 23-30.

<sup>15</sup> Leon Szalet, *Baracke 38: 237 Tage in den "Judenblocks" des KZ Sachsenhausen* (Berlin: Metropol, 2006), p. 31.

<sup>16</sup> Stein, 'Buchenwald – Stammlager', in *Der Ort des Terrors*, ed. by Herbert et al, p. 348.

repression and intimidation directed against internal ‘enemies’ of the Reich. Prisoner numbers at both Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen swelled in 1938 as concerted efforts were made to imprison those deemed to be ‘work-shy’ (‘*arbeitsscheu*’),<sup>17</sup> and increased again by several thousand in the wake of the *Kristallnacht* pogroms on 9 Nov 1938 (though many of those imprisoned at this point were released before the end of the year). With the onset of war however, any further releases were ruled out altogether, and the prisoner population increasingly consisted of non-Germans deported from occupied territories. As of November 1944, German nationals numbered 5,425 of a total of 59,267 prisoners at Buchenwald.<sup>18</sup> Prisoners were increasingly put to work as slave labourers in service of the state’s war economy, and indeed the camps came under the jurisdiction of the Business Administration Main Office (*Wirtschaftsverwaltungshauptamt*, WVHA) in early 1942. By the end of the war, prisoners were being forced to work in a dense, expansive network of satellite camps (*Außenlager*). The death rates at certain sites, such as in the Klinkerwerk brick factory in Oranienburg or the Mittelbau-Dora camp (which later became a standalone camp), were shockingly high.

Overall, the number of prisoners murdered or who died of exhaustion or illness at Buchenwald is thought to be in the region of 56,000. The figure estimated for Sachsenhausen is between 35-40,000.<sup>19</sup> Particularly as the war dragged on and the camps became increasingly overcrowded with frequent prisoner transports arriving from camps further east, the already deplorable hygienic conditions there worsened significantly, meaning that fatal diseases were rife amongst the prisoners. In the ‘small camp’ (‘*kleines Lager*’) at Buchenwald, where Jewish inmates were concentrated in an attempt to limit the spread of infection, up to 1980 prisoners occupied a single barrack. In addition, the SS frequently carried out targeted executions and mass murders; a particularly perfidious method, used to liquidate thousands of Soviet POWs at Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald in the course of 1941-1942, involved leading

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<sup>17</sup> The term could refer to Jews, Sinti and Roma, prostitutes, alcoholics, the destitute and so on. Those sent to the concentration camps as a result of the ‘*arbeitsscheu*’ roundups were forced to wear a black triangle on their uniform to denote imprisonment as ‘*asozial*’ (‘*Asoziale*’).

<sup>18</sup> Karin Hartewig, ‘Wolf unter Wölfen? Die prekäre Macht der kommunistischen Kapos im Konzentrationslager Buchenwald’, in *Die nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, ed. by Herbert et al, vol. 2 pp. 939-958 (p. 949).

<sup>19</sup> Kaienburg, ‘Sachsenhausen – Stammlager’, in *Der Ort des Terrors*, ed. by Benz and Distel, p. 65.

prisoners into a room on the pretext of measuring their height and shooting them at point blank range from behind a small, neck-high slit in the wall.<sup>20</sup>

The SS delegated much of the everyday running of the camps to prisoners. Unsurprisingly, many of the positions within the camp ‘self-administration’ such as camp elder or *kapo* were allocated to ‘Aryan’, usually German, prisoners. By contrast, the lot of those deemed ‘inferior’ in the racist hierarchy of the Third Reich was considerably worse, leaving them at the mercy of the SS and of the prisoner functionaries. Some of the *kapos* abused their power for personal advancement and more or less willingly collaborated with the SS in torturing and even killing prisoners; others built up clientist systems in which certain cliques within the camp benefited at the expense of others. It should be said, though, that a considerable number of prisoner functionaries, above all communists, did attempt to use what little latitude was available to them to ameliorate conditions for their fellow inmates and foment clandestine resistance within the camps. All in all, the line between resistance and collaboration was a fine one for the *kapos*, and placed them in a moral ‘grey zone’, to use Primo Levi’s term<sup>21</sup> – in the end a manifestation of the SS’s power, since it was they who forced prisoners into such collusion in the first place. As we will see, the legacy of resistance in the camps would later become an intrinsic part of the GDR’s official narrative of the Nazi past (I deal with this below, and in chapter two in the context of post-unification memorialization).

Such was the dominance of communist prisoners within the camp administration at Buchenwald that the underground resistance remained in existence until liberation on 11 April 1945; resistance members even had a hand in seizing control of the guard posts after the SS had fled the camp. In marked contrast to the approximately 21,000 prisoners the liberating US army division found at Buchenwald, only around 3000 inmates remained in the camp at Sachsenhausen when it was liberated by Polish and Soviet units of the Red Army on 22 April 1945. Around 33,000 others had been sent towards Schwerin on ‘death marches’, and thousands more had been transported to camps for

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<sup>20</sup> On the execution and mass murder of inmates at Sachsenhausen, see Günter Morsch, *Mord und Massenmord im Konzentrationslager Sachsenhausen 1936 – 1945* (Berlin: Metropol, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. by Raymond Rosenthal (London: Abacus, 1989), pp. 22-51.

liquidation in the months preceding this – 16,000 in February 1945 alone.<sup>22</sup> Already by this time, the Soviet advance westwards had brought with it the need to establish internment camps under the jurisdiction of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (the NKWD; later the Ministry for Internal Affairs or MWD) for German POWs, Nazi functionaries and other 'hostile elements'.<sup>23</sup> Though most of these camps were located in Poland and what was then East Prussia at the time of Germany's surrender on 8 May 1945, there was a gradual westward shift in the establishment of special camps (*Speziallager*) in subsequent months.

In the SBZ, ten such *Speziallager* were established, including at Buchenwald (*Speziallager Nr. 2*) and Sachsenhausen (*Speziallager Nr. 7/Nr. 1*). The *Speziallager*, although notionally existing as a legitimate part of the Allies' denazification strategy, also functioned as Stalinist internment camps in which legitimate or assumed political and ideological enemies of the Soviet state were arbitrarily held prisoner. A comparison with the internment camps set up by the western Allies illustrates this. Whilst the two largest groups imprisoned in camps in the US zone were Nazi functionaries and members of the SS, the *Speziallager* held almost no high-ranking officials or members of either the SA or SS.<sup>24</sup> Certainly there were de facto perpetrators amongst the prisoners. Held at the *Speziallager* at Buchenwald, for instance, was the mayor of Weimar Otto Koch, who had assisted in the ghettoization of the town's Jews in 1941.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, a number of internees were simply suspected of posing a political threat to the Soviet Occupation – threats that were often entirely groundless and were in any case never established, as not a single prisoner received due process.

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<sup>22</sup> Monika Knop and Monika Schmidt, 'Das KZ Sachsenhausen in den letzten Monaten vor der Befreiung' in *Befreiung Sachsenhausen 1945*, ed. by Günter Morsch and Alfred Reckendrees (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1996), pp. 22-34 (p. 23); Susanne zur Nieden, 'Kriegsende und Befreiung in Sachsenhausen', in *Von der Erinnerung zum Monument: Die Entstehungsgeschichte der Nationalen Mahn- und Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen*, ed. by Günter Morsch (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1996), pp. 59-67. On the death marches, see Antje Zeiger, 'Die Todesmärsche', in *Befreiung Sachsenhausen*, ed. by Morsch and Reckendrees, pp. 64-72.

<sup>23</sup> The text of the decree ordering these arrests is contained in Bodo Ritscher, 'Zur Herausbildung und Organisation des Systems von Speziallagern des NKVD der UdSSR in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands im Jahre 1945', *Deutschland Archiv*, 26, 1 (1993), 723-735 (pp. 726-727).

<sup>24</sup> See Lutz Niethammer, 'Alliierte Internierungslager in Deutschland nach 1945: Ein Vergleich und offene Fragen', in *Speziallager in der SBZ: Gedenkstätten mit "doppelter Vergangenheit"*, ed. by Reif-Spirek, Peter and Bodo Ritscher (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 1999), pp. 100-123 (p. 107).

<sup>25</sup> See *Das sowjetische Speziallager Nr. 2 1945 – 1950: Katalog zur ständigen historischen Ausstellung*, ed. by Bodo Ritscher (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1999), pp. 248-251.

Conditions in the camps were also dire, and inmates had to contend with pitiful rations, widespread disease and enforced inertia, meaning that they spent long periods of time consigned to their blocks without any opportunity to see the outside world. In Sachsenhausen alone, 12000 of a total of 60000 prisoners held at the *Speziallager* between summer 1945 and March 1950 died as a result of starvation or illness.<sup>26</sup> Of approximately 28,500 inmates at *Speziallager Nr. 2* at Buchenwald, around 7000 died. Research into Soviet documents made publicly accessible after 1990 has found no evidence that prisoners were deliberately liquidated, though some survivors of the *Speziallager* vigorously dispute this claim; I look in more detail at some of the contests over interpreting the cause of death at the *Speziallager* in subsequent chapters. Prior to 1990 this was a moot point, at least in the GDR, which suppressed the existence of the camps and particularly of mass graves in which the thousands of prisoners who had died there were buried. Besides two waves of highly propagandistic releases in 1948 and from the camps that remained open after that in 1950, the *Speziallager* were simply not discussed publicly. Around 3400 prisoners were given further lengthy prison sentences in a series of show trials at Waldheim in 1950.

Waldheim and the subsequent disavowal of any knowledge of the special camps points to the highly selective, instrumentalized character remembrance of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen took on in the GDR. The political mobilization of memory went hand in hand with the repression of less expedient aspects of the camps' past (and present). A number of survivors of the concentration camps had argued for preservation of the camp structures in the years following liberation, but their pleas largely fell on deaf ears as state interest in the sites increased in the course of the 1950s. Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, and the former womens' concentration camp Ravensbrück were all recognized as potential propaganda tools with which the Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands; SED) could stake its claim to represent the 'better' Germany borne out of antifascist resistance to Nazism. Somewhat ironically, the attempt to bring the planned memorials at the concentration camps under the purview of the state ended up marginalizing the very communists who had previously been

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<sup>26</sup> Lutz Priß, 'Das Speziallager des NKVD Nr. 7 (Nr. 1) Sachsenhausen 1945-1950', in *Sowjetische Speziallager in Deutschland 1945 bis 1950: Studien und Berichte*, ed. by Sergej Mironenko, Lutz Niethammer and Alexander von Plato, in association with Volkhard Knigge and Günter Morsch, vol. 1 (Berlin: Akademie, 1998), pp. 380-410 (p. 404).

imprisoned there, as the wrangling over commemoration played out along factional divides within the party. This power struggle pitted those communists who had spent the war in exile (including SED General Secretary Walter Ulbricht) against the former camp prisoners, resulting in a number of influential *Buchenwalder* and *Sachsenhausener* who had held important positions in the East German state falling from grace. By the mid-1950s, a Curatorium for the Construction of National Memorial Sites had been constituted under the chairmanship of GDR Minister-President Otto Grotewohl, ensuring centralized control over the projects.<sup>27</sup>

Three *Nationale Mahn- und Gedenkstätten* (National Sites of Memory and Warning; henceforth NMG) were inaugurated in the late 1950s and early 1960s, beginning in 1958 with the opening of the Buchenwald memorial on the slope of the Ettersberg and followed by subsequent inaugurations in 1959 at Ravensbrück and in 1961 at Sachsenhausen. Mythologizing the heroic struggle of communist resistance in the concentration camp and its legacy for the GDR took clear priority over any regard for authentic relics or the suffering of non-communist prisoners. Indeed, the fate of Sinti and Roma and homosexual prisoners in the camps was overlooked altogether. Though Jewish suffering was somewhat obliquely acknowledged – and in fact a separate Museum of the Resistance Struggle and the Suffering of Jewish People was opened at Sachsenhausen in 1961 in response to criticism from Israeli victims' associations – the issue was only ever addressed through an overarching antifascist commemorative framework.

By contrast, the memorial site planners made significant alterations to the camp topography in order to convey a sense of the resistance struggle's profundity to visitors. At Sachsenhausen, a 40m obelisk was erected within the main camp triangle and a semi-circular wall built around the perimeter of the barrack rings in an intentional negation of the gatehouse they faced.<sup>28</sup>

Buchenwald, elevated to the central GDR memorial on account of the supposed

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<sup>27</sup> On these internal party disputes see Manfred Overesch, *Buchenwald und die DDR oder die Suche nach Selbstlegitimation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995).

<sup>28</sup> Günter Morsch, 'Von Denkmälern und Denkmalen. Von Gedenkstätten und zeithistorischen Museen' in *Die geteilte Vergangenheit: Zum Umgang mit Nationalsozialismus und Widerstand in beiden deutschen Staaten*, ed. by Jürgen Danyel (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), pp. 181-186 (p. 183); on the GDR memorial at Sachsenhausen more generally see Morsch, 'Von der Erinnerung zum Monument – eine Einführung' in *Von der Erinnerung zum Monument*, ed. by Morsch, pp. 12-25.

‘Selbstbefreiung’ and the underground resistance organization active there, was memorialized in an imposing complex built into the Ettersberg. Here the architectural ensemble dramatized antifascist resistance and martyrdom: visitors first walked along the ‘Straße der Nationen’ depicting the international camp resistance movement in a series of reliefs before reaching a path leading up the face of the Ettersberg. Located at its summit was Fritz Cremer’s sculpture of Buchenwald prisoners in heroic, defiant poise. The concept was orientated around a teleological narrative summed up by the notion ‘durch Sterben und Kämpfen zum Sieg’.<sup>29</sup>

The NMG underwent very little change during the 1960s and 1970s, both in terms of concept and ideological message. At Buchenwald, an early exhibition in the gatehouse between 1951-52 and created in large part by communist camp survivors had been replaced by subsequent exhibitions in the prisoner canteen and later the disinfection building.<sup>30</sup> Despite some concessions to non-communist victimization in revisions made to the latter exhibition in the mid-1980s, no mention was ever made of the *Speziallager*, whilst research by a member of the site staff into the camp’s Jewish inmates could only be published belatedly after reunification.<sup>31</sup> Of the three museums at Sachsenhausen – the camp museum, the aforementioned Museum of the Resistance Struggle and the Suffering of Jewish People, and the international resistance museum – none deviated from the standard interpretation of National Socialism as a capitalist-fascist system. Only in 1990 when mass graves containing prisoners of the *Speziallager* at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen were discovered could the GDR paradigm be challenged in earnest. Upon unification later that year the memorials came under the jurisdiction of the respective federal states (*Länder*), signaling a formal end to around three decades of centralized control. I address post-1990 developments at the memorials in a subsequent section of this

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<sup>29</sup> For an overview see Volkhard Knigge, ‘Opfer, Tat, Aufstieg. Vom Konzentrationslager Buchenwald zur Nationalen Mahn- und Gedenkstätte der DDR’, in *Versteinertes Gedenken: Das Buchenwalder Mahnmahl von 1958*, ed. by Knigge, Jürgen M. Pietsch and Thomas A. Seidel, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Spröda, 1997), pp. 5-94.

<sup>30</sup> Volkhard Knigge, ‘Statt eines Vorwortes: Vorgeschichten einer Ausstellung’ in *Konzentrationslager Buchenwald 1937 – 1945: Begleitband zur ständigen historischen Ausstellung*, ed. by Gedenkstätte Buchenwald (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1999), pp. 9-14 (p. 9).

<sup>31</sup> Harry Stein, *Juden in Buchenwald, 1937 – 1942* (Weimar: Weimardruck, 1992).

introduction, but first provide an overview of *Vergängenheitsbewältigung* in divided and reunified Germany.

### ***From divided to unified memory***

As has already been intimated in the discussion of the memorials' post-war history, processes of representing the past followed very different patterns and trajectories in the eastern and western half of Germany. The establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic out of the Allied Occupation Zones in 1949 formalized these differences. Thereafter, internal developments within each state as well as the exigencies of the Cold War shaped the handling of the National Socialist past. By way of a brief overview I will chart these developments, beginning with the GDR. In order to grasp the fundamental difference between an instrumentalized and centrally controlled discourse on the past in the East and a grassroots confrontation with the Holocaust after a period of aversion and silence in the West, I also consider emerging patterns during the 'Nuremberg interregnum'<sup>32</sup> between Germany's defeat in 1945 and the crystallization of the Cold War.

In the Soviet Occupation Zone, the immediate post-war period was marked by the SED's monopolization of discourse on the Nazi past and a narrowing of focus on communist suffering and resistance. Initially communist victims of National Socialism were represented alongside various other groups in broad-based victims' associations, firstly in the less politicised local *Opfer des Faschismus* (Victims of Fascism; OdF) committees and as of 1947 the catch-all *Verein des Verfolgten des Naziregimes* (Association of Those Persecuted by the Nazi Regime; VVN). Although non-communist victims of National Socialism were admittedly capable of holding OdF-status, communist prisoners raised the possibility of a distinction between active resistance fighters and passive victims

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<sup>32</sup> See Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: the Nazi Past in the two Germanys* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 69.

within this categorization as early as June 1945.<sup>33</sup> Redefining the classification of ‘OdF’ had at first served to align resistance efforts with East German communists and therefore the SED, but it was soon used as a tool for party restructuring too. It became a pretext for the exclusion of political undesirables, whose credentials as resistance fighters had not been able to survive the scrutiny that followed in the wake of refining the ‘OdF’ label.<sup>34</sup> Before long, even the VVN had been dissolved and the victims’ associations, as of 1953 represented by the umbrella *Komitee der Antifaschistischen Widerstandskämpfer* (‘Committee of Antifascist Resistance Fighters’; KdAW), subjected to the practice of centralization governing other GDR mass organizations.<sup>35</sup>

From this point on, the instrumentalization of remembrance for the purposes of legitimizing the East German state and casting blame for National Socialism onto the FRG continued in more or less unaltered form. In addition to the opening of the NMG, the SED sought to impose official doctrine by renaming streets and schools after prominent resistance fighters, and assiduously built up a remembrance cult around certain individuals such as Ernst Thälmann, who had been murdered in Buchenwald in 1944. Yet much like the memorial sites themselves, the GDR’s antifascist ideology had essentially become petrified by the time the Wall fell in 1989. Though memorialization for instance did begin to diversify slightly in the 1980s and honour Jewish victims, all too frequently the racial dimension of Nazi persecution was elided altogether. Even a memorial stone erected at Lieberose in the 1970s to commemorate Jewish prisoners from Sachsenhausen who had been murdered there referred to the victims as ‘fighters

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<sup>33</sup> See Susanne zur Nieden, “‘Für das Ansehen der ‘Opfer des Faschismus’ nicht tragbar’”: Auseinandersetzungen um den Verfolgtenstatus von Minna R., Blockälteste im KZ Ravensbrück’, in *Die Sprache des Gedenkens: Zur Geschichte der Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück 1945-1995*, ed. by Insa Eschebach, Sigrid Jacobeit and Susanne Lanwerd (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1999), pp. 184-195 (p. 185).

<sup>34</sup> For just two such examples of political marginalisation, the first relating to a communist former prisoner and the second to a criminal prisoner, see Susanne zur Nieden, “‘Für das Ansehen der ‘Opfer des Faschismus’ nicht tragbar’”; also zur Nieden, “‘L. ist ein vollkommen asoziales Element...’ Säuberungen in den Reihen der “Opfer des Faschismus” in Berlin’, in *Vielstimmiges Schweigen: Neue Studien zum DDR-Antifaschismus*, ed. by Annette Leo and Peter Reif-Spirek (Berlin: Metropol, 2001), pp. 85-108.

<sup>35</sup> On the central steering of the camp committees, the *Lagerarbeitsgemeinschaften* (LAG), see Manfred Wilke, ‘Die Anleitung der Lagerarbeitsgemeinschaften durch die SED’, in *Materialien der Enquete-Kommission “Überwindung der Folgen der SED-Diktatur im Prozeß der deutschen Einheit* (13. Wahlperiode des Deutschen Bundestages), ed. by Deutscher Bundestag, vol. VI (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1999), pp. 623-764.

against fascism and war'.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, younger generations of GDR citizens increasingly failed to identify with Thälmann in spite the state's best efforts.<sup>37</sup>

West German approaches to the Nazi past between 1945-1989, by contrast, can be quite aptly described as a sequence of 'memory regimes'<sup>38</sup> rather than a static, politicized narrative imposed from above. Nor were developments over time reducible to a belated overcoming of latent trauma, not least as this problematically applies an individualized, psychosomatic concept to a collective body. Certainly however it took over a decade before any kind of widespread engagement with National Socialism set in, and longer still before West Germans were referring to 'the Holocaust' to denote the industrialized mass murder of Jews and other racial enemies of the Third Reich. Indeed, in the late 1940s most of the early memorials erected at former concentration camps in the territory of the FRG were devoid of Jewish symbolism, instead listing victims by nationality and addressing injunctions to remember to global audiences.<sup>39</sup>

In the 1950s too, collective energies were typically devoted to reintegrating former Nazis into West German society and driving on economic recovery. It was not until the 1960s that a 'Holocaust-centred' memory regime would supplant this 'German-centred' paradigm.<sup>40</sup>

This can be attributed to a number of factors, not least generational change and several high-profile trials involving prominent Nazi perpetrators. Firstly the trials of the *Ulmer Einsatzgruppen* were held in 1958, followed by the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann, who had overseen the ghettoization and deportation of Europe's Jews during the Third Reich, and the Auschwitz trials in 1964. Meanwhile, a generation of Germans born after the war – the so-called '1968ers' – began to address the paternal generation's complicity in National Socialist crimes, demanding broader societal confrontation with this hitherto

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<sup>36</sup> Bill Niven, 'Remembering Nazi Anti-Semitism in the GDR', in *Memorialization in Germany since 1945*, ed. by Niven and Chloe Paver (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 205-213 (p. 210).

<sup>37</sup> Annette Leo, "'Deutschlands unsterblicher Sohn...': Der Held des Widerstands Ernst Thälmann' in *Sozialistische Helden: Eine Kulturgeschichte von Propagandafiguren in Osteuropa und der DDR*, ed. by Silke Satjukow and Rainer Gries (Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, 2002), pp. 101-114 (p. 114).

<sup>38</sup> Eric Langenbacher, 'Changing Memory Regimes in Contemporary Germany?', *German Politics & Society*, 21, 2 (2003), 46-68.

<sup>39</sup> See Harold Marcuse, 'Memorializing Persecuted Jews in Dachau and Other West German Concentration Camp Memorial Sites', in *Memorialization in Germany since 1945*, pp. 192-204 (pp. 193-195).

<sup>40</sup> Langenbacher, 'Changing Memory Regimes', pp. 52-53.

marginalized past. It was not until the broadcast of the US television miniseries *Holocaust* in 1979 however that the now ubiquitous term entered common usage. Nonetheless, efforts were made to commemorate victims of the Third Reich, not least at the former concentration camps; the opening of the Dachau memorial site in 1965 represented the first of its kind in the Federal Republic. Though the West in this sense lagged behind the GDR, which had already in 1961 opened all three NMG, the memorials here were not subject to centralized control of the kind the SED exerted over Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen and Ravensbrück. Indeed, memorial sites in the FRG largely owed to the engagement of civic initiatives and received little in the way of state funding – I return to the legacy of this grassroots memorialization later in the introduction.

The mid-1980s and the return of the CDU to government marked a resurfacing of the German-centred memory regime. Two episodes in particular illustrate how it now vied for interpretative hegemony with the Holocaust-centred position. The first was the controversial commemorative visit by chancellor Helmut Kohl and US President Ronald Reagan to a military cemetery in Bitburg containing several SS graves in 1985. Then, in 1986, a second controversy followed, revolving around the question of ‘historicizing’ the Holocaust. Known as the Historians’ Dispute (*Historikerstreit*), it was principally fought out between conservative historians such as Ernst Nolte and Andreas Hillgruber and left-liberal intellectuals such as Jürgen Habermas. What was at stake was the singularity of the Holocaust in history, which Nolte sought to challenge and Habermas upheld.<sup>41</sup> Both positions would prove to be absolutely fundamental to post-unification debates on Germany’s coming to terms with the past, and were frequently referenced by various parties engaged in debates at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen in the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s, as we shall see.

With the fall of the Wall and the events of 1989-1990, the debate took on an entirely new dimension. Unsurprisingly, the caesura was pivotal to the future of the concentration camp memorials, and perhaps above all the former NMG. With unification, the Federal Republic had not just incorporated the territory now referred to as the ‘new’ federal states, but had taken on responsibility for the legacy of division too. This held consequences, firstly, for Germany’s handling of the Nazi past. Whereas, prior to 1989, blame for the National Socialist

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<sup>41</sup> On these episodes see Charles Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust and German National Identity* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

dictatorship had typically been projected westwards onto the Third Reich's 'capitalist-fascist' successor-state or eastwards onto the 'totalitarian' GDR, self-exculpation was no longer a viable option now that the bipolar world order had come to an end. Secondly, the collapse of the East German state and the vote to relocate the German capital and seat of government to Berlin in June 1991 consigned both the GDR and the Bonn Republic to history. Confrontation with the past in the new 'Berlin Republic' would necessarily entail addressing the entire period 1933-1989 – and as the mass graves discovered at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen indicated, addressing injustices committed under two different regimes as well.

### ***Memory of the 'double past' in the Berlin Republic: the shifting coordinates of 'normalization'***

Unification and the accession of the GDR into the Federal Republic via article 23 was regarded with a degree of unease by a number of prominent intellectuals and public figures in Germany. Günter Grass, seen by many to be the nation's moral conscience, was for instance opposed to reunification on the grounds that Germany had been divided in the first place as a consequence of the war of annihilation and genocide it had unleashed in Europe. An end to division, Grass maintained, signaled an end to contrition for crimes committed during the Third Reich. Grass was certainly not alone in voicing his opposition to unification, and in fact Joschka Fischer, later the German Foreign Minister, also rejected the proposition of a unified Germany in an article published in the *taz*.<sup>42</sup> For these critics, the concept of a resurgent German nationalism was in itself problematic, and many on the political left did indeed feel more comfortable expressing their 'constitutional patriotism' (*Verfassungspatriotismus*) or talking of German 'post-nationalism' (*Postnationalismus*), two ideas championed by the philosopher Jürgen Habermas. Both implied allegiance to and identification with Germany as a set of values – in this case the values enshrined in the West German 'Grundgesetz' – more than as an ethnically or politically defined nation. The

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<sup>42</sup> Joschka Fischer, 'Jenseits von Mauer und Wiedervereinigung', *taz*, 19 Nov 1989; see also Hans Kundnani, *Utopia or Auschwitz: Germany's 1968 Generation and the Holocaust* (London: Hurst & Co., 2009), pp. 197-199.

logical extension of this argument was that the country's recent past precluded a form of national identity comparable to that adopted elsewhere in Europe. Unlike Nolte, Hillgruber and others during the *Historikerstreit*, influential voices on the left rejected the historicization of the Holocaust and countered that the uniqueness of these crimes justified the 'abnormal' division of Germany.

This was not quite the line Helmut Kohl took during his second and third terms in office, however. Admittedly, he was well aware of the need to reassure Germany's partners in Europe that unification would not presage a return to bellicose nationalism, and accordingly stewarded the country through the transition out of *Zweistaatlichkeit* whilst simultaneously anchoring it in Europe. Monetary Union, a project ushered in with the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in 1991 and spearheaded by Kohl and the French Prime Minister Francois Mitterand, epitomized this dual vision. Yet at the same time, Kohl had proclaimed a 'geistig-moralische Wende' in 1983 aimed at fostering a renewed sense of national pride, and made a concerted effort to include German victims in commemorations of wartime suffering, as he demonstrated at Bitburg. It was very much with this in mind that he vigorously campaigned for the inauguration of a new central memorial in 1993, dedicated to 'all victims of war and tyranny' ("Den Opfern von Krieg und Gewaltherrschaft"). Situated on Unter den Linden in east Berlin, the Neue Wache made almost no distinction between those persecuted by the Nazis and the German soldiers and civilians who had been killed during the war, suggesting empathy with rather than condemnation of Germans' experiences under the Third Reich. Kohl's memory politics therefore insisted upon a measure of 'normal' – that is to say, 'conventional' European – nationalism where certain figures on the left had viewed the very proposition with scepticism.

That said, Kohl had not been able to garner support for the Neue Wache without first lending his own endorsement to another, quite different memorial project, this time dedicated to Jewish victims of Nazi persecution. The monument had first been proposed in the late 1980s by a citizens' initiative whose members included the historian (and later chair of the Thuringian Historians' Commission at Buchenwald) Eberhard Jäckel, and TV-personality Lea Rosh. When, in 1994, the first of two architectural competitions designed to elect a design for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe was held, this set in train a more than

decade-long debate that closely mirrored shifts taking place in the discourse on the Nazi past in the first decade and a half after unification. In the meantime though, the country was faced with the looming 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II in 1945. As Klaus Naumann has aptly noted, 1995 was deemed important not just on account of being the first major round anniversary. It was additionally loaded with significance as ‘eine Schwellensituation’ that highlighted the transition from a lived, communicative memory of National Socialist crimes to a ritualized and symbolically supported cultural memory.<sup>43</sup>

Contrary to fears raised in certain quarters prior to 1995 – though perhaps unsurprisingly – this caesura was not marked by attempts to draw a line under the past. Indeed, a resolution was brought before the Bundestag that same year to establish, as of 1996, an annual day of commemoration for the victims of National Socialism, coinciding with the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz on 27 January 1945. Liberation anniversaries were commemorated in large-scale ceremonies at other concentration camps on German soil too, including Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. Though the message presented by the federal government at the camp liberation ceremonies was not altogether uncontroversial (see chapter two), there can be no doubt that genuine attempts were made to embed ongoing remembrance within the country’s political culture. Moreover, other events taking place at the same time began to educate and sensitivise a broader public to the history of National Socialist crimes. The hugely popular – and equally controversial – travelling exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941-1944*, designed by the Hamburg Institute for Social Research and shown in its original incarnation between 1995-1999, drew crowds of up to 100,000 in several of the German cities it toured to. It would later be suspended and overhauled after it was discovered the curators had misattributed several photos in the exhibition depicting wartime atrocities to German *Wehrmacht* soldiers. In terms of initiating a broader debate on the issue of ‘ordinary’ Germans’ culpability for Nazi crimes, however, the exhibition could be counted an undeniable success.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Klaus Naumann, *Der Krieg als Text: Das Jahr 1945 im kulturellen Gedächtnis der Presse* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1998), pp. 10-11.

<sup>44</sup> See Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, ch. 5.

If 1995 was therefore not necessarily a turning point in the ‘normalization’ discourse, 1998, by contrast, almost certainly was.<sup>45</sup> Firstly, it brought a change of government, with an SPD-Green coalition replacing Kohl’s CDU/CSU-FDP administration. Whereas Kohl had belonged to the so-called *Flakhelfergeneration* and had experienced the Third Reich as a youth rather than as an active wartime combatant – what he referred to during a visit to the Israeli Knesset as ‘the grace of late birth’ – the incoming chancellor Gerhard Schröder had been born in 1944. He therefore had no personal connection to Nazism at all, belonging instead to the German generation of ‘1968’. The 1998 election was for Schröder’s SPD very much fought on a ‘68er agenda, championing social liberalism and engagement with the Nazi past in place of the older generation’s innate conservatism and focus on the post-war *Wirtschaftswunder*.

Secondly, Schröder’s assumption of the chancellorship signaled a revitalized sense of German national pride. It was in some ways a continuation of Kohl’s ‘geistig-moralische Wende’, though now more assertive of the nation’s own interests where Kohl had been content to frame these in a broader European project. Indeed, in contrast to Kohl’s aspiration that Germany “not stick out”, the Schröder government was, on the whole, more comfortable pursuing an agenda that occasionally put it at odds with the country’s European and Atlantic partners.<sup>46</sup> Undoubtedly the policy of multilateralism continued, as the ‘Salami-Taktiken’ of habituating the German public to overseas military involvement through supporting international peacekeeping missions in the 1990s indicated. In 1999, however, German troops were deployed as part of NATO air operations in Kosovo in 1999 – a bold step for a country whose last aggressive military sortie had been during World War II. Military involvement in Afghanistan followed in 2001 but, far from electing not to “stick out” once more, Schröder actually opposed the subsequent US invasion of Iraq in March 2003. In further historic steps, the chancellor personally attended the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Allied D-Day landings in June 2004, and a year later the Russian state’s day of commemoration for the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War,

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<sup>45</sup> In recognition of the concept’s contested status, ‘normalization’ appears here in single quotation marks. In all subsequent uses of the term and all cognate words quotation marks should be understood.

<sup>46</sup> See Stephan Brockmann, “‘Normalization’: Has Helmut Kohl’s Vision Been Realized?”, in *German Culture, Politics and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization*, ed. by Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006), pp. 17-29.

reflecting just how ‘normal’ Germany’s relations with its former enemies had become.

None of this could have been achieved without having simultaneously demonstrated a willingness to learn from Germany’s ‘abnormal’ past. Schröder’s itinerary around the 9 May 2005 anniversary illustrated this. A day after travelling to Moscow, he returned to Berlin to take part in the inauguration of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. The sequence quite clearly suggested that renewed national pride would not come at the expense of accountability for the Holocaust. When making the case for Germany’s involvement in Kosovo in 1999, Schröder’s Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer also fused Holocaust memory and normalization in the present: deployment was justifiable not in spite of the country’s Nazi past but *because* of it. As Fischer himself pointed out in 1997, growing up he had learnt to understand the true meaning of “Nie wieder Krieg”, but as a German he also believed profoundly in “Nie wieder Auschwitz”.<sup>47</sup> Between unification and the end of Schroeder’s second term in office, therefore, both the concept of normalization and the relationship between the Holocaust and national identity had undergone fundamental revision. By a process of inversion, normality – a term hitherto associated exclusively with the political right and a disavowal of Holocaust singularity – was adopted by the political *left*, and now signified critical engagement with this past. Equally, those on the left who had once seen in the Holocaust an irredeemable rupturing of the German nation now used this very memory to derive a sense of identity and purpose. The Social Democrat Richard Schröder perhaps best encapsulated this somewhat paradoxical notion of normality in exceptionality, remarking that being German meant ‘nichts Besonderes, aber etwas Bestimmtes.’<sup>48</sup>

But was the vision of German identity Richard Schröder put forward, as something fundamentally normal (‘nichts Besonderes’) though borne out of the unique history of National Socialism (‘etwas Bestimmtes’), widely shared? This is one of the questions that will be addressed here through detailed examination

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<sup>47</sup> Kundnani, *Utopia or Auschwitz*, p. 248.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Frank Brunssen, ‘The New Self-Understanding of the Berlin Republic: Readings of Contemporary German History’, in *Recasting German Identity: Culture, Politics and Literature in the Berlin Republic*, ed. by Stuart Taberner and Frank Finlay (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002), pp. 19-35 (p. 27).

of the debates around Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. Though, as I will go on to show, both sites provide ample evidence of divergent positions vis-à-vis normalization, it is also important to note that the discursive shifts I have described above were not without challenges from elsewhere in Germany's political and intellectual establishment. In fact, in 1998, the very year that the Red-Green coalition came to power, the prominent author Martin Walser sparked a heated debate that revolved around precisely the question of a Holocaust-centred political culture. In an acceptance speech at the Frankfurt Paulskirche, having been awarded the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, Walser railed again a perceived 'Dauerpraesentation unserer Schande', referring to the prominent place of Holocaust remembrance in German public life. This and other provocative claims, including the suggestion that Auschwitz was being used as a 'moral cudgel' ('Moralkeule'), were branded 'intellectual arson' by the then President of the Federal Council of Jews in Germany, Ignatz Bubis.<sup>49</sup> Central to the debate was the question of whether remembrance should be a private, internalized ritual – as was seemingly favoured by Walser – or (also) a symbolic, public act of contrition. As we will see, various positions along this axis between internalization and external performance of Holocaust memory crystallized at the concentration camp memorials, though this was by no means the only differential underlying interpretation of the sites.

Since the current chancellor Angela Merkel assumed office in September 2005, the debate has largely resolved itself in favour of a continuing central role for the Holocaust in official expressions of Germans' self-understanding. Clearly the inauguration of the Holocaust memorial at the site of the former Reich Chancellery (and virtually a stone's throw away from the Bundestag) in May 2005 lends most weight to such a view. Beyond this, however, the Merkel administration has by and large continued the policy of unequivocally restating German responsibility for National Socialist crimes.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, Merkel was the first chancellor and head of government to be invited to speak at the Israeli Knesset in 2008. Not that her frank handling of the Nazi past in public appearances has been restricted to addressing Jewish persecution. Under Merkel

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<sup>49</sup> On the debate, see *Die Walser-Bubis-Debatte: eine Dokumentation*, ed. by Frank Schirrmacher (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1999).

<sup>50</sup> See Ruth Wittlinger, 'The Merkel Government's Politics of the Past', *German Politics and Society*, 26, 4 (2008), 9-27 (p. 14f).

there has been a pronounced thaw in German-Polish relations, no doubt helped along by her decision to clearly lay blame for the start of World War II with Germany. Speaking at a ceremony in Gdansk marking the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of war on 1 September 2009, for instance, Merkel repeatedly made reference to ‘[den] von Deutschland entfesselte[n] Krieg’.<sup>51</sup>

On the other hand, however, the trend – already perceptible in the early 2000s – of commemorating German wartime suffering has gained momentum since 2005. As such, one can justifiably view Merkel’s contrite rhetoric in joint German-Polish commemoration of the war as underwriting simultaneous moves to honour ethnic German expellees from territories belonging to the ‘old Reich’ (and now part of Poland, the Czech Republic, and so on) after 1945. Somewhat controversially, she wrote a pledge to erect a ‘visible sign’ (‘sichtbares Zeichen’) to victims of flight and expulsion in Berlin into the 2005 coalition contract between the CDU and SPD. Schröder had, by contrast, opposed the project when it was first put forward. The controversial debates surrounding German victimhood as well as the question of how and in what relationship to memory of German crimes it should be acknowledged even reached Buchenwald in August 2006, during the annual *Kunstfest* held in Weimar. At the opening ceremony, entitled ‘Gedächtnis Buchenwald’, the deputy Minister for Culture Hermann Schäfer, who had been invited to give an address, spoke exclusively on the topic of flight and expulsion before being forced to cut his speech short as he was booed by sections of the audience. Besides the overt link to Buchenwald (and therefore National Socialist crimes) suggested by the ceremony’s title and location, several survivors of the concentration camp were amongst the audience in Weimar, rendering Schäfer’s choice of topic all the more problematic. Though some commentators believe the speech ‘illustrates that Holocaust centred memory culture is being challenged’,<sup>52</sup> my analysis in chapters three and four points to a more complicated picture, indicating just how useful a closer look at these particular memorials is for reassessing the normalization discourse.

The second development that has accompanied Merkel’s entry into office is the increasing attention paid to the fate of German victims of communism. To

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<sup>51</sup> ‘Rede von Bundeskanzlerin Dr. Angela Merkel bei der Gedenkveranstaltung zum 70. Jahrestag des Ausbruchs des Zweiten Weltkriegs am 1. September 2009 in Danzig’, *Bundes Presse- und Informationsamt (BPA) Bulletin*, 01 Sept 2009, 5pp (p. 1; 2).

<sup>52</sup> Ruth Wittlinger, *German National Identity in the Twenty-First Century: A Different Republic After All?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 42.

an extent this was to be expected given the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 2009 and the resurgence of interest in the GDR this has prompted. Yet it is nonetheless a vital context for understanding how memory contests have played out at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen since 2005 in particular. Before I deal with developments under the respective CDU-SPD and, latterly, CDU-FDP governments, it is worth retracing the steps that have led to the emergence of a joint culture of remembrance in Germany, structured around the legacy of both National Socialism and communism.

It is instructive to follow Bernd Faulenbach's loose periodisations for the first decade after unification in order to take us up to the point of departure for this thesis. Faulenbach posits that the working through of the GDR past underwent three phases after the collapse of the SED-system, beginning with a period of sensational revelations as high-profile cases of collaboration with the East German *Staatssicherheitsdienst* (the *Stasi*) were reported and details about the *Speziallager* belatedly came to light. This was followed by a second phase of intensive and far-reaching confrontation with the GDR, signaled not least by the establishment of a federal commission of enquiry into the East German state in 1992 (on which more in the following section). Finally, a third phase of receding interest set in, accompanied by the beginnings of historicisation.<sup>53</sup> Of note is that a comprehensive catalogue of measures had been introduced by the end of the decade with the aim of documenting life and mechanisms of rule in the GDR, bringing perpetrators in government and state institutions to justice, purging former collaborators from the public sector, and memorializing the victims of injustice.<sup>54</sup> Though these are discussed in greater detail below, it is vital to acknowledge that, at the point at which my narrative begins, remembrance of *both* National Socialism and East German communism (including the period of Soviet occupation directly preceding it) had been institutionalized to a greater or

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<sup>53</sup> Bernd Faulenbach, 'Die Arbeit der Enquete-Kommissionen und die Geschichtsdebatte in Deutschland seit 1989', in *The GDR and its History: Rückblick und Revision: Die DDR im Spiegel der Enquete-Kommissionen*, ed. by Peter Barker (Amsterdam/Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 21-33 (p. 22).

<sup>54</sup> On trials and lustration, see James McAdams, *Judging the Past in Unified Germany* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001); on efforts to document the GDR past, particularly in the so-called Enquête Commissions, see Andrew H. Beattie, *Playing Politics with History: The Bundestag Enquiries into East Germany* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2008); Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia* (New York: Berg, 2005), ch. 2; also McAdams, *Judging the Past*, ch. 4; on memorialisation, not only of victims but also of German division, see Carola Rudnick, *Die andere Hälfte der Erinnerung: Die DDR in der deutschen Geschichtspolitik nach 1989* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011).

lesser extent. Disagreements as to the relative weighting of these two phases in the double past, however, by no means abated.

Once more, Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen acted as something of a lightning rod for controversies of this kind, particularly during Merkel's time in office. Perhaps the most pertinent example was the CDU Interior Minister for Brandenburg Jörg Schönbohm's commemoration of victims of the *Speziallager* as well as of the concentration camp in a commemorative speech at the official ceremony marking the anniversary of Sachsenhausen's liberation in April 1945. Schönbohm's comments strongly suggested an equationist reading of the two separate forms of injustice and victimization. This was a ceremony relating to the concentration camp, after all, and he had delivered his speech from the central commemorative site for victims of the National Socialist camp, Station Z. Coming as it did just a matter of months before Hermann Schäfer's 'Gedächtnis Buchenwald' speech, the episode at Sachsenhausen can likewise be seen in the broader context of an apparent slippage in the centrality of Holocaust memory; it raises questions about *which* past and *which* memories make up the cornerstones of post-unification normalization. I trace the implications of Schönbohm's remarks for the coordinates of German memory culture in chapters two, three, and four, where I argue that these coordinates were shaped by other factors besides the issue of Holocaust singularity versus Holocaust comparability.

In a speech at Buchenwald in June 2009, Merkel herself hinted that these coordinates might indeed have shifted, if not necessarily towards equation, then certainly towards inclusivity. She had spoken at the memorial on occasion of a visit by the US president Barack Obama, who had included Buchenwald as a stop on his official trip to Germany. Reiterating the nation's 'special responsibility' ('besondere Verantwortung') towards its past, Merkel echoed Schröder in declaring remembrance of the Shoah to be part of Germany's 'Staatsräson'.<sup>55</sup> Where her rhetoric differed somewhat was in her description of German multilateralism and liberation, not from National Socialism – which she also mentioned – but from division (and by implication from communist rule in the eastern half of the country) in 1989. The preconditions for German normality and a return to Europe were therefore a repudiation of *both* National Socialism

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<sup>55</sup> 'Ansprache von Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel' (online)  
<http://www.buchenwald.de/315/date/2009/06/08/ansprache-von-bundeskanzlerin-angela-merkel>.  
 Last accessed 21 Feb 2012.

and communism, a fact that Merkel only further underlined by explicitly remembering the victims of the *Speziallager* at Buchenwald in her speech.<sup>56</sup> If Richard Schröder had been referring to the singular legacy of the Holocaust when he described Germanness as ‘etwas Bestimmtes’, it appeared that for Angela Merkel, that same ‘etwas Bestimmtes’ was the German experience of the double past.

Several of the chancellor’s public speaking engagements later in 2009 continued this politics of the past. We have already discussed how Merkel used her attendance at the ceremony on the Westerplatte to categorically restate German accountability for the outbreak of war. Several months later, in a speech at the ‘Fest der Freiheit’ marking the 20-year anniversary of the fall of the wall on 9 November, she again reflected on both positive and negative aspects of Germany’s history, as she had done at Buchenwald. Thus, she juxtaposed the memory of ‘Kristallnacht’ on 9 November 1938 with the events of 9 November 1989, which she dwelt upon at far greater length.<sup>57</sup> Implicitly the latter-day, normal nation now stood in contrast to the entire period of 1933-1989 rather than the legacy of the Holocaust. Just as the legacy of the concentration camps was now recalled unproblematically alongside post-war injustices, so too was the history of division placed in relation to the dictatorship that preceded and caused it.

### ***Institutionalizing remembrance and the development of the memorial landscape***

Unification ensured not only a belated national moral responsibility for sites with a double past; financial responsibility for their preservation was now a matter for reunified Germany too. Whereas the model of *Kulturföderalismus* established in the old FRG had placed allocation of funding for culture squarely in the hands of

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* Last accessed 21 Feb 2012.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Rede von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel im Rahmen des "Fests der Freiheit"' (online) <http://www.bundestkanzlerin.de/Content/DE/Rede/2009/11/2009-11-09-merkel-brandenburger-tor-zwanzig-jahre.html>. Last accessed 15 Nov 2012.

the *Länder*, the absorption of the GDR into the West now brought sites such as the NMG under the purview of the *Bund*. It was in fact the last East German government under Lothar de Maizière that proposed including federal financing of the former NMG in the unification treaty, much to its credit. Accordingly, the handling of the memorials in the Berlin Republic followed an administrative structure inherited from the *East*. Legislation passed by the Bundestag in 1993 therefore extended central funding to Buchenwald, Ravensbrück and Sachsenhausen, as ‘sites of national importance’, for an initial period of ten years.

Before I address this, it is necessary to return to 1990, when two other overwhelmingly *Western*-dominated institutions responsible for ‘reconceptualising’ the memorials were called into being. These were the two Historians’ Commissions (referred to variously as the *Historikerkommissionen* or *Expertenkommissionen*), convened to issue a series of recommendations for the redesign of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. Now that the antifascist concept employed at the NMG was widely recognized as being outdated and monodimensional, the task the commissions were faced with was to replace this and at the same time establish parameters for commemorating both camp phases on site. The seven-member Brandenburgian *Expertenkommission* was convened in June 1991 under the chairmanship of historian Bernd Faulenbach, and set about drawing up recommendations for the reconceptualisation of National Socialist memorial sites in Brandenburg. In the very first paragraph of its concluding report, the commission referred to the *KZ-Gedenkstätten* in the state, Sachsenhausen and Ravensbrück, as ‘überaus wichtig Orte historischer Erinnerung der Deutschen und der europäischen Völker an die Verbrechen des Nationalsozialismus’.<sup>58</sup> It also recommended that the memorials depart from the discourses of dismay (‘Betroffenheitsdiskurse’) perpetuated by the NMG. They were instead advised to document their history in a way that was ‘möglichst umfassend und differenziert’.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, the *Expertenkommission* explicitly

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<sup>58</sup> ‘Empfehlungen der Expertenkommission zur Neukonzeption’, in *Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten für die Verfolgten des NS-Regimes*, ed. by Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur des Landes Brandenburg in Zusammenarbeit mit der Brandenburgischen Landeszentrale für politische Bildung (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1992), pp. 215-270 (p. 262).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262.

advocated addressing both historical phases at the redesigned memorial site, saying: ‘Anspruch darauf, nicht vergessen zu werden, haben alle Opfer.’<sup>60</sup>

The Thuringian commission, headed up by the historian Eberhard Jäckel, issued its final report in the spring of 1992, making broadly similar recommendations. Thus, the *Speziallager* was also to be addressed at Buchenwald; commemoration of the concentration camp was to be diversified; and the objective, meticulously researched documentation and communication of historical events was to replace antifascist propagandizing in the camp exhibitions.<sup>61</sup> Beyond these more general recommendations, both commissions issued specific suggestions as to the spatial and conceptual treatment of the sites’ multiple historical phases. As these are fundamental to the subsequent memory debates discussed here, I recap them below:

Both commissions advised explicit prioritization of the period 1933-1945 in the new memorial concepts. The *Speziallager* were to be documented, and the victims commemorated, but this task was to be ‘subordinated’ (‘nachgeordnet’) to handling of the sites’ National Socialist past.<sup>62</sup> As intimated in the quotation taken from the Brandenburgian commission’s report above however, this was not to impinge upon the duty to acknowledge *all* victims. During the course of this commission’s work, Bernd Faulenbach coined a shorthand for referring to these guiding principles of comprehensiveness and differentiation: the fate of the concentration camp victims should not be ‘relativised’ (‘relativisiert’), nor should the suffering of the *Speziallager* victims be ‘trivialized’ (‘bagatellisiert’).<sup>63</sup> This quickly developed into a maxim for the handling of the double past more broadly, and would later be cited in federal documents too.

Additionally, there was to be strict spatial separation of the respective camp phases in commemorative spaces at the memorials – a stipulation denoted by the term ‘räumliche Trennung’.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, the Thuringian commission

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 263.

<sup>61</sup> See Hasko Zimmer, *Der Buchenwald-Konflikt: Zum Streit um Geschichte und Erinnerung im Kontext der deutschen Vereinigung* (Münster: agenda Verlag, 1999), p. 16f.

<sup>62</sup> Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, p. 46f.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with the author, 16 Nov 2012; see also Faulenbach, ‘Probleme des Umgangs mit der Vergangenheit im vereinten Deutschland: Zur Gegenwartsbedeutung der jüngsten Geschichte’, in *Deutschland: Eine Nation – doppelte Geschichte; Materialien zum deutschen Selbstverständnis*, ed. by Werner Weidenfeld (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1993), pp. 175-190 (p. 190).

<sup>64</sup> Zimmer, *Der Buchenwald-Konflikt*.

advised that a new building should be constructed to house a dedicated exhibition on the *Speziallager* at Buchenwald. It recommended that the building be used expressly for *documentation*; a space for commemoration, meanwhile, was available around the mass graves, at which relatives of many victims had already placed crosses and other markers in 1990.<sup>65</sup> The Brandenburg commission referred to ‘documenting’ rather than ‘commemorating’ victims of the *Speziallager*.<sup>66</sup>

Further underlining the importance they attributed to comprehensiveness, both commissions recommended also dealing with the GDR pre-history of the sites. As a result, new standalone exhibitions on the NMG and the handling of the Nazi past in East Germany were opened in 1999 at Buchenwald and in 2001 in Sachsenhausen. They each belonged, moreover, to drastically changed memorial museums. At Buchenwald, the single ‘Lagermuseum’ at the NMG opened in the mid-1980s had been replaced with a total of four permanent exhibitions belonging to the *Gedenkstätte Buchenwald*: exhibitions on the concentration camp, the special camp, and the NMG respectively; and an exhibition of art created in the concentration camps and after liberation by survivors. At Sachsenhausen, the GDR exhibition forms part of a ‘decentralized’ museum landscape of thirteen thematic exhibitions, each tied to the historical camp topography.<sup>67</sup>

Meanwhile, the various transitional justice measures utilized for coming to terms with the GDR past detailed earlier on in the chapter were in the early stages of implementation. In a strange and somewhat ironic coincidence, it was one of these instruments that would ultimately come to shape official cultural memory of the *Nazi* past in the Berlin Republic. This was the second of two federal commissions of enquiry investigating the history and legacy of the East German state, entitled *Overcoming the Effects of SED-Dictatorship in the Process of German Unity* (Überwindung von Folgen der SED-Diktatur im Prozess der deutschen Einheit). As part of its remit, the commission discussed viable strategies for national (‘gesamtstaatliche’) forms of remembering *both* the

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<sup>65</sup> *Zur Neuorientierung der Gedenkstätte Buchenwald*, ed. by Gedenkstätte Buchenwald (Thuringia: Thüringische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1992).

<sup>66</sup> Empfehlungen der Expertenkommission zur Neukonzeption’, in *Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten*, p. 230.

<sup>67</sup> Currently eleven of the thirteen exhibitions have been completed; a further, two-part exhibition on the camp SS is slated for completion in 2014.

National Socialist and East German communist regimes. Included in the commission's concluding report was, first of all, recommendations for a formal federal funding strategy covering German memorial sites – this would form the basis for the *Gedenkstättenkonzeption* that was subsequently drawn up in July 1999. More to the point, though, at the hearings of the commission at which the subject of the memorials was discussed, a remarkable consensus emerged around both what was to be memorialized and how this would be achieved.

Already in a hearing of the first commission, held at Sachsenhausen in March 1994 on the 'Beteiligung des Bundes an den Mahn- und Gedenkstätten', a basic agreement as to the function and profile of the memorial sites appeared to have been reached. Besides commission members, a number of expert delegates – a mix of academics and museum professionals – had been invited to give statements. In addition, a 'Fragenkatalog' soliciting responses to questions on the role of memorials, memory culture in pre-1989 East and West Germany, and federal financial contribution to the sites had been circulated to specialists, victims' associations and civic initiatives in advance of the hearing. Notably, the invited experts spoke unanimously in favour of polyfunctional memorials; they should ideally have a dual commemorative and documentary remit. This meant, in practice, undertaking research and implementing a museological and pedagogical concept alongside commemorating victims, as the director of the Topography of Terror site in Berlin, Reinhard Rürup, outlined at the hearing.<sup>68</sup> Rürup also established a set of criteria for determining which memorials were entitled to federal funding, in which factors such as authenticity, international standing, and the site's unique indexical link to National Socialist, Stalinist, or SED injustices – in other words a unique 'profile' – were central. These same criteria were later adopted by the Federal Memorials Strategy.

Moreover, the principle of historical differentiation was clearly articulated at this stage too. Indeed, the question in the 'Fragenkatalog' relating to memory cultures in divided Germany had met with criticism from several memorial professionals – amongst them Günter Morsch – on account of its over-

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<sup>68</sup> *Materialien der Enquete Kommission "Aufarbeitung von Geschichte und Folgen der SED-Diktatur in Deutschland"*, 12. Wahlperiode des Deutschen Bundestages, ed. by Deutscher Bundestag, vol. 9 (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1995), p. 228; see also the same basic argument in written responses to the 'Fragenkatalog' submitted by the then director of the Buchenwald memorial Thomas Hoffmann (p. 331) and the director of the Dachau memorial at the time, Barbara Distel (p. 327).

simplification of the issues at stake. It had asked for comment on the East German policy of antifascist mythologisation and West German policy of restitution, prompting Morsch and also Annette Leo, a member of the Brandenburg Historians' Commission and the Brandenburg Memorials Foundation's academic advisory council, to argue for a less dichotomous view of the pre-1989 situation.<sup>69</sup> In the Buchenwald Memorial's response to the 'Fragenkatalog', the phrasing was not criticized, but it was nonetheless revealing that the work and recommendations of the Thuringian Historians' Commission were cited.<sup>70</sup> It was a striking indication of the extent to which these milestones in the early 1990s increasingly functioned as a legitimizing resource when it came to making a case for a differentiated approach to the memorials.

Undoubtedly however, the second Enquete commission played a more significant role in post-unification commemorative politics, insofar as it put forward an actual funding concept. This made it perhaps the most decisive step in the process of institutionalizing memory in the Berlin Republic. In its closing report, the commission followed Reinhard Rürup's earlier recommendations, proposing that federal funding be extended to 'authentic' sites that possessed a unique historical profile and a professionalized museological and pedagogical infrastructure in addition to a firm anchoring in civil society. Likewise, it recommended equal financial contributions from *Bund* and *Land*.<sup>71</sup> Here then was the first iteration of a policy that would fuse the memorials to governance and identity in the Berlin Republic. Furthermore, the commission's report made quite clear that both National Socialism and East German communism figured in this nationally defined culture of remembrance: 'Die Notwendigkeit von Aufarbeitung und Erinnerung an die beiden Diktaturen ist heute Teil des demokratischen Selbstverständnisses im vereinten Deutschland.'<sup>72</sup>

When, on 27 July 1999, the federal government announced a 'Konzeption der künftigen Gedenkstättenförderung des Bundes', the claim was repeated, this time in a more precise definition:

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 349 (Morsch); for Annette Leo's position, see p. 341.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 403-409.

<sup>71</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, 'Schlußbericht der Enquete-Kommission "Überwindung der Folgen der SED-Diktatur im Prozeß der deutschen Einheit"', Drucksache 13/1100, 13. Wahlperiode, 10 Jun 1998, p. 250.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

‘Die Erinnerung an die NS-Terrorherrschaft, an Stalinismus und die SED-Diktatur sowie das Gedenken an ihre Opfer ebenso wie an Opposition und Widerstand gegen die Diktaturen festigen das Bewusstsein für Freiheit, Recht und Demokratie und den antitotalitären Konsens in Deutschland.’<sup>73</sup>

It is worth reflecting for a moment on the weighting given to these respective pasts in the parliamentary debates of 1998-1999. Certainly it would be hard to deny the central role of the Holocaust in the Berlin Republic, not least at this juncture. One such reminder of this was the parliamentary vote on the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, which took place around a month prior to the *Gedenkstättenkonzeption* passing into law. Even so, the tone and language of the Enquete Commission’s report hinted at an increasing equation of the National Socialist past with East German communism. These were referred to throughout as ‘die beiden deutschen Diktaturen’,<sup>74</sup> and somewhat reductive commonalities between the systems such as their shared disregard for and abuse of liberty, parliamentary democracy, and the rule of law were stressed.<sup>75</sup> On the whole though, a distinction was drawn between the two, and the report even cited the ‘Faulenbach-Formel’.<sup>76</sup> At this point at least, institutionalized memory discourse followed a principle of differentiation.

With shifts in the normalization discourse after 2000 came attendant attempts to revise and realign the ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’. In opposition since 1998, the CDU in particular sought to replace the existing Memorial Strategy with a concept of its own, tabled by the delegate Günter Nooke in autumn 2003 (and again in early 2004).<sup>77</sup> This ‘Gedenkstättenkonzept für ein würdiges Gedenken aller Opfer der beiden deutschen Diktaturen’ made an extensive list of recommendations for the memorialization of German wartime suffering and communist injustices, at the expense of maintaining an appropriate distinction between crimes committed against Germans and those committed in

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<sup>73</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, ‘Konzeption der künftigen Gedenkstättenförderung des Bundes und Bericht der Bundesregierung über die Beteiligung des Bundes an Gedenkstätten in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland’, Drucksache 14/1569, 14. Wahlperiode, 27 July 1999, p. 3.

<sup>74</sup> ‘Schlußbericht der Enquete-Kommission’, p. 227.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227; p. 241.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 240.

<sup>77</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, ‘Förderung von Gedenkstätten zur Diktaturgeschichte in Deutschland – Gesamtkonzept für ein würdiges Gedenken aller Opfer der beiden deutschen Diktaturen’, Drucksache 15/1874.

Germany's name. At best the CDU concept paid lip service to Holocaust singularity, and in any case proposed the energetic memorialization of German victimhood. Measures it put forward included a national memorial to the victims of Allied aerial bombing and a 'centre against expulsion' ('Zentrum gegen Vertreibung') in Berlin, suggesting rather an attempt to offset focus on the Holocaust and 're-nationalize' memory culture.<sup>78</sup> At around the same time a similar controversy had erupted in Saxony over the Saxony Memorial Site Foundation to Remember the Victims of Political Tyranny. Though the Foundation appeared to conflate the Nazi, Stalinist and SED regimes in its statute, it was nonetheless granted legal status in 2003, a step that culminated in representatives of the victims of National Socialism publicly distancing themselves from it. Together the scandals over the CDU memorial concept and the Foundation in Saxony threatened to dislodge the consensus articulated in 1999.

In the event, the CDU proposal was roundly rejected in the Bundestag. This was of no little significance. As Andrew Beattie observes, Nooke had disputed that the concept aimed at altering the coordinates of commemoration in the first place. That it had made at least passing reference to the singularity of the Holocaust, and was defeated nonetheless, amounted to a uniform rejection of exclusivist commemoration of one or another victim group. From this point on, German wartime and/or post-war suffering could realistically only occur alongside ongoing Holocaust-centred remembrance.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, the amendment of the *Gedenkstättenkonzeption* in 2008 would appear to bear out this hybridized reading of memory discourse. Though it continued to refer to the GDR as a 'kommunistische Diktatur',<sup>80</sup> there were various genuine efforts to distinguish between the Nazi and GDR pasts, for instance through emphasizing that the latter

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<sup>78</sup> See Rudnick, *Die andere Hälfte der Erinnerung*, pp. 93-96. The working group of concentration camp memorial sites in particular objected to the concept's attempted 're-nationalization' of memory. See Arbeitsgemeinschaft der KZ-Gedenkstätten in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 'Stellungnahme zum Antrag von Abgeordneten der CDU/CSU zur "Förderung von Gedenkstätten zur Diktaturgeschichte in Deutschland - Gesamtkonzept für ein würdiges Gedenken aller Opfer der beiden deutschen Diktaturen"' (online) <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/index.asp?id=490&pn=texte>. Last accessed 30 Jan 2011.

<sup>79</sup> Andrew H. Beattie, 'The Victims of Totalitarianism and the Centrality of Nazi Genocide: Continuity and Change in German Commemorative Politics', in *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, ed. by Bill Niven (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 147-163 (p. 163).

<sup>80</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, 'Fortsetzung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption des Bundes: Verantwortung wahrnehmen, Aufarbeitung verstärken, Gedenken vertiefen', Drucksache 16/9875, 16. Wahlperiode, 19 Aug 2008, p. 1.

was a ‘Konsequenz’ of the former and the war of annihilation it unleashed on Europe.<sup>81</sup> The revised strategy also mentioned the ‘Unvergleichlichkeit’ of the Holocaust and quoted the ‘Faulenbach-Formel’.<sup>82</sup>

Whilst the revised *Gedenkstättenkonzeption* represents the current federal position on memorialization and the ‘double’ past, developments in Europe since 2008 have over-layered this narrative. Attempts by several pan-European organizations to institutionalize transnational memory of communism as part of broader efforts at constructing an ‘anti-totalitarian’ European identity, for instance, implicitly seek to re-frame German memorials to the double past. Emblematic of this trend is the movement to establish a day of remembrance for victims of totalitarian regimes on August 23, the anniversary of the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939. First proposed by a number of prominent politicians and intellectuals from Central and Eastern Europe in the so-called Prague Declaration of 2008, this initiative has since received the endorsement of the EU parliament and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).<sup>83</sup> Responses by the concentration camp survivors’ associations and prominent figures within the German memorial site milieu – not least Günter Morsch – have by contrast been critical. In chapter four, I consider the dynamic created by the emergent European anti-totalitarian narrative on the one hand and the cultural agency of memorials to both Nazism and communism such as Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen on the other. It is this dynamic, I suggest, that points to the new ways the federal ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’ will be inflected in coming years.

The unfolding federal German narrative has also been accompanied by a globalisation of Holocaust memory in more general terms. Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider have spoken in this regard of a ‘cosmopolitan’ Holocaust memory, in which memory of the historical event itself has on the one hand become a universally valid morality tale – a ‘symbol of transnational solidarity’, in their words – but interacts on the other hand with local contexts at its point of

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>83</sup> See Stefan Troebst, ‘Der 23. August als euroatlantischer Gedenktag? Eine analytische Dokumentation’, in *Der Hitler-Stalin-Pakt 1939 in den Erinnerungskulturen der Europäer*, ed. by Anne Kaminsky, Dietmar Müller and Stefan Troebst (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011), pp. 431-467.

reception.<sup>84</sup> Here again the turn of the millennium is a key juncture. In fact, the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, itself an expression of the historical event's fundamental significance for humanity in general, took place in 2000. At a European level, protagonists such as the EU parliament have also attempted to establish a trans-national foundation for Holocaust memory through the introduction in 2005 of an official day of remembrance on 27 January. The globalization of memory is thus a characteristic phenomenon of the fifteen-year period under discussion here, a context I acknowledge and relate to developments around Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen above all in chapter four (and also in the thesis conclusion).

So far I have covered the 'institutionalized' narrative of remembrance emanating from Berlin during Kohl, Schröder and Merkel's terms in office. But did the 'anti-totalitarian consensus' proclaimed at federal level match the reality on the ground at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, where a number of different stakeholders had emerged since 1990? It is easy enough to point out that the reality of implementing the desired consensus lagged some way behind the rhetoric of the Federal Memorials Strategy. In both the weighting they accorded to the respective 'totalitarian' pasts and the function they attributed to remembrance, advisory and advocative groups active at the memorials departed from the federal narrative. Achieving consensus and balance was more difficult than the somewhat platitudinal references in the official documents to the 'Faulenbach-Formel' would suggest.<sup>85</sup> With this in mind, I look in more detail at how the central actors at the two sites have interpreted the double past, before proposing a conceptual model for mapping out the (dynamic) landscape of cultural memory in the following section.

I concentrate on the memorial specialists and the various concentration camp and special camp victims' lobby groups, as they actively participate in debates across all four cultural spaces examined in the thesis. Other groups whose engagement is limited to particular debates or spaces are introduced in the discrete chapters. As I have already outlined in the introduction, my conceptual

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<sup>84</sup> Danel Levy and Natan Sznaider, 'Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5, 1 (2002), 87-106 (p. 93). See also Levy and Sznaider, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter: Der Holocaust* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2001).

<sup>85</sup> See further Pearce, 'An Unequal Balance?', in *The GDR Remembered*, ed. by Hodgin and Pearce, p. 177.

model rests on two basic assumptions. Firstly, if we are to relate debates over the double past to struggles to control the ‘order of discourse’ in the present, then we must acknowledge that institutionalization in the late 1990s has invested this discourse with a force of its own (rather than it simply being the passive object of contestation). Secondly, we must ask how far it is helpful to centre these processes of institutionalization in an analysis of cultural discourse that begins in 1998.

On the face of it, the involvement of the memorial specialists in post-unification memorialisation at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen would appear to have little, if anything, to do with memory. Both Historians’ Commissions were convened as advisory bodies rather than in service of one or another victim groups’ particular claim to commemoration. As Hasko Zimmer observes, the commissions were required to fulfill a ‘Doppelrolle’, operating as specialist advisors and as a ‘quasi-politische Clearing-Stelle’<sup>86</sup> for resolving disputes between these victim groups. Equally, the permanent staff members at the memorials are responsible for research, education, documentation, curatorial work and logistical support of commemorative ceremonies and on-site memorialization. They are not personally responsible for on-site commemoration. On the other hand, memorial museums as institutions are the product of, in Paul Williams’ words, a ‘desire to add both a moral framework to the narration of terrible historical events and more in-depth contextual explanations to commemorative acts.’<sup>87</sup> Moreover, the on-site exhibitions possess an implicitly commemorative function, even if they strictly separate documentation from commemoration. As such, the work of the memorial specialists is informed by a combination of the desire to objectively document the entire history of the sites and the moral commitment to honour the victims.

Recognizing this is essential if we are to fully understand what drives and shapes cultural representation of the double past in the Berlin Republic. For though the memorial specialists support the principle of differentiation contained in the Federal Memorials Strategy, this should not be confused with straightforward compatibility between professional and ‘official’ discourses. Whether a particular group takes a view of the Holocaust as singular or

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<sup>86</sup> Zimmer, *Der Buchenwald-Konflikt*, p. 36.

<sup>87</sup> Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (New York: Berg, 2007), p. 8.

comparable is a question of more than political bias or its position vis-à-vis a federal norm. Instead we can trace the genealogy of the memorial specialists' approach to Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen by turning to the German *Gedenkstättenbewegung*. This movement coincided with a broader heritage and history boom in the West during the late 1970s and early 1980s, and manifested itself in the Federal Republic through increasing interest in local 'traces' ('Spuren') of the National Socialist past. Following the history boom's mantra of "digging where you stand", numerous local history workshops and dedicated university courses sprung up to meet this demand. At former concentration camp sites such as Dachau, the movement spurred on civic confrontation with the events that had taken place there during the Third Reich.<sup>88</sup>

To be sure, the specifically West German generational confrontation between post-war generations (namely the '1968' and '1979' generations) and their parents over the suppression of the Nazi past also played a part in the movement's origins. Such a fixation on the legacy of National Socialism certainly goes some way towards explaining why protagonists within the *Gedenkstättenbewegung* advocated a delimitation of the 'Gedenkstätte' label after 1990. Their plea responded to an increasing extension of the term to cover historically significant sites of German division as well as communist injustices, countering that these were qualitatively different from sites of Nazi crimes.<sup>89</sup> Consequently, some have interpreted differentiation in this context as a fundamental inability to acknowledge the extent of persecution under the GDR or empathize with victims of communism to the same extent as with the victims of National Socialism.<sup>90</sup> Karen Till has argued that, for professional protagonists at the KZ-Gedenkstätten, locating and documenting historical 'Spuren' was entwined with recovering a putatively 'authentic' history hitherto suppressed by

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<sup>88</sup> On Dachau, see Harold Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp 1933-2001* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001).

<sup>89</sup> See Jörg Skriebeleit, 'Neue Unübersichtlichkeit? Gedenkstätten und historische Orte im aktuellen erinnerungspolitischen Diskurs', *GedenkstättenRundbrief*, 103, 10 (2001), 3-10.

<sup>90</sup> See Heidi Behrens and Petra Haustein, 'Abschied von der Unübersichtlichkeit! Vom Verlust vermeintlicher Eindeutigkeiten im aktuellen erinnerungspolitischen Diskurs. Eine Replik auf Jörg Skriebeleit', *GedenkstättenRundbrief*, 106 (2002), 3-11; Christian Schneider, 'Deckerinnerungen: ein Lager, zwei Bilder: Generationengeschichtliche Anmerkungen zur psychologischen Binnenkonstruktion deutscher Erinnerungspolitik', in *Instrumentalisierung, Verdrängung, Aufarbeitung: Die sowjetischen Speziallager in der gesellschaftlichen Wahrnehmung 1945 bis heute*, ed. by Petra Haustein, Anne Kaminsky, Volkhard Knigge and Bodo Ritscher (eds.), (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), 79-99; Haustein, *Geschichte im Dissens*, p.287.

their parents' generation and marginalized by the state.<sup>91</sup> Yet it seems to me more accurate to understand differentiation as a result of the site- and trace-based practice this cohort adopted rather than of the accent they placed on commemorating pre-1945 events. If the sites' testimonial connection to historical crimes and victimhood was their defining feature, and scientific approaches could reveal these historical layers of testimony, then the reflex of differentiation was not political but pragmatic.

Since 1990, approaches to Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen based around differentiation and the concept of a 'search for traces' ('Spurensuche') have been enshrined in the recommendations of the Historians' Commissions. They were also upheld by the Enquête Commissions, which reflected broad-based support for the memorials' reconceptualisation along dual commemorative and documentary lines. The memorial professionals have thus established a corpus of conventions and principles of their own, quite distinct from the Memorials Strategy, for legitimizing their interpretation of the double past.

In addition to this, they could draw on an existing *pedagogical* precedent in support of differentiation, namely the 1976 *Beutelsbacher Konsens* – a set of principles established as guidelines for political education in the Federal Republic.

The three principles outlined were, broadly speaking: expressly forbidding indoctrination of any kind ('Überwältigungsverbot'); respecting 'controversial' positions in science and politics in the classroom setting; and empowering students to voice and reflect upon their own opinion.<sup>92</sup> One can fairly easily recognize the 'Überwältigungsverbot' in the deliberate moves to distance the post-unification memorials from their heavily politicized GDR-era predecessors during the redesign processes. Likewise, neither memorial shied away from controversial matters such as the post-war camps and, at Buchenwald, the role of the organized resistance and particularly of communist prisoner functionaries. In fact, the 'Faulenbach-Formel' was a clear attempt to mediate between the competing claims of the pre- and post-1945 victims' claims to the

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<sup>91</sup> Karen E. Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 208.

<sup>92</sup> See Bernhard Sutor, 'Politische Bildung im Streit um die "intellektuelle Gründung" der Bundesrepublik Deutschland', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B45 (2002). See <http://www.bpb.de/apuz/26627/politische-bildung-im-streit-um-die-intellektuelle-gruendung-der-bundesrepublik-deutschland?p=all#fr-footnodeid26>. Last accessed 20 May 2013.

sites.<sup>93</sup> Finally, critical reflection on the past was at the centre of the pedagogical concepts developed at both Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. As will become clear in the sections analyzing the educational programmes developed there (see chapters one and three in particular), the notion of ‘Urteilkraft’ – that is, a sense of critical empowerment – underlay virtually the entire enterprise. In sum, it is not particularly helpful to place the memorial specialists’ reading of the double past on a ‘flattened’<sup>94</sup> political terrain. After all, it owes to both west German, milieu-specific and post-unification, institutional precepts for dealing with historical traces.

Survivors of the concentration camps at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, unsurprisingly, insist upon strict differentiation between the camp phases too. To a greater degree than the Federal Memorials Strategy though, they regard the sites as universal symbols of National Socialist terror (and resistance against this), making no explicit connections to a more narrowly defined ‘German’ self-understanding. Thus, the international camp committees’ initial calls for participation in the ‘Erhaltung und Verwaltung der “Konzentrationslager”’<sup>95</sup> shortly before unification were addressed not to the federal government, but to various national and European authorities as well as UNESCO. When, in 1993, the EU Parliament passed a resolution on the concentration camp memorials that explicitly rejected ‘willkürliche[...] Verquickung’ of their histories under National Socialism with their subsequent post-war usage, it set a European precedent that justified prioritization the period 1933-1945.<sup>96</sup> It became an ultimate authority for the concentration camp survivors’ organizations, invoked to counter attempted equation of National Socialism and communism. Responding to the CDU/CSU faction’s 2003 Memorial Strategy, for instance, Buchenwald survivors and their representatives declared the EU ruling to be ‘nach wie vor gültig’.<sup>97</sup> Generally speaking, these organizations reacted with considerable unease at any signs of a nationalization of discourse on the

<sup>93</sup> It was therefore not, as Petra Haustein argues, an ‘Infragestellung’ of Western standards of dealing with the past that had hitherto been interested exclusively in the National Socialist period. See Haustein, *Geschichte im Dissens*, p. 380.

<sup>94</sup> Chris Healy and Maria Tumarkin, ‘Introduction’, *Journal of Social History*, 44, 4: Special Issue on Social Memory and Historical Justice (2011), 1007-1018 (p. 1014).

<sup>95</sup> ‘Memorandum der Internationalen Komitees der Nazi- und Konzentrationslager für die Rettung der Gedenkstätten der Nazideportation’ in Gedenkstätte Buchenwald (ed.), *Nationale Mahn- und Gedenkstätte Buchenwald: Jahresinformation 1990* (Weimar, n.d), pp. 30-31 (p. 30).

<sup>96</sup> Quoted in ‘Schutz der Gedenkstätten!’, *Die Glocke vom Ettersberg*, 130, 1 (1993), 1; see also Zimmer, *Der Buchenwald-Konflikt*, p. 18.

<sup>97</sup> See ‘Das richtige Gedenken bewahren’, *Die Glocke vom Ettersberg*, 174, 2 (2004), 2.

memorials – a position I highlight in my discussion of Hermann Schäfer’s controversial 2006 speech in Weimar (see chapters four and five).

As far as the committees were concerned, classifying the camps as part of a universal cultural patrimony reflected the internationalism of the prisoner contingent too. It was not just the legacy of suffering but the fact that a range of prisoners from across Nazi-occupied Europe had *resisted* persecution in the camps that provided a universally applicable moral lesson.<sup>98</sup> This humanistic narrative found its ultimate expression, of course, in the 1945 Buchenwald Oath – a manifesto of sorts which organizations such as the Internationales Komitee Buchenwald-Dora und Kommandos e. V (hereafter IKBD), the Lagerarbeitsgemeinschaft Buchenwald-Dora e. V (henceforth LAG), and the Internationales Sachsenhausen-Komitee (ISK) have continued to reference frequently since 1990. Commemoration was therefore explicitly joined to a political campaign to uphold the values of pacifism, tolerance, democracy and anti-extremism first expressed in the ‘Schwur’.

Since the impetus for this campaign was, for the survivors’ organizations, the desire to avoid a repeat of the events of 1933-1945, they by definition regarded Nazi barbarity as a historically singular phenomenon. When confronted with the public outcry over the mass graves for prisoners of the *Speziallager* at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen in 1990, their response was consequently to insist upon exclusive treatment of the site’s National Socialist pasts at the memorials. Early concerns that ‘die Henker’ – a rather indiscriminate label for perpetrators and accomplices of the Nazi regime – would be rehabilitated if post-war injustices were also addressed<sup>99</sup> continued throughout the 1990s. In 1996, for instance, the IKBD delegation staged a walkout of a hearing of the second Enquete Commission held at Buchenwald on the grounds that the organization was not prepared to cooperate with the *Speziallager* victims’ group, referred to as ‘die Vertreter[...] unserer Henker[...]’.<sup>100</sup> Though staunch refusal to cooperate with the post-1945 victims and their representatives has on the whole given way to the more defensible demands for a ‘strikte[...] Trennung der Darstellung der Geschichte des Konzentrationslagers und der Geschehnisse nach dem Sieg über

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<sup>98</sup> The point was made at the annual meeting of the Internationales Komitee Buchenwald-Dora und Kommandos in 1990. For the text of the ‘Appell’ issued there, see Gedenkstätte Buchenwald (ed.), *Jahresinformation 1990*, p. 27.

<sup>99</sup> See ‘Memorandum’ in *Jahresinformation 1990*, p. 30.

<sup>100</sup> Hausteil, *Geschichte im Dissens*, p. 173f.

den Faschismus 1945'<sup>101</sup> in the 2000s, the concentration camp survivors' associations' position is distinct from that of the memorial professionals, who also support differentiation. As Petra Haustein has shown, the survivor groups tend to lionize 'antifascist' commemorative traditions, and in doing so overlook negative aspects of centralized antifascism in the GDR such as the persecution of camp survivors who deviated from the official line.<sup>102</sup> This has also manifested itself in occasional complaints that the administrative structure of the memorial foundations has excluded antifascist groups and former concentration camp prisoners from the site directorates.<sup>103</sup>

The victims of communism were represented both by lobby groups founded in the early 1990s and by organizations with their roots in the old Federal Republic. I focus in particular on the working groups set up after the collapse of the GDR at each camp, the *Initiativgruppe Buchenwald 1945 – 1950 e. V.*, the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Lager Sachsenhausen 1945 – 1950 e. V.* (ALS), the *Gemeinschaft ehemaliger politischer Häftlinge – Victims of Stalinism e. V.* (VOS), founded in 1951, and the umbrella organization established in 1992 to represent victims of communism, the *Union der Opfer kommunistischer Gewaltherrschaft e. V.* (UOKG). Though the stances of these respective groups differ quite considerably in certain respects, as I point out in later chapters, there are nonetheless two shared threads that underpin their readings of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. The first is a staunch (and in some cases virulent) anti-communism, and the second is a fairly unreflected insistence on applying a blanket victim label to prisoners of the *Speziallager*. Prototypically anti-totalitarian statements and positions were common to virtually all of the different lobbies. They to varying degrees equated National Socialism and East German communism, as the rhetoric of early commemorative ceremonies and responses to the *Neugestaltungen* demonstrate. Articles in *Freiheitsglocke*, the newsletter of the VOS, frequently stressed common

<sup>101</sup> 'Vermächtnis der ehemaligen Häftlinge des KZ-Sachsenhausen', 26 Apr 2006, 5pp. Available at [http://www.internationales-sachsenhausen-komitee.eu/download/erstes\\_vermaechnis\\_deutsch.pdf](http://www.internationales-sachsenhausen-komitee.eu/download/erstes_vermaechnis_deutsch.pdf). Last accessed 16 Apr 2013 (p. 3).

<sup>102</sup> See Haustein, *Geschichte im Dissens*, p. 223-234.

<sup>103</sup> See for instance an open letter addressed to Günter Morsch by the former Sachsenhausen inmate Karl Stenzel. 'Zur Situation in der KZ-Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen: offener Brief von Karl Stenzel an Günter Morsch', *Bulletin für Faschismus- und Weltkriegsforschung: wissenschaftliche Halbjahresschrift*, 28 (2006), 133-137. Both antifascist groups and former prisoners are represented in the foundations' International Prisoners' Councils.

denominators such as ‘Wahnideen und Herrschaftsgelüste’,<sup>104</sup> and used the term ‘Sowjet-KZ’ to refer to a *Speziallager*.<sup>105</sup> Members of the UOKG spoke of the dual imperatives of ‘Antinazismus’ and ‘Antikommunismus’ in commemorative speeches held at Buchenwald.<sup>106</sup> Only the *Initiativgruppe* appeared to accept the proposals for separate on-site commemoration of pre- and post-1945 victims.<sup>107</sup> Otherwise, anti-communist interpretations of the sites endured, and would later be employed by victims’ associations (and the conservative right) in the debates on the double past staged during hearings of the two *Enquete* commissions.<sup>108</sup>

The second motif was total victimization, a claim which contributors to *Freiheitsglocke* constructed around three rhetorical devices. Firstly, the number of juvenile prisoners held in the *Speziallager* was inflated, thereby eliding the issue of moral and criminal complicity in National Socialism and foregrounding the arbitrariness of imprisonment by the Soviets.<sup>109</sup> Secondly, much was made of the death rate, with certain articles speculating that it had been as high as 32,000 in the *Speziallager* at Sachsenhausen,<sup>110</sup> and others pointing to the proportion of prisoners that lost their lives at the concentration camp and special camp at Buchenwald – 24% at the former as opposed to 41% at the latter.<sup>111</sup> Thirdly, the total isolation from the outside world that prisoners of the *Speziallager* had been made to suffer was seized upon as a symbol of the camps’ particular perfidiousness. A common recollection was of the strict ban on receiving or sending post of any kind that had existed until 1949, which powerfully conveyed the plight of the prisoners, hermetically sealed off from the outside world.<sup>112</sup> Collectively, these impressions of life in the special camps left little doubt about the victim status of prisoners there, but equally elided the issue of initial culpability for the Third Reich.

<sup>104</sup> E. Reese, ‘Sachsenhausen und das Land Brandenburg’, *FG*, 503 (1993), 9.

<sup>105</sup> E. Reese, ‘Sachsenhausen: Zwei Gedenkstätten’, *FG*, 498 (1993), 6.

<sup>106</sup> H. Strunz, ‘Gedenkrede zum III. Buchenwaldtreffen am 18. September 1993 auf dem Appellplatz’ in *Initiativgruppe Buchenwald 1945 – 1950 e. V.* (ed.), 3. *Buchenwaldtreffen* (Weimar, 1994), pp. 7-8 (p. 8).

<sup>107</sup> ‘Standpunkt der *Initiativgruppe Buchenwald 1945 – 1950 e. V.* zu den bisherigen Empfehlungen der Historikerkommission zur Neuorientierung der Gedenkstätte Buchenwald’ in *Speziallager 2 1945-1950: Rundbrief*, 4/5, ed. by Gedenkstätte Buchenwald (Weimar, 1992), pp. 10-11.

<sup>108</sup> See Beattie, *Playing Politics with History*, pp. 200-213.

<sup>109</sup> See for example E. Richter, ‘Kassiber aus Fünfeichen’, *FG*, 496 (1993), 10.

<sup>110</sup> W. Pfeiffer, ‘Sachsenhausen und das Land Brandenburg’, *FG*, 504 (1993), 7.

<sup>111</sup> E. Reese, ‘Buchenwald nur für Rote?’, *FG*, 487 (1992), 3.

<sup>112</sup> See Pfeiffer, ‘Sachsenhausen und das Land Brandenburg’.

As the two motifs suggest, the victims' associations typically support a reading of the 'anti-totalitarian consensus' in which both pasts are equally repudiated. Where state policy is predicated on differentiated and separate commemoration however, the *Speziallager* lobby regards talk of a consensus with scepticism. As just one example, Gerhard Finn, a survivor of the special camp at Buchenwald, advocated an internalized, conciliatory form of commemoration, expressed in the form of a Christian 'Bekennen der eigenen Schuld'.<sup>113</sup> Commenting upon the controversial memorial to all victims of war at the *Neue Wache* and subsequent attempts to list and distinguish between these victim groups on an accompanying plaque, Finn dismissively referred to the memorial's 'usage instructions' ('Gebrauchsanweisungen').<sup>114</sup> Clearly this was intended as a criticism of a national culture of remembrance established by decree, not to mention of enforced distinction between National Socialism and communism. In chapter two, I show that both the *Initiativgruppe* and the ALS have adopted elements of this conciliatory narrative in the commemorative ceremonies they hold at the memorials, thereby deflecting attention away from questions of difference and upholding the narrative of total victimization.

### ***Theoretical underpinnings***

So far in this introduction we have charted developments in efforts at coming to terms with the Nazi past following Germany's total military defeat in World War II, and with the 'double' past since the collapse of 'real existing socialism' in the GDR. I wish to turn now to how ways of relating to the past at a collective, cultural level are best theorized. That this process of reckoning with difficult legacies can and perhaps even should be undertaken by groups as well as individuals in society is implicit in the German terms 'Geschichtsaufarbeitung' and 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung'. Translated as 'confronting' or 'working through the past' and 'mastering the past' respectively, they denote a broader public responsibility for dealing with historical injustices in the transition to

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<sup>113</sup> G. Finn, 'Es darf gedacht werden...', *FG*, 509 (1994), 5-6 (p. 6).

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

stable democracy.<sup>115</sup> Such neologisms notwithstanding, this process is by no means a specifically German phenomenon. Indeed, it has been a feature of the transition to democracy in southern European states during the 1980s, of the aftermath of military dictatorships in the Southern Cone, and particularly of post-communist Eastern and Central Europe.

Typically, successor states in these instances have (with varying degrees of energy) put perpetrators and apparatchiks on trial, undertaken purges of former collaborators from the public sector (otherwise known as lustration), launched official truth commissions, ordered the opening of secret police files and sought to compensate victims of state persecution. The result has been the emergence of a consolidated field of transitional justice – a field in which Germany stands out as the only country to have negotiated two such transitions. My interest is of course primarily in memorialization – a practice that is seen as usually belonging to the broader transitional justice apparatus if not necessarily as a core constituent element of it<sup>116</sup> – and its relationship to Germany’s post-unification transition. Even if the existence of terms such as ‘Geschichtsaufarbeitung’ and ‘Vergangenheitsbewältigung’ does not automatically imply German exceptionalism in its approach to democratic transition, it may well indicate that handling difficult pasts is something of a ‘German speciality’, to use Timothy Garton Ash’s expression.<sup>117</sup> I have already elaborated on the uniquely wide range of measures implemented by the Federal Republic after the *Wende* and how this related to shifts in a specifically German normalization discourse above.

Before making a case for situating the debates around Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen in this broader ‘transitional’ context, however, I outline a

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<sup>115</sup> Though the terms imply quite different processes, it should be noted that ‘Geschichte’ and ‘Vergangenheit’ are used interchangeably to refer to ‘the past’.

<sup>116</sup> See for instance the definition provided by the International Centre for Transitional Justice, available at <http://ictj.org/about/transitional-justice>. Last accessed 8 May 2013. Lavinia Stan argues that the major and ‘most important’ transitional justice methods are lustration, the opening of secret police archives, and trials and court proceedings. See Stan, ‘Introduction: post-communist transition, justice, and transitional justice’, in *Transitional Justice in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union: Reckoning with the Communist Past*, ed. by *idem.* (London/New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 1-14 (p. 11).

<sup>117</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, ‘Trails, Purges and History Lessons’ in *idem.*, *History of the Present: Essays, Sketches and Despatches from Europe in the 1990s* (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 294-314 (p. 294).

theoretical model for conceptualizing them that utilizes an approach grounded in memory studies. At the core of this relatively new discipline is a theory of ‘collective memory’, first developed by the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, who was in fact imprisoned at Buchenwald and died at the ‘Kleines Lager’ there in 1945. According to Halbwachs, individual acts of remembrance cannot exist independently of social frameworks such as the family, religious community and professional milieu, all of which condition how one recalls the past.<sup>118</sup> In essence, ‘[o]ne cannot...think about the event’s of one’s own past without discoursing upon them’, as Halbwachs explains.<sup>119</sup> This notion of society not as an aggregate of various fixed individual memories but as a shaper of these presupposes that what we remember of the past depends on circumstances *in the present* rather than the actual events in question. It has become a central point of departure for subsequent research into memory, and is indeed highly relevant to the German context under discussion here.

Building on Halbwachs’ model, the Egyptologist Jan Assmann has developed the concepts of ‘communicative memory’ and ‘cultural memory’ to explain how memory is transmitted over time.<sup>120</sup> In Assmann’s typology, communicative memory refers to collectively held memories that can be passed from one generation to another through conversation in de-hierarchized spaces such as the family. Usually they will convey lived experience, and therefore cannot travel beyond the upper limit of inter-generational age differences (which Assmann sets at approximately 80-100 years).<sup>121</sup> Cultural memory, on the other hand, refers to external repositories of memory that endure beyond generational boundaries; these tend to be carefully constructed and reified, and therefore hyper-mediated. Elaborating upon the mechanics of cultural remembrance, Aleida Assmann uses the terms ‘Speichergedächtnis’ and ‘Funktionsgedächtnis’. These refer to a reserve of unmediated memory not (yet) ordered into a narrative in the case of the former, and select ‘bewohnte Erinnerung[en]’ that underpin identity in the case of the latter.<sup>122</sup> The connection between cultural memory and

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<sup>118</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. by L. A. Coser (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>120</sup> Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1992).

<sup>121</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp. 48-56.

<sup>122</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1999), p. 130f.

identity construction posited here, and in particular Aleida Assmann's suggestion that memory is made 'functional' by animating particular strands of a background store of 'saved' memory, will inform the theoretical model I develop here.

With this in mind, I would like to reflect briefly on the emergence of memory as both a complement and challenge to history as a mode of reconstructing the past. Scholars such as Andreas Huyssen have noted that we are living in 'memory's privileged time'.<sup>123</sup> For Huyssen, this fixation upon remembrance reflects an anxiety surrounding unmediated access to the past in an age of modernization and generational change. Pierre Nora makes a similar point, arguing that a vital connection to the past found in *milieux de mémoire* is giving way to archived, historicized *lieux de mémoire*.<sup>124</sup> To be sure, memory's current ubiquity both as a social phenomenon and a method of historical inquiry has led some to believe that a critical, objective historical profession is in danger of being supplanted by partisan and proprietorial claims over the past.<sup>125</sup> Conversely, it is also true that memory can illustrate ethical investments in the past amongst those involved in writing it.<sup>126</sup> Yet even if this is true, and we accept that the paradigm of cultural memory reveals much about the constructedness and contingency of the past, it is nonetheless necessary to ask "why memory?" if we are to avoid naturalizing the concept as a means of analysis in this case study.

Two issues in particular bear further consideration. Firstly, both history and memory are at stake in debates over Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, where the communication of the past 'as it really was' in the Rankian sense is as much an objective as the legitimization of particular memory (and identity) discourses. It is essential to consider the different subject positions stakeholders at the memorials may adopt as a result, ranging from memory activists, to custodians of the historical record, to a combination of the two. Secondly, it is important not to overextend and over-apply memory as a heuristic tool. Accordingly, whilst I still see much value in an approach grounded in memory studies, I suggest that we

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<sup>123</sup> Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (London/New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 3.

<sup>124</sup> Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations*, 26 (1989), 7-24.

<sup>125</sup> See for example Charles S. Maier, 'A Surfeit of Memory? Reflections on History, Melancholy and Denial', *History & Theory*, 5, 2 (1993), 136-152.

<sup>126</sup> Susannah Radstone, 'Memory Studies: For and Against', *Memory Studies*, 1, 1 (2008), 31-39.

must attend more closely to how processes of reckoning with the past are *constructed and/or contested synchronically* (in specific contexts), and *diachronically* (in relation to structures of power and hegemony over time) – two questions that Halbwachs and the Assmanns’ models of cultural memory do not satisfactorily answer. Complementing memory studies with the tools of museum studies research, transitional justice methodologies, critical discourse analysis, and systems theory, I argue for a considered and conditional application of the lens of memory to cultural representations of the double past.

Let us firstly address the synchronic question of context before turning to regimes of discourse from a diachronic perspective. As has been pointed out recently, what had begun as an interest in ‘memory in culture’ within memory studies research has increasingly come to resemble the study of ‘memories of cultures’.<sup>127</sup> That is to say, the definition of ‘culture’ at the heart of cultural memory is all too easily bound up with the frame of the nation state. Rather than think solely in terms of static national cultures of remembrance, however, it is helpful to pay attention to the ‘dimensions of movement’<sup>128</sup> that characterize cultural memory. Cultural memory narratives, as well as the symbols and icons comprising them, and the media through which they are transmitted, are not necessarily specific to a particular ‘national’ collective; they move across different cultures, spaces, and times. This movement can be in two directions of course – either towards globalized cultural formations, such as a ‘cosmopolitan’ form of Holocaust memory, or alternatively towards localized permutations.

Understanding transcultural memory as movement along both local and global planes allows me to question and look behind normative pronouncements of an institutionalized ‘national’ culture of remembrance in the Berlin Republic. For the same reason, I structure the thematic chapters of this thesis around several discrete cultural constellations: the institutional context (in other words, the memorial museums as spaces), the municipality, the federal state or region, and the nation (for a more detailed discussion see the explanation of the thesis structure below). In addition, by drawing on a wide range of source groups, including the sites’ museological and pedagogical concepts, press reportage, parliamentary documentation, curricula, marketing material and specialist publications by memorial professionals, survivors’ organizations and civic

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<sup>127</sup> Astrid Erll, ‘Travelling Memory’, *Parallax*, 17, 4 (2011), 4-18.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

groups, I shed light on the fluid composition of cultural memory across these different spaces. Do the same *types* of cultural representation of and debate over the past characterize all four spaces, or does the cross-section of particular representational forms and debates differ between them? What does this say about the dominance of certain actors or positions vis-à-vis the double past, the role of certain memory media in shaping discourse, and the reasons for which these discourses are deployed?

Importantly, paying attention to context in this way lends greater nuance to the following discussion of how memory of the double past is contested at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. The discussion itself draws upon existing theories that posit a ‘history politics’ (*Geschichtspolitik*)<sup>129</sup> behind constructions of identity and history on a collective level, according to which reference to history is used to buttress political legitimacy and power in the present.<sup>130</sup> Likewise, it follows recent scholarship on memorials and memorialization, which has shown how memorials serve the deliberation and contestation of a group or nation’s historical consciousness.<sup>131</sup> Certainly they are ‘objects for critical enquiry into the mechanisms by which...memories are constructed’,<sup>132</sup> as Peter Carrier has argued, but as I explain above, an analysis of construction and contestation requires acknowledging the multiple planes on which these take place besides that of the nation.

The second theoretical intervention made by this thesis concerns patterns of constructing and contesting discourses on the double past from a diachronic perspective. Of interest here are questions of continuity and change in how the various stakeholders at the two memorials have interpreted their multifaceted histories since 1998, and how this relates to the (shifting) normalization

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<sup>129</sup> Edgar Wolfrum, *Geschichtspolitik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Der Weg zur bundesrepublikanischen Erinnerung 1948-1990* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1999).

<sup>130</sup> Indeed, recourse to history may serve to influence political decision-making - that is, policy – more concretely. See Claus Leggewie and Erik Meyer, “*Ein Ort, an den man gerne geht*”: *Das Holocaust-Mahnmal und die deutsche Geschichtspolitik nach 1989* (Munich/Vienna: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2005), pp. 12-13.

<sup>131</sup> See for example Peter Reichel, *Politik mit der Erinnerung: Gedächtnisorte im Streit um die nationalsozialistische Vergangenheit* (Munich/Vienna: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1995), p. 33; Peter Carrier, *Holocaust Monuments and National Memory: France and Germany since 1989* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2005); on European memorials more generally *Representations of the Past in European Memorials: Special Issue of Forum for Modern Language Studies*, ed. by Bill Niven, 44, 2 (2008).

<sup>132</sup> Peter Carrier, ‘Places, Politics and the Archiving of Contemporary Memory in Pierra Nora’s *Les Lieux de mémoire*’ in *Memory and Methodology*, ed. by S. Radstone (Oxford/New York: Berg, 2000), pp. 37-57 (p. 48).

discourse outlined above. Having already refuted the notion that there exists a singular, monolithic culture of remembrance, I suggest, furthermore, that it is necessary to rethink the dynamic that has driven processes of representing the past. My argument here rests on two propositions. Firstly, I contend that the imminent generational transition facing the period under discussion – the passing away of the eye-witnesses who lived through National Socialist terror in the concentration camps – is crucial to understanding the dynamic of the past fifteen or so years. Secondly, and in keeping with the argument that representations of the double past ‘on the ground’ challenge as much as reflect the institutionalized narrative, I point to ways of relating the situations at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen to a federal ‘centre’ without reducing them to mere by-products of it.

With regards to the generational transition, I follow Harald Wydra’s thinking. Wydra argues that new paradigms of representing the past in Europe since 1945 have emerged out of a dialectic confrontation with existing values, traditions, and structures in society. Emerging generational ‘elites’ do not so much dispassionately analyze these as confront them from their own subjective standpoint. They are themselves socially conditioned by rituals, formative experiences and a store of latent societal memory (Aleida Assmann’s ‘Speichergedächtnis’) common to their age cohort, all of which impact upon their negotiation with the current value system.<sup>133</sup> I believe this processual model of reckoning with the past neatly captures the shift that took place in the normalization discourse upon the ‘68er government around Schröder and Fischer coming to power. As we have seen, the ‘nationalisation’ of memory – even negative memory – was almost unthinkable to many of the key figures in the generation of ‘1968’, not least Fischer himself, who as we have seen was initially deeply uneasy about the idea of unification. Hence why the shift is best understood as the result of a search for new meaning rather than the simple projection of the ideals of 1968 onto post-unification German political culture. Equally, the process of institutionalizing remembrance of the double past was not an imposition of one or another generational agenda but a discursive

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<sup>133</sup> Harald Wydra, ‘Dynamics of Generational Memory: Understanding the East and West Divide’, in *Dynamics of Memory and Identity in Contemporary Europe*, ed. by Eric Langenbacher, Bill Niven and Ruth Wittlinger (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2012), pp. 14-38.

achievement that cannot be understood in isolation from the debates and decision-making processes of the 1990s.

By contrast, the period beginning in 1998 has not (yet) been marked by rupture and the resulting need for reorientation. In terms of generational change, the ‘Ende der Zeitzeugenschaft’ is still anticipated rather than necessarily deemed a reality. We have also seen a raft of measures implemented that now govern the handling the double past, such as the *Gedenkstättenkonzeption* and new museological concepts at the sites. As such, the emphasis when it comes to grasping the dynamic behind patterns of cultural representation now falls on an emergent ‘order of discourse’, to use Michel Foucault’s term.<sup>134</sup> By this I mean the functioning of received notions of the double past as a mechanism for the exercise of power. This is an important complement to the model of synchronic contestation proposed above, and its value to an investigation of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen requires some further explanation.

There is a distinct advantage to treating institutionalized narratives of an anti-totalitarian consensus as an ‘order of discourse’. Taking this view, the memorials to the double past form part of a broader apparatus for the structuring of knowledge in society; they become tools of governmentality. Museums studies research has fruitfully applied foucauldian theory to the work performed by museums, and the approach lends itself particularly well to my study of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. Tony Bennett uses the term ‘exhibitionary complex’ to denote the collective work performed by museums and related heritage institutions in inculcating particular civic values and forms of government.<sup>135</sup> Though Bennett first developed the concept in relation to emerging forms of liberal governmentality and the ordering of evolutionary time around assumptions of Western progress and modernity in late-nineteenth century museums in Europe and North America, it can be meaningfully applied in this context too, albeit in modified form. For I too am interested in how Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen are used to structure (but also to critique) prevailing federal narratives of an ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’ and constructions of citizenship rooted in repudiation of National Socialism and communism.

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<sup>134</sup> Michel Foucault, ‘The Order of Discourse’, in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. by Robert Young (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 48-78.

<sup>135</sup> Tony Bennett, ‘The Exhibitionary Complex’, *new formations*, 4 (1988), 73-102; more recently *idem.*, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London/New York: Routledge, 1995).

In today's post-colonial order, Bennett argues, museums function as 'differencing machines', engaged in 'shaping and transforming people through their own self-activity'<sup>136</sup> and thereby embodying the political project of multicultural pluralism. If we add to the description of this project a civic will to engage with the legacy of Germany's 'short twentieth century', then we come close to capturing a sense of the normative expectations attached to memorial museums such as Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. The value of Bennett's theoretical model thus lies in its ability to render transparent the role of the memorials as civic technologies responsible for the political projects of inculcating an 'anti-totalitarian consensus'. By extension, it becomes clear that contesting the historical narrative they present involves putting forward counter-versions of the federal anti-totalitarian project and so goes to the heart of post-unification governmentality too. I therefore propose combining a memory studies methodology with a Foucauldian approach to the 'disciplinary regime'<sup>137</sup> of these memorial museums and the anxieties – or even outright challenges – that emerge in response to it.

With this we return to the issue of the memorials' relationship to a federal 'norm' over the course of the period under discussion. Certainly the model of an 'exhibitionary complex' or an 'order of discourse' provides one means of mapping their interconnectedness. As I alluded to above however, it is in my opinion a mistake to take one single discourse – in the German context the institutionalized discourse – as the sole point of reference when analyzing engagement with the memorials and the double past. What if engagement positions itself *neither* within nor outside of a prevailing 'order of discourse'? And what if, besides implicitly contesting political legitimacy in the present, as a model of *Geschichtspolitik* would have it, engagement is in certain instances driven on by an underlying logic separate from that of governmentality? Indeed, Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett's reference to 'exhibitionary complexes' in the plural attests to the limitations of clustering divergent approaches to the past around a political centre-point.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Tony Bennett, 'Exhibition, Difference, and the Logic of Culture', in *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, ed. by C. A. Kratz, I. Karp, L. Szwaja, T. Ybarra-Frausto et al (eds.), (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 46-69 (p. 52).

<sup>137</sup> This term is used by Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett. See her 'Exhibitionary Complexes', in *Museum Frictions*, ed. by Kratz et al, pp. 35-45 (p. 38).

<sup>138</sup> See *ibid.*

In order to resolve the dilemma posed by the simultaneous existence of the ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’ across multiple orders of discourse, I turn to the late sociologist Niklas Luhmann’s theory of social systems.<sup>139</sup> Society, Luhmann argues, is not defined by external structures or universally valid ontological categories (what he refers to as a ‘Dingschema’),<sup>140</sup> but is instead comprised of communication between systems. These systems organize themselves on the basis of how they perceive and reproduce communications. Crucially, this process involves a kind of second-order observation by which systems draw a distinction between the way they constitute elements from their environment (*Umwelt*) and the far more complex horizon of possible alternatives that this environment provides. Systems therefore reproduce themselves self-referentially through reducing the complexity of their environment – a process Luhmann terms ‘autopoiesis’. Thus, meaning (*Sinn*) is, according to this model, a ‘laufendes Aktualisieren von Möglichkeiten’<sup>141</sup> produced by the action of autopoiesis. Understanding meaning in terms of the functional differentiation that takes place within systems is, in my opinion, an instructive way of analyzing the positions taken up by various protagonists at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen since 1998.

Though I do not suggest that the discourses surveyed here are identical with discrete systems such as science, art, politics and the economy, I do consider whether they evidence systemic behaviour. In particular, I draw on the model of recursivity belonging to systems theory – that is, autopoiesis – to demonstrate that discourses are social processes as much as they are forms of productive semiotic work. Certainly the idea of a system distilling meaning from its environment resembles Aleida Assmann’s notions of ‘Speichergedächtnis’ and ‘Funktionsgedächtnis’. Unlike Assmann’s rather static model, however, Luhmann’s concept of autopoiesis manages to reflect the processual nature of sense-making. When applied to the negotiation of the double past, then, it helpfully reveals interpretations to be continually constituted – a vital insight if we accept that the past is not only open to revision and contestation at moments

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<sup>139</sup> Niklas Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme: Grundriß einer allgemeinen Theorie* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1984).

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

of generational transition, as Wydra claims, but rather on an ongoing basis.<sup>142</sup> Furthermore, utilizing a theory of self-referential systems allows us to more satisfactorily address specific parochial drivers behind reckoning with the double past rather than somewhat over-deterministically reading the situation at the memorials out of developments in the institutionalized narrative. Interestingly, this theoretical premise is hinted at in Halbwachs' theory of collective memory. Discussing the family as a social realm of memory, Halbwachs states:

‘[T]he family progressively tends to interpret in its own manner the conceptions it borrows from society. Each family ends up with its own logic and traditions, which resemble those of the general society in that they derive from it and continue to regulate the family's relations with general society. But this logic and these traditions are nevertheless distinct because they are little by little pervaded by the family's particular experiences and because their role is increasingly to insure the family's cohesion and to guarantee its continuity.’<sup>143</sup>

Though Halbwachs is referring here to the family unit, and specifically to memory, what he describes nonetheless resembles Luhmann's description of the operations undertaken by social systems. Indeed, Halbwachs' conceptualization of a ‘logic’ and ‘traditions’ that have a cohesive role to play in specific social frames of memory mirrors the ‘Konzept des selbstreferentiell-geschlossenen Systems’<sup>144</sup> in Luhmann's theory. In both cases, interaction with the external environment (for Luhmann) and society (for Halbwachs) occurs, but ultimately to perpetuate the internal dynamic of that system or frame of memory.

How can this insight usefully inform an analysis of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen? First of all, it provides an opportunity to nuance models of coming to terms with the double past that place conflicting positions on a political spectrum. Certainly I would not disagree that a left-wing view typically differentiates between National Socialism and East German communism, whilst

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<sup>142</sup> On this point, see Astrid Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen: Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 2005), p. 34; also Jeffrey K. Olick and Daniel Levy, ‘Collective Memory and Cultural Restraint: Holocaust Myth and Rationality in German Politics’, *American Sociological Review*, 62, 6 (Dec 1997), pp. 921-936.

<sup>143</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 83.

<sup>144</sup> Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme*, p. 63.

a right-wing view usually stresses similarities between the two or even equates them. As the thematic chapters of this thesis will show, it is indisputably those on the political right and the victims of communism who most vocally advocate the latter position. Likewise, the political left and left-liberal historians and memorial specialists do consistently come down in favour of differentiation and the singularity of the Holocaust. What I suggest instead is that we *also* attend to the aforementioned ‘logic’ and ‘traditions’ of these discourses to look behind labels such as left- and right-wing, Holocaust-centred, and totalitarianist, which may in instances screen complexity.

Needless to say, I do not aim to supplant an approach grounded in the tools and concepts of cultural memory with a focus on governmentality and functional differentiation. Together, the three complement one another, allowing representations of the double past to be approached from the bottom up, as constituent elements of a broader cultural formation, and from the top down, in connection with power relations and the structuring of knowledge in society. To reiterate what I have outlined in this section, my approach nuances the cultural memory paradigm so widespread in research into the place of the German past in the Berlin Republic on two counts. It proposes, firstly, a more fine-grained understanding of the *situational* factors underpinning how the double past is handled at and around the memorials. This chiefly entails breaking with a ‘containered’ model of cultural memory that unproblematically takes the frame of the nation-state as its point of departure, and questioning the role that the media of memory plays in shaping discourse. Secondly, it draws on the Foucauldian concept of governmentality and Niklas Luhmann’s theory of autopoietic social systems to suggest two ways of looking at the *relational* aspect of memory discourse from 1998 onwards. Thinking of the institutionalized position on the double past as an ‘exhibitionary complex’ regulating both history and identity enables us to take it seriously as a central organizing force behind debates on the ground (and specifically at the memorials). On the other hand, the relations and interactions between discourses can be analyzed on the assumption that each operates according to its own internal logic or code too.

## **Methodology & sources**

Like the theoretical framework outlined above, there are several pillars to the methodology utilized in this thesis. Whilst the theoretical underpinnings need not be repeated here, they do help to clarify the criteria use for selecting sources and delimiting the frame of enquiry. Since I am concerned with contextual factors that shape patterns of representing the sites, for instance, it follows that I look closely at the genre of the texts, practices and objects I deal with. Likewise, I will take into account ‘discourse positions’, which is to say the ideological stances of discourses.<sup>145</sup> In addition, unpacking the work of individual texts within an apparatus for legitimizing power and governance – what Foucault terms a *dispositif* – helps to shed light on the relationship between a normative ‘official’ discourse and grassroots constructions of the double past. Finally, critiquing this centre-periphery model and applying the concept of self-referentially closed systems emerging through communication shifts the focus from the inside of *dispositifs* to the interstices between them. Broadly speaking, then, I ask what the sources I analyze say about the mechanisms of power and legitimization at work, and how the exercise of power is distributed across the cultural formation.

Following recent museum studies literature, I take a holistic view of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen’s embeddedness ‘within broader relations of cultural production’.<sup>146</sup> This requires a similarly broad analytical lens that covers both site-based discourses *and* their symbolic and rhetorical figuration across multiple public spheres consisting of local, national, and even trans-national actors. That said, it is not any and all cultural representations of the double past that are of interest here, but rather those which offer a window onto the ‘disciplinary regime’ of these memorial museums or pluralize and critique the concept. I have, as a rule, concentrated on cultural discourses, practices, and objects that bear a direct relation to the ‘governmental’ aspect of remembrance, given that I am concerned first and foremost with problematizing the notion of an institutionalised narrative of the double past. Equally, I have selected sources that

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<sup>145</sup> Siegfried Jäger, ‘Discourse and knowledge: Theoretical and methodological aspects of a critical discourse and dispositive analysis’ in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London: SAGE, 2001), pp. 32-62 (pp. 49-50).

<sup>146</sup> C. A. Kratz and I. Karp, ‘Introduction: Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations’, in *Museum Frictions*, ed. by Kratz et al, pp. 1-31 (p. 20).

treat remembrance as a ritual of citizenship. Hence I my source base includes European and German federal and regional policy documents, press reportage, memorial exhibitions, educational materials, specialist debates on ‘best practice’ at the memorials, advocacy work by survivor and civic lobby groups, and municipal discourse.

Though there is a considerable amount of fictional literature and filmic material that deals with these two former camps and clearly constitutes part of a broader cultural memory, neither of these source groups directly addresses issues of post-1998 governmentality and of remembrance as a civic value. Indeed, I have on the whole excluded creative, non-documentary responses to the memorials from my analysis, as the range of subjective, artistic motivations behind their production makes them far harder to either place with any degree of certainty within the ‘exhibitionary complex(es)’ supporting the Schröder and Merkel governments’ politics of the past or clearly identify them as a critique of such complexes. The same applies to online discussion forums established by and for victims of pre- and/or post-1945 injustices, which in any case offer a sparse data set for the two memorials I address.

This notwithstanding, scholarship on the working through of the double past stands to benefit from analysis of new media. Both Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen have official web sites, and the Buchenwald memorial now has an official presence on Facebook and YouTube.<sup>147</sup> If one accepts the caveats relating to ‘online’ identities, there is much to be gained from interpreting online fora as constituent elements of a broader public sphere in which the past is debated and represented. Paul Cooke, for instance, has surveyed a wide range of websites related to various aspects of life in the GDR and their relationship to negotiations of East German identity and ‘inner unity’ since unification.<sup>148</sup> Sara Jones, too, has convincingly illustrated how online repositories can impact upon modalities of remembrance in her analysis of the website [www.stasiopfer.de](http://www.stasiopfer.de), which contains a discussion forum for victims of the East German secret

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<sup>147</sup> See <http://www.buchenwald.de/69/>. Last accessed 12 Aug 2013; <http://www.stiftung-bg.de/gums/de/index.htm>. Last accessed 12 Aug 2013; <https://www.facebook.com/buchenwaldmemorial>. Last accessed 12 Aug 2013; <http://www.youtube.com/user/BuchenwaldMemorial/about>. Last accessed 12 Aug 2013.

<sup>148</sup> Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification*, ch. 6.

police.<sup>149</sup> The fact is, however, that neither Buchenwald nor Sachsenhausen feature on this forum,<sup>150</sup> nor are the *Speziallager* a topic of interest in the websites Cooke discusses, even those intended to underline the GDR's criminality (they typically focus instead on the *Stasi*). Therefore I concentrate on print media such as the various *Verbandszeitschriften* in which survivors and their representatives voice their opinions. The far higher incidence of articles in print media compared to online sources relating directly to one or both of the memorials I discuss means that the former constitutes a more comprehensive and elucidating text corpus.

The one source group that I have not systematically analyzed but that could reasonably be considered part of the 'exhibitionary complex' is German television programmes and news broadcasts dealing with either Buchenwald or Sachsenhausen. This omission is regrettable, not least as it would have provided an interesting visual comparison to my analysis of text-based newspaper reportage, but can be explained in part by the difficulties of locating and accessing particularly the (generally shorter) segments of news broadcasts. A filmography of longer documentary films – 20 minutes and over – on the *Speziallager* has for instance been compiled by Günter Agde, but of the 28 films Agde lists, only nine date from the post-1998 period examined here. Of these, two deal with the Soviet special camp at Sachsenhausen and none with *Speziallager Nr. 2* at Buchenwald.<sup>151</sup>

I use the methods of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to provide a close analysis of my chosen sources. CDA is useful precisely because it uncovers the semiotic work performed by elements of discourse – in other words, the way these elements communicate meaning. As a first step, I subject my research data to language-based and iconographic analysis, asking how the linguistic and non-linguistic forms of communication employed by individual sources represent particular aspects of Buchenwald and/or Sachsenhausen's history. This helps to establish common topoi, which may vary depending on the genre or provenance

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<sup>149</sup> See Sara Jones, 'Catching fleeting memories: Victim forums as mediated remembering communities', *Memory Studies*, 6, 4 (2013), 390-403.

<sup>150</sup> A keyword search of the terms 'Buchenwald' and 'Sachsenhausen' on 12 Aug 2013 produced no results for either.

<sup>151</sup> Günter Agde, 'Filmographie zur Geschichte der sowjetischen Speziallager in der SBZ/DDR', in *Instrumentalisierung, Verdrängung, Aufarbeitung: Die sowjetischen Speziallager in der gesellschaftlichen Wahrnehmung 1945 bis heute*, ed. by Hausteil et al, pp. 266-270.

of certain text clusters. Newspaper reportage, as one particular text type, may for instance foreground the sensational aspects of debates at the memorials, whilst memorial specialists interpret them in terms of their relation to historical events. At the same time, local newspaper reportage will take a greater interest in the implications these debates have at the municipal level than the national press. Having identified the relevant genre- and context-specific topoi, I then group the sources according to theme and relate this back to my theoretical construct, applying concepts drawn from memory studies, Foucault's model of governmentality, and systems theory. Finally, I draw general conclusions about the ways in which these topoi are constituted and re-constituted over time (the diachronic dimension of my analysis).

In deciding which debates to cover, I rely on the concept of 'discourse strands' – that is, 'thematically uniform discourse processes'<sup>152</sup> – that can be analyzed both synchronically and diachronically. Focusing on a smaller number of exemplary 'discourse strands' is most appropriate to the thick descriptive approach of this thesis and can do justice to its aim of problematizing a normative national discourse through looking more closely at specific sites and debates. As a discourse strand can consist of various genres of text, and operate across multiple discourse planes and contexts, it is possible to approach it from a number of vantage points. Accordingly, I revisit certain 'strands' such as the controversial speeches by Hermann Schäfer and Jörg Schönbohm in 2006 in several chapters, thereby comparing and contrasting their discursive construction in local, regional and national contexts. To allow for a diachronic analysis, a number of discourse strands are surveyed in each respective chapter, spread across different stages in the political life of the Berlin Republic. On the whole, the chapters begin with the years around 1998-1999, when the Schröder government came to power (1998), the seat of the capital moved to Berlin (1999), and the Federal Memorials Strategy passed into law (1999). Subsequent discursive strands relate to the years either side of 2005, when Angela Merkel took up office, and 2008-2009, which saw an amendment to the *Gedenkstättenkonzeption* (2008), the 20-year anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall (2009), and federal elections (2009).

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<sup>152</sup> Jäger, 'Discourse and Knowledge', in *Methods*, ed. by Wodak and Meyer, p. 47.

## **Thesis structure**

The structure of this thesis reflects its aim of looking behind a normative reading of the ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’ in Germany. Each of the four thematic chapters that follow therefore takes issue with an over-simplified ‘national’ model of cultural remembrance, demonstrating how approaches to the double past are patterned quite differently depending on the cultural space one looks at. The four ‘spaces’ I investigate are the memorial museums (as public spaces), the camp locales, the federal states of Brandenburg and Thuringia, and what Astrid Erll calls the ‘fuzzy edges’<sup>153</sup> of national memory – that is, the fluid and multiple constructions of the nation as a cultural entity. As the inclusion of this final chapter indicates, I by no means reject the proposition of a national discourse out of hand. Rather, I approach it in a way that sheds light on the mutually constitutive relationship between the institutionalized discourse and representations of the double past on the ground. Indeed, as Etienne François and Hagen Schulze note in their study of *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, national identity is in any case only conceivable ‘in Beziehung und Wechselwirkung zu anderen Teilidentitäten’.<sup>154</sup> Thus, my objective is not to compartmentalize national discourse or suggest that it can be broken down into concentrically organized micro and macro spheres. Instead, I chart the key actors, debates, and junctures in the respective spaces under discussion, thereby attributing a dynamic to each space in its own right, without losing sight of continuities cutting across several spaces.

Chapter two addresses debates conducted either on-site at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen or in relation to the site materiality since 1998. In treating the *Gedenkstätten* as public spaces I follow Tony Bennett, who distinguishes museums and heritage institutions from self-contained ‘public spheres’ to highlight their intermediary role in public culture.<sup>155</sup> That is to say, I view the

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<sup>153</sup> Erll, ‘Travelling Memory’, p. 8.

<sup>154</sup> Etienne François and Hagen Schulze, ‘Einleitung’, in *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, ed. by *idem.*, vol. 1 (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2001), pp. 9-24 (p. 22).

<sup>155</sup> Bennett, ‘Exhibition, Difference, and the Logic of Culture’, in *Museum Frictions*, ed. by Kratz et al, pp. 46-6

memorials as both spaces for reproducing and inflecting the ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’, and as agencies shaping these discourses. The chapter traces a chronological narrative, but treats the phases of the memorials’ tripartite past (as concentration camp, *Speziallager*, and GDR memorial) in turn – each, we will recall, having received its own specific treatment in the *Neugestaltungen*. On the evidence presented here, it is the respective survivors’ associations and the memorial specialists who have featured most prominently in debates in the memorial spaces. Furthermore, I argue that there has been marked continuity in the situation here, insofar as interpretations of the double past on-site have not necessarily moved with concurrent shifts in the normalization paradigm, and remain diverse. To my mind, we can attribute this to successful implementation of de-centralized and plural museological concepts at both Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen.

In chapter three, I turn to the relationship between the camps and their neighbouring towns. Material traces of the concentration camp complexes and the historical entwinement of town and camp make the Nazi past virtually unavoidable in Oranienburg and Weimar. Yet, as my analysis of post-1998 marketing discourses, local press reportage, and municipal cooperation with victims’ lobbies, the memorials, and trans-national cultural institutions such as UNESCO proves, there is little doubt that the sites and their histories are now openly confronted at local level. This is no mere microcosm of the shift in the normalization paradigm introduced during Gerhard Schröder’s chancellorship however. If German normality can be described as a dialectic confrontation<sup>156</sup> with positive and negative aspects of the country’s past and present, then the dialectic is certainly most pronounced in Oranienburg and Weimar – a point confirmed by the continuous negotiation of these poles we see in municipal discourses. It is not only symbolic dates on the commemorative calendar that prompt mention of the double past (or at least certain aspects of it); public articulation of local identity more generally seems to implicitly contend with the Nazi past. Interestingly, I show that the *Speziallager* and NMG, as symbols of the East German past, play a more marginal role in identity discourses than one might expect given the decades-long imposition of antifascist identity after 1945. If anything, the unbroken focus on the years 1933-1945, which has obtained even

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<sup>156</sup> See Caroline Peace, *Contemporary Germany and the Nazi Legacy: Remembrance, Politics and the Dialectic of Normality* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

as communist injustices have come into much sharper relief under Angela Merkel's coalition government, may even screen the post-1945 period from representations of the double past.

In chapter four, debates at the memorials are analyzed within the cultural framework of the federal states, Brandenburg and Thuringia. Though this chapter is no different from others in taking a holistic view of culture, it should be noted that political culture – chiefly the work of the regional parliaments, ministries, educators, and regionally active survivors' organizations – plays a particularly pronounced role here. Partly this can be explained by Germany's federal structure, and the emergence of *Landeskunde* as a means of promoting identification with these regional entities. Indeed, institutions such as the Regional Offices for Political Education (*Landeszentralen für politische Bildung*) designed to fulfill this remit play an active part in promoting awareness of regional memorial sites.<sup>157</sup> As I point out in my analysis, the predominance of political actors in this space under whose jurisdiction the memorials fall could well explain why post-1998 representations of the double past are pointedly bound up with Germany's post-unification transition here. Unification's stated aim of breaking definitively from the GDR past has become, I argue, a powerful underlying narrative that has informed reckoning with Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen well into the 2000s. Thus, where Buchenwald largely appears to symbolize the successes of transition in Thuringia, in Brandenburg, certain discourses on Sachsenhausen's double past connect it to perceived deficits in that state's transitional process.

Chapter five challenges the notion of a single, national discourse on the double past on one final count. If, as stated above, the objective here is to problematize a normative definition of the 'anti-totalitarian consensus', then it stands to reason that, as well as pointing out local or regional permutations of cultural discourse, it is necessary to convey the sheer variety of claims to represent official German national memory that crystallize at the memorials. I cover several examples, including debates on the relationship of the *Gedenkstätten* to the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin, and a

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<sup>157</sup> See Dieter K. Buse, 'The Mediators: Memorialization Endeavours of the Regional Offices for Political Education (*Landeszentralen für politische Bildung*)', in *Memorialization in Germany since 1945*, ed. by Bill Niven and Chloe Paver (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 91-102 (esp. pp. 92-93).

challenge issued to the Red-Green coalition government by the conservative author and critic Ulrich Schacht at Sachsenhausen in 2005. The second and third sections of the chapter deal with the implication of the memorials in European and global processes of coming to terms with difficult pasts. It points out that the memorials serve not only local and regional but also trans-national constituencies. At the same time, the chapter resists implying a sequential progression from national to global memory in the years since 1998. On the contrary, the evidence I present suggests that in fact both national and global frames exist simultaneously. Arguing in favour of an overlapping and contiguous relationship as opposed to a model that sees national frameworks giving way to global memory in the course of the decade or so after 1998 is an important contribution to historicizing the period.

## Ch. 2: The ‘double past’ in the memorial museum

### *Introduction*

In April 2012, the Minister for Culture Bernd Neumann (CDU) ceremonially opened the recently re-landscaped prisoner camp at Sachsenhausen as a memorial. As part of the *Neugestaltung*, elements of the GDR-era memorial architecture had been removed and the exact foundations of the concentration camp barracks marked out using gravel beds, thus revealing the hitherto obscured ‘Geometrie des totalen Terrors’.<sup>158</sup> With the opening, the *Neugestaltung* was now all but complete. Meanwhile, the redesign of Buchenwald had been largely finished by 1999, when the third and final permanent exhibition on the GDR memorial had opened. These by no means represent the final changes to be made at the sites – further ‘decentralised’ exhibitions on the camp personnel at Sachsenhausen are scheduled to open next year, and the permanent exhibition on the concentration camp at Buchenwald is currently being overhauled with a view to reopening in 2015. Nonetheless, all the major recommendations contained in the reports by the Brandenburgian and Thuringian Historians’ Commissions have now been realized. Now is therefore an appropriate juncture at which to take stock of how these redesigns, at the heart of which lay the sites’ tripartite history under National Socialism, Stalinism and real existing socialism, relate to an ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’ in Germany.

Looking at how the physical memorials, relics, and on-site exhibitions have been culturally coded, I will probe an uncomplicated link between the sites and an ‘official’ discourse on the past. Incidentally, Neumann himself drew just such an uncomplicated link at the 2012 opening. Though he conceded that there

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<sup>158</sup> See Günter Morsch, ‘Sachsenhausen – ein neuer Lagertypus? Das Konzentrationslager bei der Reichshauptstadt in der Gründungsphase’, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 56, 10 (2008), 805-822.

was ‘keine allgemein verbindliche Anleitung für die Aufarbeitung der Verbrechen der Nationalsozialisten und für das Gedenken an die Opfer’, he nonetheless reminded the audience of the *Gedenkstättenkonzeption* – updated under his tenure as Minister for Culture in 2008 – and the importance it placed on preserving ‘authentische[...] Erinnerungsorte’.<sup>159</sup>

Contradicting his earlier statement, Neumann did in fact offer ‘Anleitung’ of sorts for dealing with Sachsenhausen. In his view it was important ‘hier in Sachsenhausen aber auch, an das Sowjetische Speziallager Nummer 7, das auf dem Areal des ehemaligen KZs lag, angemessen zu erinnern.’<sup>160</sup> The virtues of remembrance, the historical site, and the anti-totalitarian paradigm were brought together in programmatic fashion. In the remainder of this chapter, I look behind this normative position, showing that, whereas official discourse has gradually moved towards a totalitarianist stance on the double past, discourse in the museum spaces has upheld the principle of differentiation. As I will go on to argue, the trend can be attributed to the discursive *context* of the memorial museums as intermediary ‘public spaces’ and the discursive *dynamic* at play.

To begin with contextual factors, I suggest that the material sites play a crucial role in structuring the kind of discourse on the double past that is presented there, whether differentiated or equationist, and the shape of discourse, by which I mean its contours and constituent voices. Whilst I follow Flora Kaplan’s description of museums as ‘political arenas’<sup>161</sup> of contestation, I am also interested in what makes these two particular ‘arenas’ distinct from both conventional history museums and other cultural or political units such as the ‘region’ or the ‘nation’ (handled in chapters three and four respectively). Buchenwald’s and Sachsenhausen’s particular auratic and spatial qualities for instance help us to understand why it is above all survivors’ organizations, the memorial sites, and political representatives who stake out claims to interpret their multi-faceted history. Equally, they may hold a clue to understanding how these various groups attempt to do so (see above for an overview of the respective positions staked out in the immediate post-unification period).

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<sup>159</sup> ‘Rede von Kulturstaatsminister Bernd Neumann anlässlich der Übergabe der neugestalteten Freiflächen der KZ-Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen am 20. April 2012’ (online) <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Rede/2012/04/2012-04-20-neumann-sachsenhausen.html>. Last accessed 30 Aug 2013.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.* Last accessed 30 Aug 2013.

<sup>161</sup> Flora E. S. Kaplan, ‘Exhibitions as communicative media’, in *Museum, Media, Message*, ed. by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (London/New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 37-58 (p. 55).

At the same time, I treat museums as *agencies* in the production of heritage discourse.<sup>162</sup> Here I am particularly interested in how the memorials as spaces as opposed to simply texts reinforce or challenge particular readings of the double past. After all, it is the memorials themselves rather than individual exhibits that are the genuine historical artifacts.<sup>163</sup> Drawing on Greer Crawley's definition of 'theatricality' in the museum, which need not imply lack of authenticity but instead a 'spatial and spectatorial' mode of experience<sup>164</sup> engendered through particular staging effects, I suggest that the memorial space can narrate the double past in a number of ways, both intended and unintended. The curatorial teams at both sites have for example ingeniously juxtaposed historical relics with conspicuously re-constructed elements in certain places, serving as a commentary on the relics' 'layeredness'. In this case, the sites lend themselves to a discourse that distinguishes between their multiple pasts. On the whole, the new museological concepts implemented at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, oriented as they are around the principles of plural and decentralized commemoration, have limited the extent to which the sites could be monopolized by any single narrative.

These principles have their roots not in federal cultural policy but in the *Gedenkstättenbewegung* and the post-unification re-orientation of the old NMG. We are therefore dealing with longer-term chronologies and developments that have unfolded alongside and not as a result of institutionalizing the 'anti-totalitarian consensus'. In fact, conceiving of debates on site at the two memorials since 1998 as a form of history politics obscures more than it reveals about the stance of the memorial professionals on the double past. To my mind, their involvement in the (changing) memorial landscapes should be characterized not only as memory construction, but also as the integration of dialogic, reflective, critical standards from the historical profession into the memorial

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<sup>162</sup> Here I borrow from Sharon Macdonald, who primarily addresses science museums and the authority they possess in presenting scientific knowledge. See Macdonald, 'Exhibitions of power and powers of exhibitions: an introduction to the politics of display', in *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, ed. by Sharon Macdonald (London/New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 1-24 (esp. p. 19).

<sup>163</sup> Volkhard Knigge, 'Gedenkstätten und Museen', in *Verbrechen Erinnern: Die Auseinandersetzung mit Holocaust und Völkermord*, ed. by Knigge and Norbert Frei (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2002), pp. 378-389 (p. 385f).

<sup>164</sup> Greer Crawley, 'Staging Exhibitions: Atmospheres of Imagination', in *Museum Making: Narratives, architecture, exhibitions*, ed. by Suzanne MacLeod, Laura Hourston Hanks and Jonathan Hale (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 12-20 (p. 13).

museums.<sup>165</sup> Broadening focus, we see that the same applies to other groups too; the stances they adopt on the memorials may derive from a kind of self-contained discursive logic as much as from totalitarianist or Holocaust-centred history politics. Survivors and their representatives, for instance, may see the sites as form of physical proof that can buttress claims for symbolic recognition of victimization (or for that matter of acts of solidarity and resistance), and this in turn feeds into how they interpret them. For politicians the sites may facilitate the exercise of power, given the legitimization that can follow from controlling which story gets told there.

On this evidence, applying Luhmann's concept of autopoietic differentiation between systems would go some way towards explaining these distinct positions. Indeed, in a recent article analyzing compensation legislation for victims of human rights abuses in the GDR, David Clarke makes a compelling case for such an approach. Drawing as I do upon the terminology and concepts of system theory, Clarke suggests that even ostensible coalescence around common goals – in this case the CDU's support for former victims – can, on closer inspection, reveal a certain doubling of discourse. That is to say, political and advocative actors code their arguments around concepts of power and (symbolic) recognition respectively, and though in instances each appears to adopt the other's position, what takes place is in fact a translation of that position 'into the languages of [the group's] own interests'.<sup>166</sup> Applying the model of autopoiesis to the memorials, and to the discourses of victims' organisations, memorial specialists and politicians, I suggest that it captures what the concepts of history politics and an 'exhibitionary complex' cannot, namely the (at least partial) autonomy of discourse from the dominant federal precedent.

The chapter is structured around the major challenges that faced the two memorials during the period of reconceptualisation and have since been overlaid by normative expressions of an 'anti-totalitarian consensus'. These two main challenges are addressed in individual sections of the chapter. Firstly, I address the task of diversifying and broadening commemoration of the

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<sup>165</sup> On this point see K. H. Pohl, 'Wann ist ein Museum "historisch korrekt"? "Offenes Geschichtsbild", Multiperspektivität und "Überwältigungsverbot" als Grundprinzipien musealer Geschichtsrepräsentation' in *Museum und Geschichtskultur: Ästhetik – Politik – Wissenschaft*, ed. by O. Hartung (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2006), pp. 273-286.

<sup>166</sup> David Clarke, 'Compensating the Victims of Human Rights Abuses in the German Democratic Republic: The Struggle for Recognition', *German Politics*, 21, 1 (2012), 17-33 (p. 18).

concentration camp victims as well as fleshing out the picture of camp life. Secondly, I reflect on the bitterly contested integration of the history of the Soviet camps into the memorial concepts. I quite deliberately leave aside processes of musealizing the legacy of GDR antifascism and the history of the GDR memorials, in part because this has already been explored in an excellent study focused on Buchenwald, and in part because the new museums dealing with the East German memorials more closely resemble traditional museums of contemporary history. They do not facilitate commemoration but treat it as an object for documentation and critique; as such, they are not as present in the various different forms of interaction with the sites and do not give a handle on how these are constituted. In any case, GDR traditions are addressed in some detail in the opening section of the chapter.

I treat each of these in order rather than tracing a chronological course from the turn of the millennium onwards as I do in other chapters. Taking this delineated approach allows me to map out many of the arguments that I will return to throughout the thesis. It also allows me to assess when exactly during the lifespan of the Berlin Republic each of the constitutive elements of the reconceptualisation has been most vigorously debated on-site. Finally, my specific interest in developments at the memorials is reflected in the source base for this chapter: I draw for the most part on analysis of the memorial and exhibition spaces, published critiques of these, commemorative ceremonies and speeches held on site, exhibition catalogues, and interactive media produced by the memorial staff.

### ***“Rückkehr zum historischen Ort”: interpreting the concentration camps***

In the opening section of the chapter I explore patterns of commemorating the concentration camps at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen and the ways in which these patterns variously shape and are shaped by the site materiality. My

overarching concern with institutionalization and the postulate of an ‘exhibitionary complex’ that deploys the memorials as mechanisms of governance guides the enquiry. I am most interested here in questions of continuity and change across the period of formal institutionalization towards the end of the 1990s. Picking up on the argument made in the introduction to this chapter, I dispute whether forms of interaction position themselves in relation to a central, federal narrative of an ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’. Arguably it is not one central reference point but in fact several, dispersed discourses that account for patterns of interpretation. In order to gain a sense of chronology, I begin by recapitulating the early post-unification debates on how to find adequate forms of memorialization and musealization at the two sites. Although these debates are familiar and have been recounted elsewhere,<sup>167</sup> my interpretation is unique in linking them to a discussion, firstly, of the sites’ defining auratic and spatial qualities and, secondly, of how these qualities either normativized or unsettled patterns of interpretation emerging towards and into the 2000s. It is for this reason that I concentrate on a smaller number of high-profile exhibitions that were seismographs of the re-conceptualisation process. At Buchenwald, I consider the permanent exhibition on the concentration camp opened in 1995, and at Sachsenhausen I hone in on the exhibition produced for barrack 38, which was damaged in an arson attack in autumn 1992.

The second half of the section concentrates on the post-2000 period, thereby bringing the discussion more or less up to date. It focuses on the ways in which groups have interacted with the memorial space and the authentic objects since the turn of the millennium. As the post-unification decisions on how best to re-present the history of the concentration camps set in train a diversification of the memorials, the decade or so since 2000 has represented, amongst other things, a continuation of a process begun already in the 1990s.<sup>168</sup> New memorials to hitherto marginalized victims groups continue to be added and a number of the decentralized exhibitions on the pre-1945 camp at Sachsenhausen have since opened. Notably, unlike the new approach taken to political resistance to national Socialism in the camps in the redesigned exhibitions, these developments have provoked little controversy. In light of the fairly minimal trace that can be found in, for instance, the publications of survivors’ associations in response to on site

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<sup>167</sup> Zimmer, *Der Buchenwald-Konflikt*; Hausteil, *Geschichte im Dissens*.

<sup>168</sup> On these developments, see in particular Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, ch. 1.

memorialization, I rely amongst other things on commemorative ceremonies held at the sites by various groups, a number of which I attended. These have of course continued to take place on an annual basis and so provide a consistent barometer of attitudes. Aside from participant observation and the analysis of the ceremonies' performative and discursive dimensions, I also analyze educational materials produced by the memorials and designed to either aid orientation on site or accompany new exhibitions there.

In my analysis of the first exhibitions to emerge out of the *Neugestaltungen*, I critique Alexandra Klei's argument that the contemporary memorials are best understood as a series of 'gestalterische[...] Eingriffe[...]',<sup>169</sup> in the architectural ensembles. Certainly Klei is right to point out that re-conceptualising the former concentration camps has required 'Formen von Präsentation und Gestaltung'<sup>170</sup> and is therefore inherently much more than a value-negative 'overcoming' ('Überwindung')<sup>171</sup> of prior GDR practices of remembrance at sites such as Buchenwald. How this politics of representation has played out, and the extent to which the professional and advisory teams behind the redesigns at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen have reflected on this, are questions to which I will return throughout this chapter and the thesis as a whole. I do however depart from Klei's reading in certain respects. Firstly, I seek to balance a view of the 'Neugestaltungen' as a new layer of interpretation with recognition that the historical site nonetheless lies at the heart of the new memorial concepts. Secondly, I propose that the key to understanding both the aims of the redesign and the highly disparate ways in which the sites continue to be read today is, in fact, the uniquely auratic, 'authentic' qualities they possess – qualities that set them apart from other museums of contemporary history. As I will show, whilst the reconceptualisation processes and the official 'anti-totalitarian consensus' in Germany have both undeniably played a role in memory contests at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, many of the positions adopted in these contests have just as much to do with interpretations of the material sites themselves.

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<sup>169</sup> Alexandra Klei, *Der erinnerte Ort: Geschichte durch Architektur: Zur baulichen und gestalterischen Repräsentationen der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2011), p. 24.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

I begin with the permanent exhibition on the concentration camp that was inaugurated in 1995 – the first such exhibition to open at a concentration camp memorial on German soil in the post-unification period. Scholarship on the concentration camp exhibition has focused for the most part on its deconstruction of the mono-dimensional antifascist narrative presented at the GDR memorial, and in particular its treatment of resistance at Buchenwald.<sup>172</sup> Certainly it did break from the previous memorial's overwhelming fixation on (communist-led) opposition to National Socialism and focus the exhibition around prisoners' shared experiences of arrest, cruelty and murder. Furthermore, the new exhibition, spread over two floors of the former camp depot building (*Kammergebäude*), ends not with the triumph over fascist-capitalism but with the literal 'end' of the camp. A dimly lit table display in the final section of the exhibition contains archaeological finds from the memorial grounds, mostly personal items belonging previously to prisoners, reminding visitors that thousands of lives had been unjustly cut short by the time Buchenwald was liberated. For the purposes of this thesis however, it is helpful to analyze the exhibition as an early example of the functional changes that the memorials were undergoing in the 1990s, and also as the nexus of the various discourses that were beginning to crystallize here at that time.

In the exhibition's concept paper drawn up by the Buchenwald site staff, the turn to embrace a multi-perspectival approach is evident. The history of the concentration camp, the concept paper stated, should not be presented 'im überlieferten Fundus von Sinnkonstruktionen'<sup>173</sup> – a position that resonated with the description of the memorials several pages later as 'offene Lernorte'.<sup>174</sup> These tenets informed the inclusion of various victim perspectives in the exhibition, represented by their written and spoken testimony as well as objects (*Relikte*) that were of significance to them. However, the concept paper advocated a particular approach to the display and contextualisation of exhibition objects that was distinguishable from the way in which the concentration camp victims' organisations interacted with them. As this difference cross-cuts

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<sup>172</sup> See Bill Niven, 'Redesigning the Landscape of Memory at Buchenwald: Trends and Problems' in *The GDR and its History: Rückblick und Revision: Die DDR im Spiegel der Enquete-Kommissionen*, ed. by Peter Barker (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 159-183 (p. 163f).

<sup>173</sup> 'Das Konzentrationslager Buchenwald: Eine Geschichte des Verbrechens. Konzeption für ein historisches Museum zur Geschichte des Konzentrationslagers Buchenwald', ed. by Harry Stein, Archiv der Gedenkstätte Buchenwald (hereafter BwA), p. 5.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

distinctions drawn by mapping discourses against the anti-totalitarian consensus, it is worth reflecting on.

In the view of the concept paper, objects were merely the starting point of visitors' interaction with the material site; they represented the 'Niederschlag von in und hinter ihnen liegenden unterschiedlichen Praktiken, von Strategien, Bedürfnissen und Zwängen, die sie haben entstehen lassen.'<sup>175</sup> On account of the by definition fragmentary meaning of objects that the museum setting is able to convey, the concept paper unequivocally rejected attempts to impose totalizing claims over them in the concentration camp exhibition by subordinating them to an overarching narrative, as had been the case at the NMG. For the Lagerarbeitsgemeinschaft Buchenwald-Dora e. V., by contrast, this position was unacceptable precisely because it denied visitors a sense of orientation. Reflecting on the exhibition in *Neues Deutschland*, the secretary of the LAG argued that its design had 'left visitors alone' ('Besucher...allein gelassen') with a flood of information.<sup>176</sup> Though the LAG evidently supported the GDR narrative, choosing to interpret the exhibition as evidence of the 'Verbindung zwischen KZ und Industrie',<sup>177</sup> it also responded differently to the aura of the exhibition objects. Whereas the *Relikte* held documentary value for the memorial staff, who proposed using them to trigger processes of autonomous learning and interpretation, for the LAG they took on a moral force as legitimation of an antifascist political programme.

One of the first major projects undertaken at Sachsenhausen as part of the *Neukonzeption* was a design concept for the Jewish barracks, which had been badly damaged in an arson attack in the autumn of 1992. The incident prompted a global outpouring of disgust, with large numbers of visitors to the memorial gathering around the charred remains of the barracks in a spontaneous condemnation of anti-Semitic violence. The federal government's response was rather more lukewarm, Helmut Kohl declining to visit and instead sending the Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel in a move that some commentators later pointed out to be typical of Kohl-era commemorative politics, averse as they were to any kind of sustained engagement with the Holocaust and German guilt. Indeed, Kinkel appeared at pains to discredit the attack as an isolated act of anti-

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<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>176</sup> Ulrich Schneider, 'Das KZ Buchenwald: Lageralltag', *Neues Deutschland*, 2 May 1999.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

Semitism, in response to which he could evoke a morally pristine culture of ‘anti-anti-Semitism’ in Germany, to use Klaus Neumann’s term, and conveniently ignore the broader questions this raised about the rise of xenophobia and extremism in the Federal Republic.<sup>178</sup> All the same, the council of the Brandenburg Memorials Foundation – on which representatives of the federal government sat, incidentally – agreed to prioritize the redesign of the Jewish barracks in the *Neugestaltung* at Sachsenhausen.<sup>179</sup> Even at this early stage, it was inaccurate to suggest that discourses at the memorial mirrored the federal government’s line.

What the redesign of the Jewish barracks did reflect was a critical juncture in an institutional discourse on memorial site practice. Memorial professionals such as Günter Morsch very clearly interpreted the impending redesign along these lines. Speaking at a preliminary meeting to discuss what was to be done with barracks 38 and 39, Morsch noted the lack of consensus within the memorial site milieu around approaches to historical relics. He personally regarded reconstruction with scepticism, believing that it would equate the concept of historical authenticity with ‘Typengleichheit’.<sup>180</sup> Yet he conceded that ‘[o]hne die Darstellung ihrer äußeren Form...die Topographie fast unvorstellbar, jedenfalls den Besuchern kaum noch vermittelbar [scheint]’.<sup>181</sup> At stake for Morsch was also the place of artistic, interpretative elements in an eventual solution. It was of course little surprise that this question arose, given that the architect Daniel Libeskind had submitted (and garnered not inconsiderable support for) a design concept that would, if selected, preserve the barrack ruins as a potent symbol of the constant threat posed by right-wing extremism and anti-Semitism. Morsch conceded the attraction of Libeskind’s proposal in a remark cut from the final draft of his speech, in which he noted of the design:

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<sup>178</sup> Klaus Neumann, *Shifting Memories: The Nazi Past in the New Germany* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), pp. 113-135.

<sup>179</sup> Günter Morsch, ‘Sachsenhausen – auf dem Weg zur Neugestaltung und Neukonzeption der Gedenkstätte’, in *Gedenkstätten im vereinten Deutschland: 50 Jahre nach der Befreiung der Konzentrationslager*, ed. by Jürgen Dittberner and Antje Meer (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1994), pp. 46-60 (p. 60).

<sup>180</sup> ‘Mahnmal oder Rekonstruktion, Wiederaufbau oder Abriss: Einführende Bemerkungen zum Fachseminar “Die Baracken 38 und 39: Geschichte eines geschändeten Mahnmals”’, Manuskript von Rede, Archiv Sachsenhausen (AS), 9 Dec 1993, 6pp (p. 5).

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5.

‘[seine] künstlerische Ausdruckskraft [war] so stark und beeindruckend..., daß sie die öffentliche Debatte ebenso wie die Entscheidungsfindung in den Gremien der Stiftung, im internationalen Beirat, in der Fachkommission und im Stiftungsrat, lange und anhaltend beschäftigte.’<sup>182</sup>

In the event, the chosen concept, submitted by the Frankfurt-based architects Braun & Voigt, eschewed an artistic memorial. This was an altogether more restrained design, and one that restored the ‘äußere[...] Form’ considered by Morsch to be so integral to communicating the topography of the concentration camp. As Morsch would later explain in a speech marking the inauguration of the museum in barrack 38 in late 1997, Libeskind’s approach was ultimately considered too problematic by the memorial professionals. To juxtapose the barrack with the acrylic and charred remains of the proposed memorial would, Morsch argued, have risked banalising Nazi crimes and the destruction of the European Jews at their core by appearing to put them on equal footing with right-wing extremist crimes of today.<sup>183</sup> This was a significant departure from artistic memorial forms, and therefore also an important step in working out a position that would later be applied to Sachsenhausen’s post-war history, too.

The Braun & Voigt design entailed reconstruction of barrack 38 with the addition of a ‘shell’ covering the badly damaged but still extant section so as to incorporate the fire damage into the exhibition. Another damaged section was preserved behind protective glass and a timeline of the barrack’s history, which ran from its construction as part of the ‘Kleines Lager’ in the concentration camp up until the arson attack in 1992. A ‘zeithistorisches Fenster’ was installed in the opposite wing of the barrack, illustrating the stages in this historical sequence through exposed layers of paintwork on a section of the structure dating from the time of the concentration camp, special camp and GDR memorial respectively. The reconstructed sleeping quarters – a feature of the NMG that had been built using material taken from other barracks – were also preserved behind glass, turning not the objects themselves but the entire restaging into a Perspex-framed museum exhibit for visitors to view from a distance.

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<sup>182</sup> ‘Rede 9.11.97/Material’, AS.

<sup>183</sup> ‘Rede zur Eröffnung des Museums Baracke 38 am 9. 11. 97’, AS, 9pp (p. 3).

Thus the redesign concept was, as Günter Morsch put it, unequivocally ‘auf den Bau eines funktionalen Museums ausgerichtet’.<sup>184</sup> Not only was the reconstructed barrack an exhibition *object* as much as it was an exhibition space; it also became the starting point for confrontation with the various phases of Sachsenhausen’s checkered history (though its significance for the concentration camp was clearly foregrounded). This approach obtained in the exhibition content, which led from the biographies of 74 Jewish prisoners at Sachsenhausen and was organized around the stages of progressively radical Nazi persecution of Jews in Germany and Europe. Biographical information and exhibits relating to these prisoners could be found in wall-mounted vitrines consisting of a display cabinet and a series of protractible drawers. As such, the highly tactile wall-mounts literally interrupted the visitor’s route through the exhibition and gave him or her a moment’s pause to uncover aspects of the prisoners’ pre-1933 and (in the case of those who survived) post-1945 biographies. The exhibition therefore countered urges to regard the Holocaust as a shorthand for the myriad processes that defined the systematic murder of the Third Reich’s racial and political opponents – as a kind of ‘Metatheorie’, in Morsch’s words.<sup>185</sup> Instead, it sought to present an artifact-based, factually grounded account of Jewish persecution between the years 1933-1945 related *specifically* to the site in question and the individuals who populated it.

Taken together, the exhibition content and redesigned barracks generate a deliberate ‘archaeology’ of the past, if anything aimed at problematising and complicating straightforward commemoration of a *sui generis* ‘Holocaust’. Whether in the disembodied voices of victims that echo through hand-written letters on display in the vitrines, the ‘zeithistorisches Fenster’, the GDR-era recreation of sleeping arrangements in the barrack now frozen in time behind Perspex, or the smell of charred wood pumped around the exhibition space to evoke the moment of the arson attack, absent traces of the layers of history are everywhere to be found in barrack 38. The layers themselves can be likened to ruins, unsettling the unity of the body in space and time in the manner of what Dylan Trigg refers to as a ‘haunted undercurrent’.<sup>186</sup> That is to say, they pose a

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<sup>184</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3.

<sup>185</sup> ‘Anhörung “Holocaust-Mahnmal” am 22. März 1999/20. April 1999, in Oranienburg am 11.03.99 gefasst’, AS, 3pp (p. 2).

<sup>186</sup> D. Trigg, ‘The place of trauma: Memory, hauntings and the temporality of ruins’, *Memory Studies*, 2, 1 (2009), 87-101.

challenge to conceptualizations of time in which one simply projects one's own temporality onto the world around oneself or derives temporality from sites. Instead, the voids left behind by the barrack's partially erased pasts resurface in an unspecific, unplaceable way as 'murmurs' – an 'architectural emergence without time and stability' comparable to traumatic memory.<sup>187</sup>

Yet this symptomatic appropriation of the barrack's traumatic past is in turn offset by deliberate attempts to distance the visitor from the exhibits they are confronted with. The glass paneling in particular functions as a frame, mediating and managing the relationship between object and viewer as well as producing a historiographical cross-section of the past in which purportedly 'authentic' relics exist in an entirely constructed but perpetual stasis. Visitors who view the 'zeithistorisches Fenster' or reconstructed barrack, for instance, see a component of the concentration camp architecture, but are simultaneously aware of how its original meaning has *not* endured over the decades. It is not an uncomplicated artefact of the 'Holocaust' as much as it is a composite of different temporal layers – the arson attack and the contemporary issue of anti-Semitism being just one of these. That said, there is a clear hierarchy established here, and the primacy of events between 1936-1945 is manifest in the museological arrangement.

Ultimately, then, the redesigned Jewish barracks cannot be interpreted as a product of shifts occurring at the political centre of German discourse on the recent past. Nor for that matter was the museum a direct response to prevailing interpretations of National Socialism and the Holocaust. It might have proposed an alternative to a view of the Holocaust as 'Metatheorie', but was hardly a symptom of political contests over history fought out between the Kohl administration and the members of the '68er and '79er generations professionally linked to the memorials. The new museum's pared-down presentism and diacticism suggests that standards belonging to the historical and museological professions as well as the unique 'auratic' quality of the site informed the approach adopted at barrack 38. These provided a kind of internal logic through which the curatorial team at Sachsenhausen filtered their interpretation of the site materiality. Luhmann's concept of autopoietic self-reference therefore provides an instructive lens for theorizing the means by

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<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

which discourse on the memorials was constructed and contoured. As we will see, the logic of problematizing fixed meaning and taking “‘what has been” [as] the starting-point of meaning’<sup>188</sup> would indeed come to underpin the entire memorial site, in museums to both the concentration camp and special camp.

It is possible to apply this theoretical concept to political interpretations of the Jewish barracks too. A speech held by the incumbent Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel at Sachsenhausen to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the concentration camp’s liberation in 1995 provides an opportunity to do so. The manner in which Kinkel framed the history of the concentration camp (and the Third Reich more generally) in his speech was markedly different from the bottom up, site-specific, biographically and empirically grounded concept implemented at the memorial. Instead, a nebulous and largely symbolic understanding of the Holocaust permeated Kinkel’s reading of Sachsenhausen, and his speech concentrated overwhelmingly upon the legacies and lessons of Nazi terror in the present rather than upon the historical detail.

Kinkel noted early on in his speech that Sachsenhausen had been a European site of National Socialist terror prior to 1945 on account of the wide range of nationalities amongst the prisoner contingent. From here, he jumped forward 50 years to reflect upon the very different set of relationships that the Federal Republic had cultivated with its European neighbours. Retaining his focus on the nations that became erstwhile victims of Nazi occupation and rule, Kinkel observed:

‘Alle diese Länder sind heute unsere Partner, Verbündete, Freunde. Besonders zu Israel haben wir ein Verhältnis besonderer Freundschaft gefunden, wofür wir dankbar sind.’<sup>189</sup>

Using ‘heute’ to demarcate reunified Germany from its wartime predecessor, Kinkel gestured towards Germany’s wholly different (and improved) standing in the eyes of Europe and the world. Similarly, his reference

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<sup>188</sup> S. A. Crane, ‘The Conundrum of Ephemerality: Time, Memory, and Museums’, in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Sharon MacDonald (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 98-109 (p. 108).

<sup>189</sup> *Erinnerung und Begegnung: Gedenken im Land Brandenburg zum 50. Jahrestag der Befreiung*, ed. by Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur des Landes Brandenburg (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin Brandenburg, 1996), pp. 90-92 (pp. 90-91).

to German-Israeli friendship suggested historical animosities had been overcome, a point that he spelled out unambiguously by asserting: ‘weil wir [the collective German nation, RB] mit der Vergangenheit gebrochen haben, wurden wir wieder in die Völkergemeinschaft aufgenommen’.<sup>190</sup> Sachsenhausen was thus a convenient staging post for the Kohl government’s attempts to shore up a ‘post-national’ German identity embedded in European and trans-national values. This was reflected not least in the rhetorical sequencing of Kinkel’s speech. In a series of four paragraphs making up the latter half of the speech, universal values of ‘Würde’ and pacifism – symbolised by the ‘Aufbau des neuen Europa’<sup>191</sup> – preceded any mention of Sachsenhausen, which featured in the fourth and final paragraph. Coming to the specific history of the site and the arson attack only at the end of his speech, Kinkel effectively inverted the fine-grained biographical approach taken in the on-site exhibition and proceeded from a European meta-narrative.

Thus, the ‘doubling of discourse’ that Luhmann’s theory identifies was apparent in the various interpretations of Sachsenhausen in the mid-1990s. Kinkel’s reading of Sachsenhausen and the museum in barrack 38 both acknowledged and commemorated the suffering of prisoners at the concentration camp, but this ostensible convergence masked differences in how the narrative was framed. Whereas the museum foregrounded the specific site and historical events, Kinkel’s speech connected Sachsenhausen to post-war European politics and concentrated on the site’s meaning in the present. The systemic coding of discourse taking place here can be aptly explained using Luhmann’s description of how systems interpret certain elements in their environments:

‘Es bleibt zwar richtig, daß interpenetrierende Systeme in einzelnen Elementen konvergieren, nämlich dieselben Elemente benutzen, *aber sie geben ihnen jeweils unterschiedliche Selektivität und unterschiedliche Anschlußfähigkeit, unterschiedliche Vergangenheiten und unterschiedliche Zukünfte*’ (italics in original, RB).<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>192</sup> Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme*, p. 293.

Luhmann's model is accordingly better suited to conveying discourses on the memorials at this point than a Foucauldian analysis using the concept of an 'exhibitionary complex'. But has a synchronicity between federal policy directives and memory discourse on the ground at the memorials been established with the passing into law of the *Gedenkstättenkonzeption*? Certainly the decade or so since then has seen the strengthening of an 'anti-totalitarian consensus' at central level. Yet whilst few would deny that post-1945 injustices have received increasing attention during the 2000s, the primacy of the National Socialist past has by and large been upheld at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. In order to illustrate what has produced this relative degree of continuity, I now address the post-1998 years at the sites.

I turn my attention firstly to some of the major annual commemorative ceremonies held at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. To a certain extent, these have grown out of the *Neukonzeptionen*, at least insofar as they have replaced the centralised mass rallies that were a hallmark of the NMG or have been modified in line with post-1990 efforts to 'decentralise' commemoration and tie it to historical sites, events, and groups. On the other hand, they stand in a longer-term tradition of on-site commemoration, and so attest to the fact that the physical sites map out parameters of interpretation in much the same way interpretations can be mapped back onto the sites. This helps to explain why we see both continuity and change in the nature of the ceremonies across the rupture caused by the events of 1989/1990. In order to convey a sense of the pluralisation and de-centralisation mentioned above, I discuss ceremonies introduced since unification, above all those marking the day of remembrance for victims of National Socialism on 27 January. But I also analyse ceremonies that have their roots in the NMG, such as the liberation anniversaries and, at Sachsenhausen, the anniversary of the murder of 27 political prisoners in October 1944 following the investigation of a Gestapo *Sonderkommission* into underground resistance at the camp.

The 27 January commemorations at Sachsenhausen are dedicated to a specific group of the camp's victims each year. This can be a national group – there have been recent ceremonies dedicated to Spanish inmates (2009) and French prisoners (2013), for instance – or victims of particular events, such as the 'Kriegswinter' of 1939/1940 (commemorated in the 2010 ceremony), or the

250 Jewish camp inmates murdered in May 1942, the focus of the ceremony in 2012. Most obviously this strategy allows for a degree of thematic variety in the ceremonies and largely prevents repetition or hollow commemorative platitudes creeping into the proceedings – a not insignificant consideration given that the date is often referred to (incorrectly) in Germany by the shorthand ‘Holocaust-Gedenktag’. This notwithstanding, there are established traditions that now belong to the Sachsenhausen ceremonies. They are, for example, staged by the memorial site in cooperation with the regional government and parliament in Brandenburg, and begin with a series of commemorative addresses. This is followed by a wreath-laying ceremony at Station Z, the central commemorative site at Sachsenhausen.

Looking specifically at the 2010 ceremony, which I attended, it could in some respects be considered a re-contextualisation of the material site. By holding the commemorative addresses in the ‘Veranstaltungsraum’ housed in the former prisoners’ laundry room (‘Wäscherei’), the organisers subvert the East German commemorative practice of staging highly politicised, open-air, mass gatherings at the memorial. Instead of speaking from a pulpit in front of René Graetz’s sculpture *Befreiung* and beneath the 40-metre obelisk with its overwhelming political symbolism, the speakers address an audience in the enclosed and therefore almost reverentially quiet space of the former barrack. Likewise, the careful sequencing of the ceremony, beginning with the addresses and concluding with wreath laying at Station Z, breaks with the antifascist narrative of rebirth through death as resisters and martyrs.<sup>193</sup> Whereas the memorial complex at the NMG Buchenwald, for instance, lead visitors down a series of steps into the ‘Nacht des Faschismus’ before they ascended to the ‘Turm der Freiheit’ (via a series of reliefs depicting the international communist resistance struggle), the route of the 27 January commemoration at Sachsenhausen *ended* with quiet, reflective mourning of the dead.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> For a comparative analysis of the NMG at Buchenwald, Ravensbrück and Sachsenhausen, paying particular attention to architectural and topographical alterations made to the sites, see Peter Fibich, ‘Buchenwald – Ravensbrück – Sachsenhausen: Die städtebaulich-architektonische und landschaftsarchitektonische Gestaltung der Nationalen Mahn- und Gedenkstätten’, in *Die Sprache des Gedenkens: Zur Geschichte der Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück 1945 – 1995* ed. by Insa Eschebach, Sigrid Jacobeit and Susanne Lanwerd (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1999), pp. 262-281.

<sup>194</sup> The impression of a personal ‘Totengedenken’ was heightened in the 2010 ceremony, as students of a local school read out the names of those who had died at Sachsenhausen on 27 Jan 1940 whilst attendees laid wreaths.

At the same time the structure and format of the ceremony explicitly avoided imposing unitary readings on the history of the concentration camp. Though all of the speakers explicitly commemorated the victims of the camp, their approaches to doing so were markedly different. The site director Günter Morsch, for his part, combined commemoration with documentation, describing how the SS used overexposure to the freezing cold to assist them in murdering prisoners en masse. The survivor Adam König, who had been sent to Sachsenhausen as a teenager, also spoke. He concentrated for the most part on depicting conditions in the camp during the winter of 1939/1940. In addition, pupils from a local school performed a series of interpretative readings that addressed local ambivalence towards the fate of the camp prisoners. The pupils in particular performed a double role, engaging with the history of the site and symbolically passing down the testimony of survivors at the same time. One of the readings, for instance, was an extended passage taken from the memoirs of former camp elder Harry Naujoks, in which Naujoks recalls the commandant Rudolf Höß's order to extend the prisoner roll call during a freezing day in January 1940.<sup>195</sup> In the course of the ceremony, the historical site and the history of suffering at the concentration camp were approached from a range of subject positions: from the view of a professional historian, an eyewitness, and non-expert local residents belonging to the so-called 'Enkelgeneration'.

Multi-perspectivity has been incorporated into the liberation anniversary ceremonies in much the same way. Indeed, certain traditions dating as far back as 1945 have been carried forward into the post-unification period, now forming part of a more variegated programme on and around the anniversary dates at the two camps. To take the example of Buchenwald, the main ceremony, held on the Sunday nearest to the liberation anniversary on 11 April, continues to be held at the site where the very first ceremony commemorating the camp victims on 19 April 1945 took place. In fact, this remains the central memorial to all victims of the camp, albeit in modified form eschewing the monumentality of the initial, cenotaph-like 'KLB' memorial (see introduction). As the president of the IKBD typically delivers an address at the ceremony, the voice of the communist prisoners continues to be prominent. Current president Bertrand Herz's address at the 2012 ceremony, for instance, was a fairly standard rehearsal of the

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<sup>195</sup> See Rainer Kuhn, *Konzentrationslager Sachsenhausen*, ed. by the *Landeszentrale für politische Bildung* (Berlin, 1989), p. 11.

communist-antifascist position, according to which camp life for the prisoners had been a more or less constant (political) struggle against fascist terror. Herz himself drew on the dichotomous poles of terror and resistance in his speech in order to trace a line from the Buchenwald Oath, proclaimed in the aftermath of liberation, to the latter-day fight to eliminate forms of racism, neo-Nazism and anti-Semitism. As such, he borrowed directly from GDR-era “Willenskundgebungen”, which as Ulrike Köpp observes ‘[führten] in der Tradition der Arbeiterbewegung die historische Erinnerung und das Gedenken für die jeweils tagespolitisch aktuellen Auseinandersetzungen mit dem politischen Gegner ins Feld’.<sup>196</sup>

In the 2012 ceremony, the narrative of ongoing antifascist resistance was spatially emplotted in other ways too. Many of the participants in the liberation ceremony, and above all the so-called ‘Antifa’ groups in attendance, moved in train from the central memorial to the bell tower holding aloft banners and flags in the style of the rallies staged at the NMG. Not uncontroversially, several actually carried and waved the GDR flag, effectively telescoping earlier commemorative ceremonies organised by the SED onto proceedings 22 years after its demise.<sup>197</sup> Other banners called for an ‘NPD-Verbot’, resonant in their militant tone of the active ‘struggle’ (‘Kampf’) that Herz had alluded to. It therefore represented a somewhat conventionally ‘East German’ way of coding an anti-extremist sentiment that other speakers at the ceremony had implicitly shared. Éva Pusztai, a Hungarian Jewish former slave labourer at a satellite camp of Buchenwald and current member of the memorial’s International Advisory Council, had for her part expressed the hope that the third generation in post-war society could live a life without institutionalised hatred and prejudice. The Thuringian SPD Minister for Culture Christoph Matschie, meanwhile, had enjoined participants to take lessons (‘Lehren ziehen’) from the history of the camp in order to secure a better future. Once again, on-site commemoration was able to sustain a multiplicity of perspectives.

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<sup>196</sup> Ulrike Köpp, ‘Das Gedenken wird zur nationalen Aufgabe erklärt: Das Kuratorium für den Aufbau nationaler Gedenkstätten und die Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen’ in *Von der Erinnerung zum Monument*, ed. by Morsch, pp. 133-147 (p. 139).

<sup>197</sup> See ‘DDR-Fahnen in Buchenwald geschwenkt’, *Ostthüringer Zeitung*, 17 Apr 2012 (online) <http://www.otz.de/web/zgt/politik/detail/-/specific/DDR-Fahnen-in-Buchenwald-geschwenkt-217178305>. Last accessed 20 Apr 2012; also ‘Politiker streiten über DDR-Fahnen in Buchenwald’, MDR.de, 15 Apr 2013 (online) <http://www.mdr.de/thueringen/mitte-west-thueringen/ddrfahnen-buchenwald100.html>. Last accessed 05 May 2013.

Moreover, a separate ceremony was held on 11 April, beginning at 15:15 to mark the time of Buchenwald's liberation by US army units, assisted by the prisoners. Though this was an altogether more modest and less well-attended occasion, it did strip away the overt politicisation of the former camp as historical relic that had occurred in the GDR by incorporating a wider range of victims groups into the ceremony and tying commemoration to localised sites within the memorial. Breaking with the dramaturgy of the NMG Buchenwald and indeed the Antifa processions, the ceremony took the form of a walking tour. It began at the memorial to all victims of the concentration camp before stopping at the Soviet POW memorial, the Sinti memorial, the memorial plaque at the former 'Kleines Lager', the Jewish memorial, the memorial stone dedicated to Polish and Jewish victims of the Sonderlager, and the Krematorium respectively. At each station, a different text drawing on eyewitness accounts of victimisation and acts of solidarity amongst prisoners was read out and flowers were laid. Unlike the IKBD and Antifa commemorations, overt interpretation gave way to the voices of victims and the indexical connection of the site to narratives of perpetration and victimhood in the 11 April ceremony.

The final ceremony I wish to discuss is another whose origins lie in the early post-war years. This is the annual commemoration of the 27 political prisoners of KZ Sachsenhausen murdered on 11 October 1944 after the Gestapo had uncovered the illegal underground resistance hitherto active at the camp. The resistance efforts, orchestrated chiefly by German communist prisoners, had involved, *inter alia*, secretly receiving radio broadcasts on devices hidden from the SS; several of the prisoners involved, such as Ernst Schneller, would later become iconic symbols of antifascist resistance in the GDR. Despite the ceremony's self-evident link to forms of commemoration practiced at the NMG, it is now co-organised by the Sachsenhausen memorial and the Sachsenhausenkomitee in der BRD e. V. – a member of the ISK with its own roots in the pre-unification Federal Republic. If one factors in the involvement of local school groups as well, it is fair to say that the ceremony in its post-unification guise is a decidedly cooperative undertaking. As I will indeed go on to show, the historical site as setting enables the Sachsenhausenkomitee to 'sacralize' the 27 political prisoners without necessarily compromising other

readings of the concentration camp and of the victims of the Gestapo investigation more specifically.

Much like the liberation ceremonies, relocating this particular act of commemoration to the redesigned ‘Station Z’ has lent it a more reverential dimension. Partially enclosed by the protective ‘shell’ (‘Hülle’) shielding the remains of the camp gas chambers from the elements, the ceremony no longer monopolises the memorial topography. In any case, it is of fairly modest proportions compared to events held at the NMG – around 30 people were present at the ceremony I attended in 2011. A further resemblance it now bears to other post-unification commemorative events such as the 27 January ceremonies is its structure. The programme now typically contains addresses by the memorial site directorship, a representative of the Sachsenhausenkomitee, and an eyewitness; local school pupils also read poems or give renditions of songs such as the ‘Sachsenhausenlied’ and ‘Moorsoldatenlied’, originally composed and sung by prisoners of the concentration camps.

As could be expected, Günter Morsch, speaking in his capacity as director, fused commemoration with reconstruction of the historical sequence of events leading to the political prisoners’ murder upon opening the ceremony in 2011. One could recognise the professional consensus around the material site, which held that it was a composite of distinguishable ‘traces’, in Morsch’s admission that the picture of the resistance efforts and subsequent Gestapo investigation was still incomplete. On this reading Sachsenhausen attested as much to the absence – of the prisoners who had been killed, but also of the erasure of the living proof of what took place in the camp – as to the presence of history. Fixity rather than texture and incompleteness characterised the Sachsenhausenkomitee’s conception of the site, however. In her speech, Regina Szepansky, the representative of the survivors’ organisation, concentrated on the internecine conflict between criminal and political prisoners at Sachsenhausen. In apportioning blame for denouncing the communist prisoners to the Gestapo and SS, she singled out individuals such as Samuel Kundke – a criminal prisoner who had become camp elder in 1944 – as ‘exemplary’ (‘exemplarisch’) of those who had colluded. Such a neat division between honourable resistance and dishonourable self-advancement resembled the rhetoric of communist-dominated victims’ associations shortly after 1945, which had also sought to wrestle the

‘Opfer’ label away from notions of passive victimhood and align it with the unassailable (not to mention politically expedient) concept of resistance.<sup>198</sup> In both cases inconvenient or ambivalent prisoners’ experiences were effectively sequestered at the former camps in order to maintain a singular association between the material remains and the triumph of antifascism. In the 2011 ceremony, this was achieved not least by ‘sacralizing’ the 27 victims of 11 October 1944. Wreaths were laid at Station Z in their honour and the ‘Sachsenhausenlied’ was sung, signalling through its refrain a teleological understanding of the cause that the victims had fought and martyred themselves for:

‘Wir schreiten fest im gleichen Schritt,  
wir trotzen Not und Sorgen,  
denn in uns zieht die Hoffnung mit  
auf Freiheit und das Morgen.’<sup>199</sup>

Collectively, these ceremonies illustrate continuities in on-site commemorative practice that have been largely unaffected by the normative position on the memorials laid out in the *Gedenkstättenkonzeption*. In the case of the established, pre-1989 traditions, the basic narrative of the survivors’ associations in particular has remained the same, the only difference being that the ceremonies now form part of a de-centralized and diversified commemorative calendar. This change pre-dates the Federal Memorials Strategy in any case. Furthermore, the effect of the broadly similar re-conceptualisation of both Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen is that the two sites have established virtually the same parameters for commemorative discourses. At both, the pronounced continuities in the handling of the concentration camp owe a great deal to the prioritization of the ‘authentic’ relics over latter-day interpretations in the *Neugestaltungen*.

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<sup>198</sup> See Susanne zur Nieden, ‘Antifaschismus und Kalter Krieg: Vom Hauptausschuss für die Opfer des Faschismus zur Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes’, in *Von der Erinnerung zum Monument*, ed. by Morsch, pp. 77-86 (p. 79).

<sup>199</sup> For the song lyrics, see ‘Sachsenhausenlied’, <http://holocaustmusic.org/places/camps/central-europe/sachsenhausen/sachsenhausenlied/>. Last accessed 7 Oct 2013; see also Shirli Gilbert, ‘Songs Contest the Past: Music in KZ-Sachsenhausen’, *Contemporary European History*, 13, 3 (2004), 117-134.

Before I come to discourses on the *Speziallager*, I address digital media produced by the memorials during the last decade that address the history of the concentration camps. Given the hand that site staff had in creating them, these sources represent an expert discourse on the former camps. What they prove is that institutionalisation has not noticeably affected patterns of interpretation. If anything, the past decade has seen educators, site staff and members of the memorials' advisory councils firmly adhere to principles developed prior to the Federal Memorials' Strategy and in some cases even before unification, as I have shown above. This is well illustrated by an educational CD-ROM and DVD produced by the Sachsenhausen memorial in 2004 and 2008 respectively. The CD, entitled *Gegen das Vergessen: Häftlingsalltag im KZ Sachsenhausen 1936 bis 1945*, was released in conjunction with the exhibition on everyday life in the camp that opened in barrack 39 in 2001. It presented the prisoner biographies handled in the exhibition, as well as detailed and comprehensive information on life for the prisoners, organised under the headings 'Wege nach Sachsenhausen'; 'Häftlingsgesellschaft'; 'Raum und Zeit'; 'Arbeit'; 'Gewalt, Sterben, Tod'; and 'Leben mit der Erinnerung'.<sup>200</sup>

Günter Morsch, who had acted as chief curator for the *Alltag* exhibition, was also named as the academic advisor for the DVD "*Das kann sich keiner vorstellen*"...*Sachsenhausen*. It was financed by the Förderverein der Gedenkstätte und des Museums Sachsenhausen, and provided a brief overview of the memorial, beginning with the establishment of the inspectorate of the concentration camp system in Oranienburg and concluding with the post-unification redesign. Though they coincided with the CDU-initiated 2004 memorial strategy and 2008 amendment of the *Gedenkstättenkonzeption*, which appeared to tip the scales of the 'anti-totalitarian consensus' towards equation, the CD and DVD presented a quite different discourse on Sachsenhausen. Instead, they reflected a longer-term continuity that stretched back beyond the moment at which this and other memorials were formally co-opted into federal cultural policy.

A section of the narrative voiceover accompanying the "*Das kann sich keiner vorstellen*" DVD proves the point well. In the penultimate section, addressing the years since unification, the narrative track covered both the

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<sup>200</sup> *Gegen das Vergessen: Häftlingsalltag im KZ Sachsenhausen 1936 bis 1945*, prod. by United Soft Media Verlag GmBH, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (Munich, 2004).

Internationale Jugend- und Begegnungszentrum (IJBS) at Sachsenhausen (constructed in 2004) and the ‘Vermächtnis’ of the concentration camp survivors. Underlying their inclusion in the narrative was a stated aim of preserving the testimony bequeathed by survivors and communicating this to younger generations. In other words, the DVD acknowledged that the memorial in part pursued a moral, commemorative agenda. This moralism was expressed in fairly muted terms however; the emphasis was very much on prompting ‘weitere[...] Fragen’ rather than providing ‘endgültige[...] Antworten’ through confrontation with Sachsenhausen and its history, as the voiceover noted. Ultimately then, the moral discourse the DVD channelled was not so much the federal ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’ as the moral injunction to remember contained in the ‘Vermächtnis’.<sup>201</sup> Thus, the role allocated to the memorial in the DVD was essentially indistinguishable from that assigned to it by Günter Morsch in 1993, when he had spoken of acting as ‘Sachwalter’ for survivors and victims of the camp.<sup>202</sup>

Equally, the DVD evidenced the continuing influence of even older traditions upon the work of the memorials, namely the ‘Beutelsbacher Konsens’. Much like the on-site exhibitions, the DVD adopted an expository style that prioritised the site qua historical artefact – both the opening and closing frames were of the memorial – and primarily used eyewitness testimony as a means of commenting upon it. Taking the form of a walking tour around the memorial, it also grounded testimony and contextual information in specific locations across the site – much like the annual liberation commemoration at Buchenwald analyzed above. This was clearly the intention behind the CD too. It was recommended to users as a means of following up site visits, for example by revisiting the prisoner biographies or individual themes in greater detail.<sup>203</sup> Alternatively, it could be used to formulate questions in advance of visiting the memorial; in this case the production team suggested that teachers could use the CD as the basis for small-group tasks with school groups, who could then be

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<sup>201</sup> “Das kann sich keiner vorstellen” ...Sachsenhausen, prod. by Sanssouci Film GmbH and Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg (Oranienburg: Förderverein der Gedenkstätte und des Museums Sachsenhausen, 2008).

<sup>202</sup> ‘Einführungsrede vor Mitarbeitern’, AS, 02 Jan 1993, p. 9.

<sup>203</sup> Brauer, Juliane, ‘CD-Rom “Der ‘Alltag’ der Häftlinge im KZ Sachsenhausen 1936 – 1945”’: Pädagogischer Leitfaden’, [http://www.stiftung-bg.de/gums/de/museumspaedagogik/paedagogischer\\_leitfaden\\_internet.pdf](http://www.stiftung-bg.de/gums/de/museumspaedagogik/paedagogischer_leitfaden_internet.pdf), p. 6 [accessed 3 Feb 2013].

directed to relevant eyewitness testimonies from which to glean further information when at the memorial.<sup>204</sup> Both the DVD and CD expressly avoided proscribing fixed interpretations of historical issues and empowered users to reach their own conclusions – objectives that were written into the ‘Beutelsbacher Konsens’ in the tenets ‘Überwältigungsverbot’ and ‘Der Schüler muss in die Lage versetzt werden, eine politische Situation und seine eigene Interessenlage zu analysieren’.<sup>205</sup>

An additional consequence of this subjective, multi-perspectival approach was that differentiation, particularly (though not only) between the Nazi and Soviet camps, could be written into such commentaries on the material sites almost *en passant*. The CD content provides an elucidating example here. Users consulting the biography of the prisoner Heinz Wollmann, for example, can access an audio recording in which Wollmann recalls stuffing newspaper down his shoes in order to stay warm – and therefore stay alive. To hear him label an object as mundane as newspaper ‘lebenswichtig’ is undeniably unsettling for the listener, and offers a window into the abject conditions prisoners of the concentration camp faced.<sup>206</sup> Interestingly, newspapers appear as a memory motif in pedagogical materials produced by staff members at Buchenwald too, though they instead accompany the *Speziallager* exhibition. In this instance newspapers convey a sense of the sheer monotony and enforced tedium of life in the Soviet camp, since prisoners only obtained them, very belatedly, in 1947. Different insights into the experience of imprisonment are thus derived from the same historical object, one existential and the other psychological, subtly encoding a reflex of differentiation and – when applied to a comparison across the 1945 divide – of distinction too.

Both the CD and DVD very much carried forward the tenets of the *Neugestaltungen* into the 2000s. Whilst it is therefore reasonable to see the re-conceptualisation at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen as a precedent that shaped discourses on the sites in the Berlin Republic, it was not in itself a structure (or *cadre sociaux*, to use Halbwachs’ term). Taking this view of institutional practice

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6; see also Juliane Brauer, ‘Neue Medien in der Gedenkstättenpädagogik: Beispiele zur Anwendung der CD-ROM: “Gegen das Vergessen” – Häftlingsalltag im Konzentrationslager Sachsenhausen 1936-1945’, *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 58, 3 (2007), 180-186 (p. 183).

<sup>205</sup> See ‘Der Beutelsbacher Konsens im Wortlaut’ (online) <http://www.bpb.de/die-bpb/51310/beutelsbacher-konsens> [accessed 7 Oct 2013].

<sup>206</sup> *Gegen das Vergessen: Häftlingsalltag im KZ Sachsenhausen 1936 bis 1945*.

is to essentialize the landmark recommendations issued by the Historians' Commissions. Applying concepts from systems theory however, these past decisions can be reconceived as 'Ressourcen'<sup>207</sup> that pre-figure the subsequent course of interpretation during the Schröder and Merkel chancellorships. To use Luhmann's terminology, they act as 'Erwartungsstrukturen'<sup>208</sup> that steer the temporal dimension of systemic organisation and reproduction – or in other words, a system's evolution over time. I find this a more useful way of explaining the discursive continuities I have identified so far, not least because it draws attention to the diachronic dimension of the interplay between past and present (not to mention action and context).

### ***Broadening parameters: the place of the Speziallager in the memorial concepts***

Perhaps the most fiercely contested element of the plans outlined by the Historians' Commissions were the recommendations relating to the post-war camps. Here again the question of continuity and change across the steps taken to internalize an 'anti-totalitarian consensus' in German political culture is key. As I will show, survivors' representatives and politicians (belonging to both major parties) considered memory of the Soviet camps an integral element of this consensus from a very early stage, even though the *Neugestaltungen* had clearly prioritized the sites' National Socialist pasts. Later, under CDU/SPD and thereafter CDU/FDP coalition governments, the post-war injustices at these sites would come into much sharper relief as increasing attention was paid to totalitarian crimes committed against as opposed to by Germans. Institutionalization has, therefore, driven on a process of commemorating and acknowledging the fate of the *Speziallager* victims, at least insofar as memory of their victimization is now enshrined in federal cultural policy.

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<sup>207</sup> Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme*, p. 252.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 418.

What I argue, however, is that *on-site* at least, the changed political and cultural context has actually had relatively little impact upon how major stakeholders commemorate the *Speziallager* and situate it vis-à-vis memory of the concentration camps. Just as we saw in the first section of the chapter, distinct discursive codes appear to have been carried forward into the new millennium. In order to understand the stance of the memorial experts, for instance, we must look towards the *Gedenkstättenbewegung* and local history boom of the 1980s as well as the recommendations made by the Historians' Commissions in the early 1990s. Likewise, claims made by many survivors of the special camps and their representatives about the moral rectitude of the wider prisoner contingent originated in the early post-unification years (or even earlier). Neither position responded directly to a proclaimed 'anti-totalitarian consensus'. That said, I do not claim the interpretations of the *Speziallager* bore no relation at all to the precedent set at federal level. Indeed, there is certainly evidence that members of the survivors' associations began to adopt this vocabulary in 2005. In the run-up to the federal elections that year, the VOS, perhaps registering the CDU's attempts to reorient the 'anti-totalitarian consensus' around equation of Nazism and communism, intensified comparisons of its own between the *Speziallager* and concentration camps.

On the whole however, my findings suggest a need to de-centre institutionalized discourse from a chronological survey of cultural memory around the two memorials. Instead, we need to attend to the site's active role in shaping the memory landscape. That it exists in a kind of mutually constitutive tension with practices of commemoration rather than merely acting as a canvas onto which they are projected is clear in, amongst other things, the attitudes of particular *Speziallager* lobby groups. Only by appreciating the sense of proprietorship organizations such as the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Lager Sachsenhausen 1945 – 1950 e. V. (ALS) claim over the *entire* memorial grounds – the ALS, in fact, spoke in the early 2000s of 'its' memorial – can we begin to understand the rationale behind their support for joint commemoration of both camp phases. By the same token, the memorial experts have not 'imposed' a paradigm of contextualized and compartmentalized commemoration on the sites so much as developed it in response to the 'traces' ('Spuren') they have found there.

I once more follow a chronological narrative beginning in the 1990s and following debates either taking place at the memorials or directly related to the material sites through to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of unification. Analysis of commemorative ceremonies – again as both a performance and discourse – forms a large part of my discussion. Though I do analyze the museological and commemorative strategies employed in the two *Speziallager* exhibitions, I do so primarily where there is a connection to be made to the central question of institutionalization and the dynamic of cultural memory. The underlying concepts and exhibition architecture have in any case been commented on elsewhere.<sup>209</sup> I have relied in addition on specialist publications such as the newsletters of the various victims' associations; exhibition catalogues; the audio guides available on-site; and commemorative speeches.

To begin with, it is worth recapitulating the normative discourse that was beginning to crystallize at Buchenwald in the years prior to the opening of the *Speziallager* exhibition in 1997. Indeed, at the time of the symbolic ground breaking ceremony for construction on the *Speziallager* museum at Buchenwald in 1995, the first of the two Enquete Commissions dealing with the East German past had already proclaimed the need for an 'anti-totalitarian consensus'. Speaking at the ceremony, Thuringian Minister for Science, Research and Culture Gerd Schuchardt portrayed Buchenwald as the testing ground for this consensus, noting '[p]olitische Kultur in Deutschland wird gemessen am Umgang mit seiner Geschichte an sensiblen Orten wie Buchenwald'.<sup>210</sup> On this reading, the memorial's dual tasks of developing a historically and ethically appropriate means of commemorating two overlapping pasts and dealing with the legacy of the GDR were more broadly relevant on a national level. Buchenwald's 'doppelte Zerreiprobe'<sup>211</sup> was Germany's 'doppelte Zerreiprobe' too.

Implicit to Schuchardt's line of reasoning was that there would be no line drawn under either past. As he went on to explain however, it was only within

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<sup>209</sup> See Horst Seferens, "'Der systematische Schein des Unsystematischen": Erffnung des Museums "Sowjetisches Speziallager Nr. 7/Nr. 1 (1945-1950)" in der Gedenksttte und Museum Sachsenhausen', *GedenkstttenRundbrief* (2002), 14-20.

<sup>210</sup> 'Rede des Ministers fr Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur Dr. Gerd Schuchardt anllich des symbolischen ersten Spatenstichs zum Bau eines Ausstellungsgebudes zur Geschichte des sowjetischen Speziallagers 2 Buchenwald 1945 – 1950', in *Speziallager 2 1945-1950: Rundbrief*, 11/12, ed. by Gedenksttte Buchenwald (1995), pp. 3-5 (p. 4).

<sup>211</sup> A. Kugler, 'Im Clinch ums Interpretationsmonopol', *taz*, 7 Mar 1994, p. 3.

certain set parameters that a more inclusive model of commemoration referencing German perpetration *and* German victimhood was acceptable. Returning once more to Buchenwald, Schuchardt categorically stated:

‘Sie [die Gedenkstätte, RB] wird sich nicht scheuen, das zwischen 1945 und 1950 in Buchenwald begangene Unrecht beim Namen zu nennen. Aber sie wird das von Deutschen in den Jahren 1939-1945 in Europa begangene Unrecht nicht relativieren. Denn nur die schonungslose Erinnerung an diese Verbrechen legitimiert zur Kritik am Unrecht, das von anderen begangene wurde.’<sup>212</sup>

Only by accepting that accountability remained vital, therefore, could remembrance of post-1945 injustices avoid charges of relativisation. The Holocaust-centred but inclusive paradigm advocated by Schuchardt mirrored the approach broadly favoured across the political parties involved in the Enquête Commissions. In fact, it foreshadowed the notion of a German ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’ that the commissions popularized and, with the 1998 *Schlußbericht*, wrote into federal discourse. Did such an interpretation percolate downwards to the groups involved in on-site commemoration with the issuing of the *Schlußbericht*? In the remainder of this section I trace the various patterns of interaction with the built relics of the *Speziallager* as well as the newly erected museums and commemorative symbols dedicated to the Soviet camps through to the present day. I begin with the respective museum openings in 1997 at Buchenwald and 2001 at Sachsenhausen, before assessing whether federal cultural policy of the early 2000s and the upcoming elections in 2005 impacted upon the memory discourses around the sites’ post-war topography. I conclude by taking stock of trends around the time of subsequent federal elections – and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall – in 2009.

The permanent exhibition on *Speziallager Nr. 2* at Buchenwald, housed in a purpose-built documentation centre and inaugurated on 25 May 1997, was the first of its kind to open in Germany. It was also the second major project to be completed as part of the *Neugestaltung* following the opening of the permanent exhibition on the concentration camp, discussed above. As we have

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<sup>212</sup> ‘Rede des Ministers für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur’, p. 4.

seen, heated debates on the post-war camp had been ongoing since 1990, and by no means ended with the opening of the new museum. However, before I look at responses to the *Speziallager* at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen in the new millennium, I wish to provide an overview of the exhibition at Buchenwald, followed by a snapshot of how memorial specialists, victims' organisations, and politicians initially interacted with the new documentation centre. Here I pay particular attention to the ways in which the site materiality and spatiality were perceived.

Just as in the concentration camp exhibition, the *Speziallager* exhibition was structured around prisoners' biographies. More than 20 of these biographies were presented in a series of drawers running along the left-hand side of the documentation centre. Both the exhibition layout and the tactile features such as sliding drawers and multimedia stations empowered visitors to engage critically and autonomously with the content on display; they invited deeper engagement with particular individuals and themes but proscribed no set sequence or manner in which to do so.<sup>213</sup> In addition to the concept of *Urteilsbildung*, the *Kontroversitätsprinzip* served as a conceptual thread running through the exhibition – this was another principle outlined in the *Beutelsbacher Konsens*. Indeed, the exhibition utilized techniques such as juxtaposition and multi-perspectivity to highlight the differing interpretations of the special camp. Information on the conditions there were set against panels on the opposite side of the exhibition space dealing with Allied internment camps in the Western Occupation Zones after 1945 in order to draw attention to differences between the camps. Likewise, the biographies cover a variety of prisoners, including not just de facto victims of arbitrary imprisonment but also those clearly guilty of collaboration with the National Socialist regime prior to 1945. As the museological concept applied here implied, the *Speziallager* defied straightforward categorization.

This multi-perspectival approach carried over into the documentation centre's design and embedment in the camp topography. Particularly ingenious was the architectural rendering of the camp's dual origins in de-nazification protocol and Stalinist repression. The shell of the building and the exhibition itself were devoid of any commemorative elements, and the building was

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<sup>213</sup> Rikola-Gunnar Lüttgenau, 'Zur Konzeption der Ausstellung' in *Das sowjetische Speziallager Nr. 2 1945 – 1950*, pp. 11-14 (here p. 12).

positioned in such a way that it was not visible from the *Appellplatz*. As a consequence, the stipulation that the post-war camp at Buchenwald be ‘subordinated’ to the concentration camp was met; it did not impinge visually on the topography of the National Socialist camp, and visitors were not presented with an overtly commemorative space in a way that might have invited false analogies between the two camp phases. That said, a single slit window in the documentation centre is located next to the *Totenbuch* for prisoners of the special camp and looks out onto the nearby mass grave. Even this muted element of pathos reminds visitors that, whatever the post-war camps’ putative connections to de-nazification, the *Speziallager* were nonetheless inhumane and characterised by mass death.

Speaking at the museum’s inauguration, Volkhard Knigge and Eberhard Jäckel, the chair of the Thuringian Historians’ Commission, agreed that the exhibition served first and foremost the victims of the *Speziallager*.<sup>214</sup> At the same time, Knigge commented on the design of the documentation centre, which had been the cause of significant friction between the memorial and the *Speziallager* lobby in the preceding two years. In his estimation, the building’s almost featureless exterior well captured ‘die Unwirtlichkeit des Lagers, seinen Charakter als Isolations- und Schweigelager’.<sup>215</sup> Equally, he described the exhibition space’s uniformly grey palette as an ‘Elendsgrau’ that lent the exhibition objects and documents an unsettling prominence in their marked contrast to the general colour scheme.<sup>216</sup> Günter Morsch would use an almost identical set of arguments in support of muted museum architecture in 2001, when the *Speziallager* museum opened at Sachsenhausen (see below). For the memorial professionals, it was important that the exhibitions implicitly honoured victims of the former camps, but the museum architecture should ultimately respect the primacy of the historical site.

In addition, both Knigge and Jäckel saw in the documentation centre an implicit response to GDR memory culture. This was however framed in a narrative of (belatedly) re-conceptualising the memorial around rigorous empirical and scientific standards. Jäckel for instance noted that the newly

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<sup>214</sup> See ‘Reden zur Eröffnung der historischen Dauerausstellung in der Gedenkstätte Buchenwald am 25. Mai 1997’ in *Speziallager 2 1945 – 1950: Rundbrief*, 15/16/17, ed. by Gedenkstätte Buchenwald (1997), pp. 5-21 (p. 5; p. 19).

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

opened exhibition was ‘frei von Weisungen’,<sup>217</sup> whilst Knigge argued that the exhibition allowed visitors to ‘engage autonomously and for the sake of historical enlightenment with German history’ (‘sich selbstverantwortlich und um historischer Aufklärung willen mit deutscher Geschichte auseinandersetzen’).<sup>218</sup> Both therefore envisaged visitors’ interaction with the *Speziallager* museum as that of empowered, critically discerning ‘users’ of the exhibition space rather than passive ‘recipients’ of its message, much in line with developments in museological practice more broadly.<sup>219</sup> Having already sketched out above how the exhibition both anticipates and facilitates this model of visitor behaviour, I now briefly consider the ways in which other stakeholders depart from it.

Indeed, survivors and their representatives were less concerned with the respective epistemologies of museum display when it came to differentiating between the GDR and the reunified Federal Republic. For them, the new exhibition was not so much a corrective to earlier GDR memory culture as an indictment of the East German state as a whole. Gerhard Finn, in his speech at the inauguration, hoped that the *Speziallager* documentation at Buchenwald would immunize against GDR nostalgia.<sup>220</sup> Consequently, an objective moral message was assigned to the exhibits, and the exhibition as a whole was positioned within an ideological deconstruction of post-1945 communist systems of rule in East Germany.

Federal and regional politicians attached a similarly monolithic message to the documentation centre. One of the invited speakers at the inauguration was Markus Meckel, who was an instrumental figure in the two Enquete commissions, and in his address to the audience at Buchenwald he outlined a position that had been popularised by the work of the commissions. He was first of all careful to situate the *Speziallager* and Stalinist injustices within a chain of historical causality, in which ‘[d]er von Deutschland geführte totale Krieg... auf das eigene Volk zurück[schlug]’.<sup>221</sup> Thus he recognised and reinforced the

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<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>219</sup> On this development, see Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*. (London/New York: Routledge, 2000); also *idem.*, ‘Museum Education: past, present and future’ *Towards the Museum of the Future: New European Perspectives* ed. by Roger Miles and Lauro Zavala (London/New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 133-46 (p. 141).

<sup>220</sup> ‘Reden zur Eröffnung der historischen Dauerausstellung’, p. 14.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

continued centrality of German accountability for the Holocaust in an integrated narrative of the period 1933-1989. Mindful of this, Meckel could unproblematically argue that memorials to the double past, such as Buchenwald, were ‘unersetzliche Pfeiler einer demokratischen Erinnerungskultur und des antitotalitären Konsenses’<sup>222</sup> – a formulation that normatively linked both the Nazi *and* communist pasts to a German polity united in the lessons it drew from its own dark history. Gerd Schuchardt, in a similar vein, referred to Buchenwald as a ‘Stätte der Begegnung und des Lernens für *alle* [...], die nach uns kommen’ (italics RB).<sup>223</sup> Political discourse couched engagement with the *Speziallager* museum (and by extension the Buchenwald memorial as a whole) in the language of national identity politics.

Perceptions of the documentation centre therefore hinged upon how one interpreted the memorial’s dual responsibilities of commemoration and documentation. The team behind the exhibition had clearly sought to keep commemoration and documentation separate, as was clear in the single visual link to the mass graves and objective, enlightenment tone of the exhibition content. Politicians by and large agreed that the history of the Soviet camp should be ‘subordinated’ to treatment of the concentration camp, following the recommendation made by the Historians’ Commission. Where they departed from the stance of the memorial specialists was in the function they assigned to the site: confrontation with Buchenwald’s double past should consolidate national identity in the present. Any separation of documentation and commemoration became, in this view, largely irrelevant. Members of the *Speziallager* victims’ lobby, by contrast, implicated the museum in a moral discourse of commemoration.

The opening of the *Speziallager* museum at Sachsenhausen elicited similarly disparate reactions from survivors’ lobbies and the curatorial team. Whereas Günter Morsch spoke approvingly of the museum upon its inauguration, the former prisoners and organisations representing them were by contrast less taken with the finished product. A review appearing early in 2002 in *Der Stacheldraht*, the newsletter of the Union der Opfer kommunistischer Gewaltherrschaft (henceforth UOKG), was largely critical of the museum concept and exhibition style. Just as significantly, it revealed fundamental

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<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

differences between the memorial experts and the victims' association concerning what a museum ought to represent and achieve. The review appeared for one thing to challenge the logic behind the museum's muted architecture, defining it as 'unzugänglich'<sup>224</sup> and so evaluating it in terms of its appeal to visitors rather than its place in the 'dezentrales Museumkonzept'.

Morsch, on the other hand, had rejected unequivocally the argument for a symbolic form of commemoration, remarking that it was not the task of a museum to produce this. He instead praised the museum's functional aesthetic, which he believed to encourage, through its conspicuous lack of any artistic features, a sense of consternation at the ambivalence of the perpetrators as well as sympathy for the victims of the special camp. Furthermore, he argued that the series of slit windows linking the museum building to the nearby mass graves and the inclusion of a central display cabinet dealing with 'Tod und Sterben' successfully fused the building and exhibition into an 'ästhetische[...] Einheit'.<sup>225</sup> This was not to say that he limited his comments to the museum building; he also pointed to the inclusion of two prisoner barracks in the museum concept:

'Durch die Einbeziehung von zwei authentisch erhaltenen, unmittelbar benachbarten Häftlingsbaracken in das museale Konzept, wird darüber hinaus mit zurückhaltenden Mittel versucht, die Lethargie und Erbärmlichkeit des Haftalltags im Speziallager ein kleines Stück weit sinnlich vorstellbar zu machen.'<sup>226</sup>

The *Stacheldraht* review made no mention of these additional elements, focusing instead on the museum building. Tellingly, the reviewers appeared to misread the intention behind the concept and assumed that the exhibition lacked any kind of guiding narrative whatsoever, noting:

'Kein Lageplan, keine Übersicht, mit deren Hilfe man Ausstellungsteile auswählen könnte, keine Hervorhebungen oder Hinweise für den Weg, einfach nichts [...] Hier wird der Besucher in einem Maße alleingelassen,

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<sup>224</sup> Viktor Gorynia/Gertrud Röder, 'Annäherung an eine Ausstellung', *Stacheldraht*, 2 (2002), 8-9 (p. 8)

<sup>225</sup> 'Begrüßungsansprache zur Eröffnung des Museums zur Geschichte des sowjetischen Speziallagers Nr. 7/Nr. 1 in Sachsenhausen 1945 bis 1950 am 9. Dezember 2001', AS, 7pp (p. 3).

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

daß er entweder den Weg ins nächste Cafe eintritt oder [...] nach einer flüchtigen Überschau glaubt, er „wisse“ nun etwas über Speziallager. Weder zur Vertiefung in die Interpretation der historischen Sachverhalte noch zu wirklichem Verstehen wird eingeladen.<sup>227</sup>

Here the difference in functional understanding of the memorial museum was at its most pronounced. This was readily apparent not just in the review's assumption that there *should* be a carefully explicitated 'route' ('Weg') through the exhibition, but also in a crucial misplacement of a section on the camp commandant, Alexander Kostiukhin, at the start of the exhibition. According to the *Stacheldraht* article, the visitor comes first of all to a section on the end of the war and the rise of figures such as Kostiukhin, who had cut their teeth in the Soviet GULag system and would soon play important roles in the administration of the special camps in Germany.<sup>228</sup> This reading situates the *Speziallager* alongside, even perhaps within the GULag archipelago by tying them to figures such as Kostiukhin, whose own biography was closely entwined with that system of camps.

Yet the exhibition in fact 'begins' – at least in the chronological sense – with a discussion of the situation in 1945 and Allied internment policy. The so-called 'Berija-Befehl', the military directive from which the special camps emanated and which authorised the detention of both domestic and Nazi security threats, is documented in the first vitrine the visitor reaches, whilst wall panels on the far side of the exhibition space detail the polemical coverage of the camp in Cold War and post-unification newspaper reportage. Fittingly, the subjective and complex experience of prisoners that speaks through their biographies and the exhibits is situated in between the two. Thus, the visitor is enjoined to look beyond the polarising frames of the camp's beginnings in domestic security measures and its afterlife in historical memory, both of which tell only a half-truth about its true character. The *Stacheldraht* review and its somewhat skewed reading of the exhibition narrative, by contrast, betray the assumption that the camp can and should be more straightforwardly identified with the GULag. An article appearing in the same newsletter two years later reinforces this impression, referring to the special camps as 'Außenstellen des GULag' in its

<sup>227</sup> 'Annäherung an eine Ausstellung', p. 8.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

title. Likewise, it cites the ‘Kraft der Versöhnung’ extolled in a sermon at that year’s commemorative ceremony and extended to *all* victims of the special camp, failing to distinguish between those unjustly persecuted as supposed political opponents of Stalinism and those who had been de facto Nazi functionaries.<sup>229</sup>

In the pages of *Freiheitsglocke* too, victims of the *Speziallager* and their representatives reacted angrily to the content and format of the newly opened exhibition. Once more their objections rested on a disparity between expert and advocative stances vis-à-vis the role of memorial museums. This was relatively surprising, insofar as the *Speziallager* museum at Sachsenhausen was unequivocally critical of Soviet post-war internment practices. To give one particularly pertinent example, the museum displayed a name list compiled by Kurt Weiss, one of a group of 38 youths from Greußen arrested on ‘Werwolf’ charges (and referred to as the *Greußener Jungs*). The names of the deceased are marked with a cross or struck through, in effect combining the documentary function of naming the victims with the commemorative function of honouring the dead.<sup>230</sup> Transposing the exhibit to the memorial museum setting naturally lent it a poignancy that went beyond its testimonial value, as the sparse, almost incantatory ‘list’ format resembled something closer to a memorial in and of itself, especially in the dimly-lit and quiet surroundings of the *Speziallager* exhibition. Arguably then, the sense of pathos here was unexpectedly pronounced, even if the exhibition, for the sake of narrative balance, cited accusations that certain inmates belonged to ‘[die] sogenannten führenden Kreise[...] der Nazis’ and were therefore not undeserving of imprisonment.<sup>231</sup>

In spite of this, the decision to include a section documenting the perpetrators – namely Kostiukhin – in the museum elicited vocal protest from victims’ organisations. The exhibition planning team had if anything taken a strongly condemnatory tone in their treatment of camp personnel. Mention of Kostiukhin’s time as a guard in the infamous Solovetski camp in the White Sea, opened in 1923 as a prototype for the GULag system, was explicitly intended to

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<sup>229</sup> Ekkehard Schultz, ‘Außenstellen des GULag’, *Stacheldraht*, 8 (2004), 10.

<sup>230</sup> *Sowjetisches Speziallager Nr. 7 / Nr. 1 in Sachsenhausen (1945 – 1950): Katalog der Ausstellung in der Gedenkstätte und Museum Sachsenhausen*, ed. by Günter Morsch and Ines Reich (Berlin: Metropol, 2005), pp. 227-229.

<sup>231</sup> This is the phrase used in a letter written by Alfred Jacob whilst inside the *Speziallager*. Jacob had himself belonged to the 6<sup>th</sup> police battalion. See *Ibid.*, p. 159.

embed the special camps within the Soviet machinery of state terror.<sup>232</sup> Yet this evidently was not enough for the *Speziallager* victims, who responded with outrage at the thought of a ‘Denkmal’ for the camp commandant making its way into the exhibition.<sup>233</sup> Not only did they object in principle to the coverage of Kostiukhin; they also sought to discredit the exhibition planners and memorial professionals at Sachsenhausen by warning of a return to the ‘ohnmächtige Trauer’ of GDR times, as if the move purposefully aimed at restoring a veil of silence around the camp and its existence.<sup>234</sup>

Two years later, the memorial site staff came under renewed criticism for their depiction of conditions in the special camps in a contribution to a volume reflecting the current state of research into the *Speziallager*. Published in 1998, the collection drew upon insights gained through research into newly opened Soviet archives, and grew out of collaboration between the Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen memorials and university departments in Hagen and Jena. Despite the scholarly rigour and meticulous research these solid credentials suggested, the volume was denounced as ‘[s]chamlose Geschichtsfälschung’ in *Freiheitsglocke*.<sup>235</sup> In particular a chapter written by a former staff member at Sachsenhausen positing a liberalisation of conditions at camps in 1949 provoked a hostile response. The purported ‘Liberalisierungsschritte’ and the claim that prisoners could receive money and parcels from relatives as of 1949 were seen as ‘absurde[...] und verlogene[...] Darstellungen’<sup>236</sup> and vigorously contested by the victims’ organisation. So too was the chapter’s insistence that multiple and overlapping jurisdictional responsibilities for the camps rather than a deliberate strategy of liquidation were the cause of such a high mortality rate amongst prisoners.

Both the putative ‘Liberalisierung’ of camp conditions and the prisoners’ right to receive packages and money were refuted a second time by a former inmate of the *Speziallager* at Sachsenhausen, who wrote in to *Freiheitsglocke*. Contradicting the view of the memorial experts, the survivor stated that neither packages nor money could be received or sent at any point during the camp’s

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<sup>232</sup> *Sowjetisches Speziallager*, ed. by Morsch and Reich, pp. 114-136.

<sup>233</sup> W. Schlät, ‘Stalin-Orden auf Massengräbern’, *FG*, 585/586 (Aug-Sept 2001), p. 9.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>235</sup> W. Pfeiffer, ‘Schamlose Geschichtsfälschung über “Speziallager” in der SBZ’, *FG*, 605 (Mar 2003), 5.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

five-year existence; only letters could be sent from late 1949, and even then these were heavily censored.<sup>237</sup> Once again the charge of ‘Fälschung’ was levelled at the memorial experts, and in this case attributed explicitly to the citation of ‘angebliche[...] sowjetische[...] Dokumente’.<sup>238</sup> As in the UOKG and VOS’s earlier objections to the documentation of Kostiukhin in the *Speziallager* exhibition, the fault lines in the debates surrounding camp conditions were drawn between critical, expert efforts at historical reconstruction and a survivor perspective fiercely protective of eye-witness testimony. In large part the victims’ organisations took issue with the use of perpetrator sources because they posed a challenge to the ‘total victimization’ trope. As we see, the notion of ‘liberalisation’ called into question not only survivors’ recollections, but also the motif of complete isolation that had constituted an integral element of the victimization narrative. The VOS and UOKG were concerned first and foremost with mobilising in defence of this position, and less prepared to take on board the archival evidence presented in the exhibition and the publication by the memorial experts.

Of course, the dual obligations of the memorials towards the victims on the one hand and towards the objective historical record on the other have imposed certain institutional limits of their own on the representation of state-sanctioned injustice in general terms, and of the double past more specifically. Lutz Niethammer inverts the familiar dictum of the ‘Zeitzeuge als Feind des Historikers’ to convey a sense of the challenges that academic and curatorial staff at memorials to the double past face. Is it not in fact the case, Niethammer asks, that historians are the threat to eyewitness testimony, not least because, as custodians of this testimony, they assume control of the witness’ subjective identity? Might they reduce survivors to affirmative ‘Ikonen der Unterhaltung’ if simply using their biographies to evidence suffering?<sup>239</sup> Certainly the teams responsible for the new exhibitions at both Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen have done an admirable job of integrating the victims’ perspective into the redesigned memorial conceptions in a differentiated and reflexive manner, as I have argued for much of this chapter. Equally, the leitmotif of a memorial visit as

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<sup>237</sup> G. Krause, ‘Speziallager: Keine Briefe, keine Geldüberweisungen, keine Pakete’, *FG*, 606 (Apr 2003), 9.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>239</sup> Lutz Niethammer, ‘Buchenwald: KZ und NKWD-Lager: Der Zeithistoriker im Konflikt mit Zeitzeugen’, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 54, 12 (2006), 1039-1053 (p. 1041).

‘Spurensuche’ that underpins both sites explicitly challenges visitors to look beyond naturalised or stock narratives of victimisation by tying these to the specific place at which – and specific historical context in which – this victimisation occurred. But in certain instances this paradigm runs up against its own limitations in narrating the phenomenon of multiple camp phases, and I would like to briefly consider one such example here.

As part of the *Neugestaltung* at Sachsenhausen, a new visitor signage system (‘Besucherleitsystem’) has been installed. An audio tour is also available, allowing visitors to access contextual information about particular stations within the ‘dezentrales Konzept’ by entering the corresponding number on the signage system into an audio device. In certain ways the ‘Spurensuche’ concept has been applied to the audio commentary too, as several stations include optional ‘Vertiefungsebenen’ for those who wish to discover more about their historical function as well as how they were perceived both during and after the Third Reich. Whilst walking along the ‘Lagerstraße’ leading to the entrance to the former camp, for instance, visitors can access information on the audio guide relating to its place in the recollections of both concentration camp and special camp prisoners. Thus it is of interest firstly as an example of how the memorial specialists tasked with Sachsenhausen’s redesign have negotiated implicit comparisons between the Nazi and Soviet camps. In particular the audio guide’s approach to documenting and commemorating the double past forms an interesting contrast to the moralising narrative of total victimisation presented by the *Speziallager* victims’ organisations. Secondly, it is of interest as a reminder that context – namely, the auratic and material dimensions of the memorial as historical relic – conditions the forms these comparisons may take.

The segment of the audio guide addressing the ‘Lagerstraße’ relays two anecdotes about prisoners’ experiences entering and leaving Sachsenhausen along this road in a ‘Vertiefungsebene’. The first describes how locals often gathered by the side of the camp road to pelt prisoners entering the concentration camp with stones, whilst the second explains that, for certain *Speziallager* prisoners assigned to external work details, taking the road had provided a precious opportunity to furtively pass letters to their family. Visitors are referred in the audio commentary to several such letters sent between the prisoner Paul-

Otto Helm and his children, now displayed in the *Speziallager* museum.<sup>240</sup> This is a thoughtful and challenging narrative, designed to point out the multi-layeredness of the ‘Lagerstraße’ as a historical relic and also critique the account of complete isolation in the *Speziallager* propagated by the victims of communism (though without devoiding Helm’s story of a strong sense of pathos). Looked at another way, however, the audio commentary can be understood as a mechanism of disentangling the complex strands of this multivalent relic and predicating comparisons between the two camp phases on difference. Indeed, juxtaposing hostility towards concentration camp inmates and familial solidarity with prisoners of the special camp arguably has the effect of bifurcating the ‘Lagerstraße’ into two distinct memory spaces – one attesting to the awful situation facing prisoners of the Nazi camp and the other suggesting a comparably more tolerable experience in the *Speziallager*. Moreover, as visitors must take the ‘Lagerstraße’ to enter the main camp it is one of the first stations on the audio tour. ‘Beginning’, as it were, with the dichotomous narrativisation of the road as a symbol of victimisation prior to 1945 and solidarity thereafter risks pre-figuring models of difference.

This is not intended as a criticism of the audio commentary’s content, nor of the rationale behind differentiation. Rather, I wish to highlight the conundrum the memorial site is presented with as a result of its dual commemorative and documentary imperatives, as well as the auratic quality of the exhibition space itself. In relation to the demands of history and memory that memorial museums to the double past must contend with, Andrew Beattie has noted that the two are in practice hard to disentangle from one another. Their professed ‘physical and cognitive separation of documentation and commemoration’ notwithstanding, even the memorials’ enlightenment aims are in part derived from a humanitarian and moral commitment to the victims that suffered there.<sup>241</sup> To this I would add that the multiple authenticities of the site architecture – what Günter Morsch has aptly labelled a ‘mehrfach gebrochene Scheinauthentizität’ in light of its reuse in the GDR memorial ensemble<sup>242</sup> – further complicates matters. Many features of

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<sup>240</sup> Audioführer, ‘Lagerstraße: Vertiefungsebene 2’.

<sup>241</sup> Andrew H. Beattie, ‘Between histories and memories: Torgau’s Memorial Museum for Germany’s short twentieth century’, *Museum and Society*, 8, 1 (2010), 37-55 (quote p. 44).

<sup>242</sup> Günter Morsch, ‘Mahnmal oder Rekonstruktion, Abriß oder Wiederaufbau? Die Baracken 38 und 39: Geschichte und Zukunft eines geschändeten Denkmals’ in *Die Baracken 38 und 39*:

the post-unification memorials such as the ‘Lagerstraße’ at Sachsenhausen attest to injustices that occurred either side of 1945. Given this, could the audio commentary’s use of juxtaposition to explain and contextualize this multivalence in fact do an injustice to the memorial’s affective (and educational) potential as a palimpsestuous space? The question reinforces one of this chapter’s central contentions, namely that the memorials as discursive spaces set limits and possibilities of their own for representing the double past.

I wish to return now to the victims’ lobbies and compare their attitudes in the mid-2000s to the positions I have recapitulated above. The first lobby group I address, on the evidence of a commemorative ceremony at Buchenwald in 2005, is the VOS. This is an elucidating example, as it suggests that shifts in the course of federal cultural policy may have prompted a hardening of their stance on communist injustices. Following this, I consider how the victims of *National Socialism* have responded to the Soviet camps at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen since the *Speziallager* exhibitions opened there. Despite the overwhelming empirical evidence that the memorials now present in favour of commemorating the post-war victims, the concentration camp prisoners’ committees have on the whole maintained a skeptical distance to the issue of Stalinist injustices.

For his part, the federal chair of the VOS Bernd Stichler saw little difference between Stalinist communism and ‘real existing socialism’. In a commemorative speech held at Buchenwald in 2005, Stichler effaced differences between the SBZ and GDR, regarding them both as part of an expansive ‘Diktatur des Sowjetimperiums’.<sup>243</sup> Equally, he subsumed victims of the SED regime, such as those shot attempting to flee to the West across the Berlin Wall, and German victims of Soviet post-war injustices together under the blanket label ‘victims of communism’. This category amounted to a total of 100m victims – a figure popularised by the 1997 *Black Book of Communism*. Not only did Stichler use the occasion of commemorating the *Speziallager* victims to construct an unbroken period of dictatorship from 1945-1989. He also contrasted the 100m victims of communism with the approximately 30m victims of Nazism

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*Geschichte und Zukunft eines geschändeten Denkmals*, ed. by Günter Morsch (Berlin: Edition Hentrich and Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten, 1995), pp. 9-14 (p. 11).

<sup>243</sup> B. Stichler, ‘Es gibt kein Braun ohne Rot – Parallelen zwischen den Diktaturen sichtbar machen’, *FG*, 632 (Jun 2005), 10.

in order to refute arguments in favour of differentiating between the two dictatorships.

In fact, as far as Stichler was concerned, was was truly ‘criminal’ (‘verbrecherisch’) was to refute any kind of comparison between the camps out of hand.<sup>244</sup> Pronouncements of this sort indicated that anti-communism was still a prevalent feature of the *Speziallager* lobby’s interpretation of Buchenwald in the run-up to the 2005 federal elections. Moreover, the initial circumvention of certain *Speziallager* prisoners’ initial culpability for National Socialism had given way to outright elision of this fact. The true crime, according to Stichler, was *not* to compare the two regimes. Enforced comparison now overrode, as it were, even the prerogative of internalising one’s own guilt or compromised victimhood that Gerhard Finn had spoken of in 1994. In this respect at least, then, the position of the post-war victims’ lobby appeared to keep pace with concurrent shifts in the federal political landscape, though not with advances in scientific knowledge of Soviet post-war internment practices.

Stichler’s speech came in late May 2005, only a matter of months before the federal elections of that year. In it he observed with evident concern that right-wing parties were ‘öffentlich geächtet’ in Germany whilst the PDS was ‘öffentlich hofiert’.<sup>245</sup> He further warned that a governing SPD under Gerhard Schröder could become the ‘Wegbereiter einer neuen Diktatur’ by entering into a coalition with the PDS, attributing this danger to a ‘gemeinsame ideologische Basis’ in Marxism that these two parties shared with the Greens.<sup>246</sup> Stichler’s commemorative speech was therefore also an overtly political statement, and one that unmistakably sided with the CDU’s equationist approach to memorializing National Socialism, Stalinism and ‘real socialism’. This course had been signalled by the ‘Gesamtkonzept für ein würdiges Gedenken aller Opfer der beiden deutschen Diktaturen’ put forward by the party in 2003, and Stichler’s rhetoric certainly echoed its reference to the ‘beiden totalitären Diktaturen des 20. Jahrhunderts’.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>247</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, ‘Förderung von Gedenkstätten zur Diktaturgeschichte in Deutschland – Gesamtkonzept für ein würdiges Gedenken aller Opfer der beiden deutschen Diktaturen’, Drucksache 15/1874, p. 1; see also Rudnick, *Die andere Hälfte der Erinnerung*, pp. 91-96.

Representatives of the concentration camp victims, meanwhile, proved to be rigidly inflexible in their interpretation of Sachsenhausen's post-war history. A report written on the *Speziallager* museum in 2003 by the *Niederländischer Freundeskreis Sachsenhausen*, a group affiliated with the ISK, might just as well have been written a decade earlier, such was the extent to which it trivialised injustices committed by the Soviet Occupation forces. Describing the purpose of the post-war camps, the report categorically stated that they had at first 'primarily' ('hauptsächlich') held 'Naziparteibonzen..., SS-Leute[...] und andere[...] Kriegsgefangene[...]'. It conceded at another point that political opponents of the Soviet regime were increasingly prominent amongst the prisoners, though described them in highly ambiguous terms as 'Menschen..., die sich gegen das Sowjetregime kehrten sowie Kriminelle'.<sup>248</sup> In doing so, the report presented post-war internment as a legitimate form of criminal punishment and utterly ignored both the overwhelming evidence of arbitrary grounds for arrest and the presence of legitimately innocent prisoners in the camps. Likewise, it treated the ALS with a bewildering degree of scepticism. Despite (rather disingenuously) professing 'Verständnis' for this lobby group's stance on commemoration of post-1945 injustices at Sachsenhausen, the *Freundeskreis* nonetheless proceeded to speculate that:

'Unter den Mitgliedern dieses Vereins [the ALS, RB]...sich vermutlich auch die Nazis [befinden], die unmittelbar nach ihrem Prozess in Nürnberg in das Sowjetische Speziallager Nr. 7 eingewiesen wurden.'<sup>249</sup>

As well as indicting the prisoners of the *Speziallager* and the organisation representing them for having purportedly propped up the National Socialist regime, the *Freundeskreis* sought to trivialise conditions in the post-war camp. Relying on a reductive reading of the evangelical priest Heinrich Gruber's comments upon visiting Sachsenhausen in 1947, the report noted: '[i]n seinen

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<sup>248</sup> Arbeitsgemeinschaft Lager Sachsenhausen 1945 – 1950 e. V., 'Neubau in Oranienburg erinnert an das Sowjetische Speziallager Nr. 7', *FG*, 598 (Aug 2002), 4. The report appeared in *Freiheitsglocke*, evidently as the ALS and VOS wished to highlight its extremely tendentious reading of Sachsenhausen's post-war history. The victims' organisations neglected to say whether or not it had been redacted or amended for publication here however. As I was unable to locate a copy of this report in published material pertaining to the concentration camp victims' lobby groups, I have had to rely on this copy.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

Augen glich es [the *Speziallager*, RB] einem Sanatorium.<sup>250</sup> This comment in particular was singled out in a later article by the VOS rejecting the report as ‘skandalös’.<sup>251</sup> Moreover, as far as the VOS were concerned, the views espoused by the *Freundeskreis* were part of an ongoing campaign to trivialize the post-war camps. This latest intervention had, in the eyes of the *Speziallager* victims’ representatives, ‘once more’ (‘einmal mehr’) attempted to downplay post-war injustices at Sachsenhausen.<sup>252</sup> Certainly there was little to distinguish it from the rhetoric of 1990, when survivors of the concentration camp had labelled the *Speziallager* lobby a ‘Tarnorganisation zum Schutz von Schwer- und Scwerstbelasteten’.<sup>253</sup>

We have already seen above how the dogmatic anti-fascism of communist-dominated victims’ associations underlay interactions with the post-unification memorials. Were there equivalent conventions or pre-suppositions behind the commemorative discourses of the various *Speziallager* victims’ organisations? Whereas the *Freundeskreis* clearly felt that the regional government in Brandenburg had ‘respected’ the wishes of the ISK<sup>254</sup> by ensuring the *Speziallager* museum at Sachsenhausen was erected outside of the main camp triangle, the VOS vehemently opposed separate on-site commemoration of the two camp phases. Instead, siting the museum in Zone II was seen as ‘nachträgliche Diskriminierung’ and an ‘offene[...] Verhöhnung der vielen unschuldigen Toten und Überlebenden des Speziallagers’.<sup>255</sup> Furthermore, the museum itself was referred to in the *Freiheitsglocke* article as ‘die Gedenkstätte der Arbeitsgemeinschaft 1945-1950 e. V.’,<sup>256</sup> suggesting a more proprietorial attachment to it. Unlike the memorial specialists then, for whom the concept of the ‘Gedenkstätte als multiple Institution’<sup>257</sup> dictated its function and the constituencies it should serve, the *Speziallager* lobby foregrounded the museum’s role in commemorating and extending symbolic recognition to victims of the post-war camp.

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<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>251</sup> ‘Oranienburg: Stalinismus-Opfer bleiben zweite Wahl’, *FG*, 599 (Sept 2002), 2.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>253</sup> See Haustein, *Geschichte im Dissens*, p. 101fn42.

<sup>254</sup> ‘Neubau in Oranienburg erinnert an das Sowjetische Speziallager Nr. 7’, 4.

<sup>255</sup> ‘Oranienburg: Stalinismus-Opfer bleiben zweite Wahl’, 2.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>257</sup> On this concept see in particular Volkhard Knigge, ‘Museum oder Schädelstätte: Gedenkstätten als multiple Institutionen’, in *Gedenkstätten und Besucherforschung*, ed. by Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Bonn, 2004), pp. 17-33.

It is noticeable that members of the *Initiativgruppe* make recourse to religious language and symbolism at commemorative ceremonies held in honour of the *Speziallager* victims at Buchenwald. A sermon has long been part of these ceremonies, and attests to the Christian connotations that remembrance takes on in this format. In the 1994 sermon, for example, Richard von Weizsäcker's maxim that memory is the 'Geheimnis der Erlösung' was cited.<sup>258</sup> Since then, it has become the norm to portray remembrance as an act of reconciliation; services over the years have, to cite a select few examples, drawn on the motif of a survivor who had pledged to lead a life without hatred after the war was over,<sup>259</sup> called for the forgiveness of sins,<sup>260</sup> and recited Paulus' enjoinder: 'Zur Freiheit hat euch Christus befreit. / Bleibt daher fest und lasst euch nicht von neuem das Joch / der Knechtschaft auflegen!'.<sup>261</sup> The corollary of employing these Christian motifs is an elision of the culpability of certain *Speziallager* prisoners for lending their support to the Third Reich. Looking more closely at the language of commemoration on site thus reveals ways in which Luhmann's concept of systemic codes could be applied to discourse at the memorials. It is a form of reducing complexity in the sense that it screens awkward questions about the grounds for imprisonment in the *Speziallager* and is repeated each year, thereby building a code into the act of commemoration.

At Sachsenhausen, the position of the ALS in the years around 2009 is broadly the same. It also prioritizes redemptive narratives designed to restore honour to the victims over multi-perspectivity, recommending for instance that the post-war rehabilitation of many prisoners by the Russian government is included in the *Speziallager* museum. They have also erected a seven-metre high Christian cross in a commemorative space near to the *Speziallager* museum. The language and symbolism of commemorative ceremonies held beneath this cross by the ALS reflect a desire for 'reconciliation' ('Versöhnung') and 'forgiveness' ('Vergebung')<sup>262</sup>. They typically involve gathering to hear a Christian sermon, as at Buchenwald, and the cross itself is even referred to as a 'Golgotha' for the survivors and their relatives, evoking a Christian vision of salvation through a

<sup>258</sup> 'Andachts-Predigt des Herrn Pfarrer Eric Kranz am Gräberfeld', in *4. Buchenwaldtreffen*, ed. By *Initiativgruppe Buchenwald 1945-1950 e. V.* (Weimar, 1995), p. 10.

<sup>259</sup> 'Gedenkgottesdienst', in *17. – 20. Buchenwaldtreffen*, ed. by *Initiativgruppe Buchenwald 1945-1950 e. V.* (Weimar, 2010), pp. 9-10 (p. 10).

<sup>260</sup> 'Gedenkgottesdienst', in *ibid.*, pp. 28-29 (p. 29).

<sup>261</sup> 'Gedenkgottesdienst', in *ibid.*, pp. 85-87 (p. 85f).

<sup>262</sup> 'Schuld und Erinnerung', *Stacheldraht*, 7 (2009), 5.

link to the Passion. The attempts on the part of the survivors' association to efface lingering ambivalences through overtly religious forms of commemoration resemble what Tim Cole has referred to as 'redemptive closure'.<sup>263</sup> The way in which the ceremonies are staged implicitly serves the purpose of reclaiming an uncompromised and uncomplicated concept of victimhood for the survivors and their representatives.

Despite this, the decentralized and plural memorial concepts enable such a form of commemoration without allowing it to dominate the site topographies. Of course, the imperative of democratizing the sites has on occasion come into conflict with the reconciliatory commemorative discourse, most recently when the Christian cross was unveiled at Sachsenhausen in 2009. This incident typified the differences between memorial experts and victims of the Soviet camp when it came to interpreting the *Speziallager*. Whereas the survivors' association reacted angrily to a last-minute decision to shorten the cross from eight metres to seven, complaining to the local press that the move amounted to a 'decapitation' ('Verstümmelung') of the cross, the memorial staff claimed to be taking the necessary steps to ensure it did not visually impinge upon the concentration camp topography.<sup>264</sup> Ultimately, it is not a question of whether the professional or advocative stance on commemorative ritual and iconography has won out on site; they both share the memorial space and interpret it according to their own specific internal differentiating mechanisms.

## **Conclusion**

Looking in detail at discourses on the double past in the museum space has shown that developments on site have unfolded independently from the federal normalization narrative. There was perhaps some correlation between the commemorative rhetoric of the VOS in 2005 and the CDU's attempts in the

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<sup>263</sup> Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler: How History is Bought, Packaged and Sold* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 153.

<sup>264</sup> H. Eckert, 'Wut über "amputiertes" Holzkreuz', *Märkische Allgemeine Zeitung*, 21 Sept 2009, p. 16.

years prior to that to supplant the 1999 *Gedenkstättenkonzeption*. However, since this was an oppositional discourse rather than the official government position, the VOS was actually articulating dissent from an institutionalized principle of differentiation. Likewise, as federal discourse did begin to shift closer to joint commemoration of the double past after 2005, interactions with the memorials upheld a strict spatial separation of their distinct historical phases. On this evidence it is fair to say that the sites are both spaces for and agencies in the cultural representation of the double past. As the chapter has shown, the redesign processes at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen have prefigured plural, differentiated commemoration by foregrounding the historical sites as well as introducing a layered approach to them.

Admittedly not all commemorative practices on site take as nuanced an approach as the museum curators and advisors have. Nonetheless, the reorientation of the memorials around ‘authentic’ traces of the concentration camp – taking precedence over the *Speziallager* topography and the architecture of the GDR memorial complex where these phases overlap – has prevented any one discourse monopolizing the spaces. Viewing the architectural relics as ‘Zeitschaften’<sup>265</sup> that attest to the sites’ various historical functions allows a range of groups to hold commemorative ceremonies there and legitimize their narrative of the camp without impinging upon or undermining the legitimacy of other ceremonies. As I highlight in my analysis of the audio guide at Sachsenhausen, the multivalent auratic qualities of the sites do on occasion resist or complicate an attempt to separate these layers. On the whole however, the *Neugestaltungen* – which had been agreed upon if not implemented in their entirety by the point I begin my analysis – ushered in a differentiated spatial and narratological framework for handling the double past on site.

This over-layered rather than necessarily modified the commemorative discourses and practices of the respective survivors’ associations. Indeed, concentration camp survivors’ lobbies such as the LAG and IKBD have continued to commemorate the anniversary of liberation at Buchenwald by holding rallies that are reminiscent of GDR-era mass *Kundgebungen*. They are

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<sup>265</sup> See Insa Eschebach and Andreas Ehresmann, “‘Zeitschaften’: Zum Umgang mit baulichen Relikten ehemaliger Konzentrationslager” in *Der Nationalsozialismus im Spiegel des öffentlichen Gedächtnisses: Formen der Aufarbeitung und des Gedenkens*, ed. by Fank, Petra and Stefan Hördler (Berlin: Metropolis, 2005), pp. 111-120.

highly politicized and propagate an anti-extremist message. Moreover, by tracing a route from the camp memorial on the *Appellplatz* to the memorial complex on the Ettersberg, they perpetuate the antifascist narrative of the NMG epitomized by the phrase ‘durch Sterben und Kämpfen zum Sieg’. At Sachsenhausen, the Sachsenhausenkomitee in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland e. V. honour the 27 communist functionaries murdered on 11 October 1944 in an annual ceremony, thereby preserving another tradition from the GDR. Though the committee representatives themselves continue to portray life in the concentration camp using the antifascist categories of ‘good’ resisters and ‘bad’ accomplices of the SS, they are not the only speakers at the ceremony; their narrative is complemented by a short speech by a representative of the memorial, musical elements and interpretative readings. In any case, as the ceremony is held at Station Z rather than at the foot of the 40m-high GDR-era obelisk, it is kept at a careful distance from the site’s communist iconography.

Finally, the concepts of autopoiesis and systemic differentiation lend themselves to an analysis of on site commemoration. Most obviously, the model of ‘double contingency’ explained above, which understands the construction of meaning in communication between systems to be a process that is internal to each system, can be applied to the discourses I have surveyed. Certainly it is instructive to conceptualize the interaction between discourses through recourse to ‘systemic’ operations; they interpret communication about the double past in terms of the disjuncture between their structure and the (more complex) structure of their environment. The meaning that any one system derives from this communication is therefore opaque to the others.

Using this model, we can differentiate within as well as between left wing, Holocaust-centred discourse and right wing, anti-totalitarian discourse. Both the memorial professionals and the victims of National Socialism, for instance, fall into the former category. Yet whereas expert protagonists orientate their work around empirical standards and the cornerstones of the *Gedenkstättenbewegung*, the victims – at least in the communist-dominated lobby groups – view the Holocaust as singular on account of their experiences under National Socialism (codified in the Buchenwald Oath of 1945). Likewise, both members of the CDU and victims of communism downplay differences between Nazism and communism, though to serve the respective goals of civic

governance and of extending recognition to victims of the post-war camps at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen.

## Ch. 3: Local patterns of representation

### *Introduction*

Writing in the journal of the Brandenburg Museums Association in 2007, Günter Morsch outlined the three main objectives of construction work as part of the ‘Neugestaltung’ at Sachsenhausen. The first objective entailed careful preservation of material ‘traces’ of the historical site (‘Spurensicherung’) as a means of documenting acts of perpetration and commemorating the victims. The second involved identifying and preserving the topography of the broader camp complex outside of the pre-1989 memorial grounds. Thirdly, the redesign aimed to develop a concept that handled both the GDR memorial architecture and ‘authentic’ relics in a historically appropriate relationship to one another.<sup>266</sup> The second has impinged most obviously on local memory culture, as it has often entailed memory work at sites that have since taken on local functions and designations separate to their historical identity as part of the camp topography.

In Oranienburg, efforts to musealize a more complete picture of Sachsenhausen have centred around four particular sections of the camp topography: the industrial yard, where the SS carried out mass executions; the KZ-Sonderlager (later ‘Zone II’ of the *Speziallager*); the SS-Truppenlager; and the former Klinkerwerk sub-camp, a brick works to which prisoner details from Sachsenhausen were sent as slave labourers.<sup>267</sup> Thus far, the former two have been successfully integrated into the redesigned memorial. The SS-Truppenlager was of course the subject of a high-profile architectural design competition and slated as the site of Daniel Libeskind’s ultimately unrealised Hope Incision project, which I discuss in section one. At the site of the former Klinkerwerk, meanwhile, an open-air exhibition has finally been inaugurated after many years

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<sup>266</sup> Günter Morsch, ‘Zum Wandel der Gedenkstätten nach der Deutschen Einheit’, *Museumsblätter*, 10 (2007), 10-15 (p. 12).

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

of torturous bureaucratic and financial wrangling that clearly tried the patience of the *Internationales Sachsenhausen Komitee*. In both cases the town had a protracted and significant role to play in the deliberations preceding the abandonment of the former project and the realisation of the latter; it also made a financial contribution to the Klinkerwerk exhibition.

Similar projects have been undertaken since 1990 in Weimar, though these have also addressed the intellectual relationship between the camp on the Ettersberg and the town of critical modernity and Germany's first democratic republic (a relationship reflected upon not least by prisoners of the concentration camp). Certainly local instances of National Socialist persecution, such as the round up and deportation of Thuringia's Jewish residents in May 1942, are now commemorated, and indeed at the actual site of the round up itself in Weimar as part of a ceremony organised jointly by the memorial, the town and others on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the round up.<sup>268</sup> Other commemorative plaques in the town mark events such as the Death Marches in 1945 and the deportation of several thousand Jews to Buchenwald in the aftermath of 'Kristallnacht' in 1938. It was however engagement with the historical intertwinement of camp and town prompted by Weimar's nomination as European Capital of Culture – a title it held in 1999 – that was arguably of most consequence for local Buchenwald memory. A number of events relating to the concentration camp featured in the cultural programme organised for the so-called *Kulturstadtjahr* and, given the prominent place they were afforded in it, constitute an important barometer of attitudes to the memorial and its multiple histories in Weimar.<sup>269</sup> I analyse several of the major projects in detail in sections one and two.

These and other ventures undertaken in and with the support of Weimar and Oranienburg provide, firstly, an illuminating insight into local memory of the double past. Whilst the concentration camps, as we see, quite literally branched out into the town proper and underwent re-signification with the collapse of the Third Reich, the *Speziallager* were very carefully (if not quite hermetically)

<sup>268</sup> See <http://www.buchenwald.de/47/date/2012/05/10/denn-ich-will-noch-fuer-euch-leben-aus-dem-abschiedsbrief-von-gerda-brueg-gera-9-mai-1942/>. Last accessed 26 Jun 2012.

<sup>269</sup> Silke Roth notes that Buchenwald 'played a decisive role in "Weimar 1999", although the number of events dealing with Buchenwald was much smaller than those dealing with Classicism.' See Roth, 'Goethe and Buchenwald: Re-constructing German National Identity in the Weimar Year 1999' in *Why Weimar? Questioning the Legacy of Weimar from Goethe to 1999*, ed. by Peter M. Daly, Hans Walter Frischkopf, Trudis E. Goldsmith-Reber and Horst Richter (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 93-106 (p. 98).

sealed off from the local population, leaving no such material traces with which to anchor a corresponding local culture of remembrance. Combined with the GDR's circumscription of public discussion of the Soviet internment camps, Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen's post-war usage could by definition be little more than a communicative memory in Weimar and Oranienburg (and beyond) up until 1989. In many ways, this discrepancy between the visibility of the concentration camp and the invisibility of the special camp outside the camp perimeter has prefigured the development of local discourses on the double past after unification. For it was the memorials' National Socialist and post-1949 GDR pasts that would have more of a bearing on the coordinates of memory culture in Weimar and Oranienburg.

The fact that certain local memorial projects have come to fruition at all reflects the extent to which local opinion has evolved to embrace ongoing confrontation with National Socialism. Moreover, this was, it should be noted, a shift that was far from self-evident. Harold Marcuse has argued in relation to changing memory of the Nazi past in the pre-1989 Federal Republic that the popular myths of Germans as *victims* of National Socialism and as ignorant of the existence of the concentration camps were only really exploded in the late 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>270</sup> In the GDR, by contrast, official antifascism had effectively absolved East Germans of a sense of responsibility for brown-collar crimes, and the evidence of communist crimes that surfaced after unification threatened to offer a new form of self-exculpation. There were several good reasons, in other words, to expect that local opinion in Oranienburg and Weimar would cling tenaciously to the myths of victimization and ignorance. Instead however, what we see is a fairly rapid dissipation of local calls for a normalization of the past along conservative lines – that is, for a line under the past (*Schlussstrich*) – once engagement with the historical and material traces of National Socialism began. What we can infer from the widespread support for normalization *pace* Schröder relatively early on in the 1990s is that local discourses have developed independently of post-unification shifts in federal discourse.

The first of two central arguments this chapter will make is that the reflexive incorporation of the memorials into constructions of local memory and

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<sup>270</sup> Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*, pp. 335-371.

identity from the turn of the millennium onwards has produced normative frameworks in its own right. In both Weimar and Oranienburg press reportage and ‘official’ municipal actors make recourse to the same basic narrative of the ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ sides of local history to frame discussion of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, generating specific local memory paradigms. These typically focus on the concentration camps rather than the memorials’ multiple pasts as archetypal symbols of ‘negative’ heritage and a counterpoint to more straightforwardly celebratory local traditions. In this particular context then, where memory debates can be described as relational, they relate not – or not only – to a national norm, but to local norms with their own implicit assumptions about confronting the past. As this chapter demonstrates, local memory actors commemorate the double past in a variety of ways and link this to differing identity narratives, taking their cue to varying degrees from the Holocaust-centred *municipal* discourse as much as from a federal standard. The concept of systemic ‘codes’ lends itself well to the picture that emerges, capturing as it does a sense of how, in one sense, cultural spaces consist of a centre and a periphery, whilst in another sense appearing to be made up of distinct discourses following their own internal logic and conventions.

Secondly, and relating to the first argument, the chapter calls for a more nuanced view of the differences and similarities between the two ‘local’ contexts under discussion. For all the specificities of each case, it is notable that in *both* localities memory is typically Holocaust-centred and has, broadly speaking, remained so despite the recent tendency towards equationist readings of the double past at federal level. This is, I argue, a result of the particularly acute challenges to constructing normal identities local publics are presented with by the visibility of the camps. Finding a means of reconciling this negative history to local identity has indeed precipitated a shift in the perception of the camps – Jörg Skribeleit utilises the phrase ‘vom Stigma zum Standortfaktor’ to capture a sense of this<sup>271</sup> – but in doing so the related issue of the double past has tended to be overlooked. On the other hand, it is important to stress the embeddedness of these memory discourses in the distinct local histories of Prussian tolerance and multiculturalism (in Oranienburg) and enlightenment, humanistic traditions of

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<sup>271</sup> Jörg Skribeleit, ‘Vom Stigma zum Standortfaktor: Die Gemeinde Flossenbürg und das Erbe des Konzentrationslagers’ in *Das Erbe der Provinz: Heimatkultur und Geschichtspolitik nach 1945*, ed. by Habbo Knoch (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2001), pp. 191-217.

literature, politics, and thought (in Weimar). Nor can one overlook the differences between the memory activists and networks of remembrance in each of the local publics. Thus, there is a need to differentiate in two regards when it comes to unpacking at local level what Caroline Pearce has termed the ‘dialectic of normality’<sup>272</sup> – that is, constantly and implicitly invoking the nation’s dictatorial past in attempts to present oneself as normalized. One must distinguish the local dynamic of cultural memory from respective regional and federal dynamics with their own specific structural underpinnings and drivers, and also differentiate between the two iterations of ‘local’ memory, grounded as they are in specific historical and cultural constellations.

The chapter itself analyses several different memory texts. It takes ‘official’ and municipal discourses as a starting point, addressing how they inflect the relationship between memory, identity, and governmentality to produce local ‘exhibitionary complexes’. The official position is best gauged by looking at local press reportage, the work of local heritage institutions and the published output of cultural elites. As such, I have honed in on several of the most high-profile cultural events of the past decade or so – for instance the cultural programme accompanying ‘Weimar 1999’, when the town held the title of European Capital of Culture, and the popular flower show, the ‘Landesgartenschau’, hosted by Oranienburg in 2009. As these events were extensively reported in local newspapers, programmatic of municipal interpretations of local identity and history, and often the precursor for protracted memory debates, they provide an invaluable window onto both the contents and construction of cultural memory across diverse local publics. In later sections, when I turn to civic memory activists, I have relied variously on specialist publications produced by lobby groups, interviews with key protagonists, and field research – above all exhibition analysis – at heritage institutions in Weimar and Oranienburg. Finally, the chapter is organised around a loose chronological narrative beginning in the mid-/late-1990s and running through to the present day. This structure made intuitive sense for two reasons. Firstly, it best conveys a sense of the underlying memory dynamic(s) I identify above. Secondly, it allows me to plot the initial construction of local memory paradigms at the turn of the

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<sup>272</sup> Pearce, *Contemporary Germany and the Nazi Legacy*.

millennium before addressing their blind spots and the counter-narratives that we can identify when the lens is broadened beyond official and municipal groups.

### ***Constructing local memory paradigms***

In this first section I will map out the emergence of ‘official’ local memory paradigms in Weimar and Oranienburg prior to the turn of the millennium. Consequently, I focus for the most part on municipal opinion, which I have gauged through a systematic analysis of press reportage, marketing and promotional materials such as tourist brochures, leaflets and other publications, as well as the programme organised in connection with Weimar’s tenure as European Capital of Culture in 1999. In both cases a dualism emerges as a result of juxtaposing the concentration camps with more positive aspects of local heritage; that is, in Oranienburg’s case, a specifically Prussian history of tolerance and multi-culturalism, and the legacies of enlightenment and Classicism in Weimar. Thus I also seek to highlight the dimensions of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen’s multi-faceted histories as well as the local groups that are marginalised by these monolithic cultural memory discourses. In sections two and three of the chapter I then hone in on, firstly, the blind spots of municipal memory and, secondly, the alternative memory narratives that emerge alongside or indeed in response to them. I explore memory of Sachsenhausen in Oranienburg before turning to the situation in Weimar.

First of all, I wish to look in detail at discussions surrounding the future of the SS-Truppenlager in Oranienburg during the 1990s. Even as early as 1993, at about the time that the Sachsenhausen memorial was reopened under the aegis of the *Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten*, the issue of a 44-hectare section of the town formerly integrated into the concentration camp topography was already the subject of controversy. Many of the buildings in this area of Oranienburg had served a functional purpose for the camp complex or housed the SS-battalion stationed at Sachsenhausen, meaning that the whole area was of

historical significance as an architectural relic of the perpetrators. After the end of the war, the housing estate had been re-designated as a residential area. In 1991, the town convened a panel of specialists, who were to review a series of proposals for future uses of the *SS-Kasernengelände*. This *Gutachterverfahren* initially recommended a redesign proposal submitted by the Austrian architect Hermann Czech, in which commercial and residential use of parts of the site were planned.

Yet by 1994, a year after the publication of the *Gutachterverfahren*, enthusiasm for Czech's project had waned, and attention turned back to a proposal first submitted by the architect Daniel Libeskind at the time of the initial design competition. Though Libeskind's radical idea of flooding the foundations of the SS-buildings and constructing a series of walkways that would allow visitors and locals to contemplate the gradual erosion of the *Täterarchitektur* was dismissed, a revised proposal entitled 'Hope Incision' ('*Hoffnungsschneise*') was more enthusiastically received. Libeskind retained a confrontative architectural approach, albeit one that was somewhat toned down in comparison to his initial submission, in the design of 'Hope Incision'. This included a raised platform of land pointing towards Schwerin, the planned destination of the death marches begun shortly before the liberation of Sachsenhausen in April 1945, which would house educational institutions and community centres. Given that enterprises both from Oranienburg and elsewhere would be invited to set up shop on the 'Hope Incision', the project seemed to signal a commitment to the forward-looking requirements of town planning too. Not least the change in name would appear to confirm this; the optimism inherent to a notion of 'Hope' replaced 'Dawn of a new Mo(u)ning' with its at best faint promise of beginning anew. Before developments reached a more or less permanent *impasse* in 2001, the future of the area was even discussed at a 3-day symposium held between Oranienburg and Berlin in March of the same year. The following analysis is based in large part on press coverage in the build up to and during the symposium, when the story was followed with interest in local, regional and national newspapers.

Beginning with local press reportage, it is clear that, by the time the symposium was held in Berlin, there was widespread local enthusiasm for Libeskind's proposed design concept. In Oranienburg's case, this represented a

significant change of heart, given that the language of the earlier *Gutachterverfahren* bespoke a desire for residential and commercial usage. The result of this initial process had been to embrace ‘urbaner Vielfalt’ – that is, mixed-usage municipal architecture – as a means of breaking with the SS’s functional compartmentalisation of architectural ensembles in the area.<sup>273</sup> Indeed, the *Gutachterverfahren* documentation proposed that ‘wo Lager war, soll Stadt werden’<sup>274</sup>, which though an altogether reasonable recommendation in itself makes quite emphatically clear the determination to build housing and commercial properties at this stage. As was made clear on the very first page of the documentation:

‘[Es] bestehen erhebliche und wachsende Flächenbedarfe für soziale Infrastruktureinrichtungen, Handel- und Dienstleistungen und Gewerbe sowie für Verwaltungseinrichtungen.... Ehemals militärisch genutzte Flächen bieten hierfür ein hervorragendes Entwicklungspotential.’<sup>275</sup>

Of course, the very nature of the *Gutachterverfahren*, requiring academic and in instances non-local specialists to draw up their recommendations for the Truppenlager, means it cannot be taken as entirely representative of opinion in ‘the town’, but it is nevertheless elucidating to compare the language above with articles that appeared in the local press eight years later. In a comment article appearing in the *Märkische Allgemeine Zeitung* on 19 March 2001, for example, it was claimed that:

‘Stadt und Architekt trotz längerer Denkpausen wieder miteinander [arbeiteten] und ein Vorschlag entstand, der die Züge des Ungewohnten hat, aber das Leben zulässt. Die Stadt wird weiter mitarbeiten. Das erklärte [Hans-Joachim] Laesicke [the town mayor, RB] und er will dafür Sorge tragen, dass die Oranienburger zur Vergangenheit ihrer Stadt stehen können. Auch zu diesem Projekt.’<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> Stadt Oranienburg (ed.), *Gutachterverfahren: Urbanisierung des Geländes der ehemaligen SS-Kaserne Oranienburg* (Oranienburg, 1993), p. 45.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>276</sup> I. Nehls, ‘Die Zeit nicht verschlafen’, *Märkischer Allgemeine Zeitung*, 19 Mar 2001, p. 15.

The mention of ‘hervorragendes Entwicklungspotential[s]’ in the *Gutachterverfahren*, implying acute awareness of the benefits of an architectural redesign from the perspective of commercial redevelopment, had been toned down significantly by 2001. The main criterion now appeared to be that ‘die Oranienburger zur Vergangenheit ihrer Stadt stehen können’, whilst the once explicit expectation of commercial reward on the other hand had been discarded; it was now enough that the project merely avoided impinging too much upon life in Oranienburg (‘das Leben zulässt’). Local press reportage cited expressions of approval from academic experts and architects working with Libeskind, which had the effect of validating the town’s *volte face*. Libeskind’s colleague Matthias Reese was quoted praising the decision to embrace ‘Hope Incision’ as “zweifelsfrei die richtige.”<sup>277</sup> Similarly an article appearing in the *Märkischer Allgemeine* on 16 March 2001 observed that:

‘...Libeskind nicht nur bei der Stadt Oranienburg und der Stiftung [Unterstützung findet], sondern auch bei renommierten Wissenschaftlern, wie dem US-Amerikaner Prof. James Young, Inhaber des Lehrstuhls für Judaistik an der Universität Boston.’<sup>278</sup>

An approach favouring confrontation with the past at the ‘Truppenlager’ was presented in normative terms by the local press. This was a feature of national and regional reportage too, as I discuss below. At local level, the normative force of the argument in support of Hope Incision manifested itself in a certain ambiguity surrounding who exactly had been won over to the proposal. In an article in the *Oranienburger Generalanzeiger*, it was ‘[d]ie politischen Gremien der Stadt Oranienburg’<sup>279</sup> that had supposedly decided for Libeskind’s concept. In a separate piece sharing the same page, the enthusiasm of academic observers such as the American memorial expert James Young for the *Hoffnungsschneise* was reported.<sup>280</sup> An opinion article in the same edition likewise styled the change of heart in Oranienburg over the ‘Truppenlager’ as an imposition of elite positions: if the town ‘anfangs die Idee des Wohnungsbaus

<sup>277</sup> H. Bergt, ‘Geschichtliche Symbiose’, *Märkischer Allgemeine Zeitung*, 17/18 Mar 2001, p. 17.

<sup>278</sup> H. Hohenhaus, “‘Hoffnungsriegel’ gegen den Verfall’, *Märkischer Allgemeine Zeitung*, 16 Mar 2001, p. 17.

<sup>279</sup> ‘Experimenteller Ansatz’, *Oranienburger Generalanzeiger*, 17/18 Mar 2001, p. 3.

<sup>280</sup> “‘Utopia neben Spree-Athen errichten’”, *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[favourisierte]’, then it was ‘deren Verantwortliche’ who now categorically ruled this out.<sup>281</sup>

What are we to make of the evidence that press discourse reinforces a normative position on Oranienburg’s relationship to the Nazi past? I suggest working once more with the tools of transcultural memory, Foucault’s *dispositif*, and systems theory to conceptualize representations of the Hope Incision project in the press. Departing from Klaus Naumann’s interpretation of press reportage on World War II and National Socialism as a repository of memory, I argue that it perpetuates a normative regime of interpretation.<sup>282</sup> As a corpus, the various articles in local, regional and national newspapers dealing with Libeskind’s project and discussed here constitute a ‘vieltimmige[n] Text’.<sup>283</sup> Collectively, however, they organize discourse around existing power relations. This picture emerges firstly out of the broad convergence that the text ensemble constructs between local and ‘elite’ national and international stances on the project, and secondly as a consequence of the marginal voice that it gives to local opinion.

In order to further differentiate between local press reportage on the one hand and regional or national coverage of the story on the other, I trace the systemic characteristics of these discourses. Just as I have demonstrated elsewhere in this chapter, trends towards confronting the past at local level were not necessarily symptomatic of broader shifts taking place in the federal normalization discourse. Rather than assuming that one, monolithic *dispositif* shapes patterns of cultural representation across all of the contexts surveyed in this thesis, I propose thinking in terms of multiple *dispositifs*. Indeed, evidence would seem to bear out this approach. The local press clearly oriented debates on the redesign of the ‘Truppenlager’ around the consequences it would have for local life – much as the ‘Gutachtenverfahren’ had in the early 1990s, even if support for confronting the historical relics of the concentration camp was now more forthcoming.

Andreas Röhl, writing in the *Märkischer Allgemeine*, clearly assessed the potential benefits of the *Hoffnungsschneise* from the perspective of local enterprises and businesses:

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<sup>281</sup> D. Lange, ‘Impuls bietet Chance’, *Oranienburger Generalanzeiger*, 17/18 Mar 2001, p. 2.

<sup>282</sup> Naumann, *Der Krieg als Text*, p. 17.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

‘Die hiesigen restriktiven Planungsbedingungen seien zudem ein Vorteil für den Standort und brächten Sicherheit für einen Nutzer, da Letzterer sein Interesse aus der räumlichen oder inhaltlichen Bindung zum Ort ableite.’<sup>284</sup>

Following Röhl’s argumentation, the site provided security to its ‘users’ (the choice of word itself hinted at his consumerist appraisal), and its unique historical significance would create a connection between site and service too. In addition to these enthusiastic remarks, the author detailed Berlin town planner Rainer Emenlauer’s thoughts on a three-tiered usage of Hope Incision, designed to encourage institutions at federal, state and local level to relocate here. The article noted that the *Dienstleistungszentrum Oranienburg* envisaged by Emenlauer could house local institutions.<sup>285</sup> An article in the same newspaper the previous day even went as far as to describe the State Finance Ministry’s hint at financial support as ‘[d]ie wichtigste Botschaft des dreitägigen Symposiums zum Thema Nachnutzung des ehemaligen SS-Truppenlagers...’.<sup>286</sup> The verdict of the national press, however, was decidedly different, as perhaps best illustrated by the concluding sentence of an article in *Der Welt* on 23 March: ‘Die Diskussion um die Zukunft des SS-Truppenlagers Oranienburg wird die Zukunft deutscher Gedenkkultur entscheidend mitprägen.’<sup>287</sup>

What is also noticeable about reportage within Oranienburg is the temporal spread of articles dealing with the architectural concept. This is quite distinct from the vicissitudes of national coverage, where surges in interest unsurprisingly coincide with moments such as the symposium in March 2001, when the action shifts temporarily away from Oranienburg to Berlin. Indeed, a keyword search in the Federal Press Archives using the terms ‘Sachsenhausen and Libeskind’ indicates that the symposium was reported by four separate national broadsheets during the week after it took place. After this point, however, no results are returned for the same search, suggesting that interest subsequently all but ebbs away. Conversely, the accent in the local press at this

<sup>284</sup> A. Röhl, ‘Sensibilität gefordert’, *Märkische Allgemeine Zeitung*, 20 Mar 2001, p. 16.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>286</sup> *Idem.*, ‘Kleine Brötchen backen’, *Märkische Allgemeine Zeitung*, 19 Mar 2001, p. 15.

<sup>287</sup> K. Teetz, ‘Wo Lager war, soll Stadt werden’, *Die Welt*, 23 Mar 2001, p. 35.

point is on the need to *develop* discussion, as article headlines – ‘Symposium bringt Idee voran’ and ‘Impuls bietet Chance’<sup>288</sup>, for instance – seem to confirm. Furthermore, the story was picked up again later the same year when the local ‘Forum gegen Rassismus’ publicly presented a model of ‘Hope Incision’ in an attempt to familiarise locals in Oranienburg with the project.<sup>289</sup> This was barely registered in the regional and national press, consigned to a solitary and inconspicuous report in the ‘Regional’ section of the *Berliner Morgenpost*.<sup>290</sup>

Where local reportage tended to recode the ‘Hope Incision’ project in terms of its perceived benefit to Oranienburg, national and regional newspapers framed the debate in terms of German identity and German rituals of coming to terms with the past. This is perhaps most apparent in the interest that Daniel Libeskind’s involvement in the project generated. In a number of articles Libeskind was referred to as the ‘jüdischen Stararchitekt’<sup>291</sup> or ‘amerikanischen Stararchitekt’<sup>292</sup>, and in many instances the Jewish Museum in Berlin, which he designed and is arguably his most recognisable credential, was mentioned. An article in the *Berliner Zeitung* even referred to the ‘Libeskind-Plan’ without stating the name of the project in question or its relation to Oranienburg, pointing to an implicit assumption that the name of Libeskind was virtually synonymous with the redesign debate as a whole.<sup>293</sup>

Collapsing together the figure of Libeskind and the broader debate of course abstracted Hope Incision from Oranienburg. For all the attention given in the regional and national press to Libeskind’s Jewishness and American nationality, conspicuously little was said as to his residency in Berlin. In none of the newspaper articles analysed (approximately 30) was this information given; it was only provided by an article in the weekly magazine *Focus* and the property newspaper *Immobilien Zeitung*, the latter of which in any case has a significantly lower circulation and took interest primarily in the development of real estate

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<sup>288</sup> D. Lange, ‘Symposium bringt Idee voran’, *Oranienburger Generalanzeiger*, 19 mar 2001, p. 3; *Idem.*, ‘Impuls bietet Chance’.

<sup>289</sup> ‘Einfach mitten im Leben’, *Märkische Allgemeine Zeitung*, 19 Sept 2001, p. 17.

<sup>290</sup> H. Eckert, ‘Im Gras Schneisen der Hoffnung’, *Berliner Morgenpost*, 17 Sept 2001.

<sup>291</sup> See for example ‘Symposium zu SS-Areal’, *Berliner Morgenpost*, 6 Mar 2001; H. Eckert, ‘Oranienburg hält an Planungen für Hoffnungsriegel fest’, *ibid.*, 19 Mar 2001.

<sup>292</sup> See N. Maschler, ‘Was tun mit dem “Einschnitt der Hoffnun”?’’, *taz*, 15 Mar 2001; *idem.*, ‘Am Reißbrett entworfen’, *ibid.*, 19 Mar 2001.

<sup>293</sup> ‘Landesdenkmalamt lehnt Libeskind-Plan ab’, *Berliner Zeitung*, 16 Mar 2001.

envisaged as part of Libeskind's architectural design.<sup>294</sup> The architect's connections to Jewish history, either through his own background or involvement in the Jewish Museum, by contrast, featured prominently. Thus, a metonymical link to Germany's national accountability vis-à-vis Jewish victims of National Socialism was made by foregrounding Libeskind's own intimate familial connection to the Holocaust and professional résumé, in which architecture imbued with Jewish iconography was well represented. The same affect was achieved by, conversely, downplaying his association with both the capital and Oranienburg as the stages upon which these architectural debates played out. The following extract from an article in the *Berliner Zeitung* in particular attests to this:

‘Auftritt ein Popstar und reicht Oranienburg die helende Hand. Ein bisschen an Elton John erinnernd, wiederholt er zweimal seine knappen Thesen. Das klingt wie ein Refrain, der Star ist ein begnadeter Selbstvermarktungskünstler. Aber nicht fürs eigene Geschick, auch für Oranienburg könnte sich Daniel Libeskind als Glücksfall erwiesen.

Nach der Podiumsrunde verschwindet er so plötzlich wie er gekommen ist, anders als Bürgermeister Hans Joachim Laesicke oder der Direktor der Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten, Günter Morsch, die sich für das Kolloquium über die künftige Nutzung des ehemaligen SS-Truppenlagers des KZ Sachsenhausen drei Tage Zeit nahmen...<sup>295</sup>

Libeskind was presented here – doubtless with a certain amount of wilful hyperbole – as a ‘brand name’, recognisable in pithy statements akin to song lyrics (‘Refrain[s]’) that were part of a slick marketing performance. He was the ‘Popstar’ of debates surrounding the *Truppenlager* who wilfully enters and leaves a podium discussion as he sees fit, as opposed to the local mayor and director of the Sachsenhausen memorial, both of whom committed to attending all three days of the symposium. Yet despite the near risible pomp and celebrity

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<sup>294</sup> U. Plewnia, ‘Bröckelnde Zeugnisse’, *Focus Magazin*, 8 Feb 1999; ‘Konfrontation mit dem Grauen: Neben dem ehemaligen KZ-Sachsenhausen entsteht ein Gewerbezentrum’, *Immobilien Zeitung*, 27 Jan 2000.

<sup>295</sup> A. Krause, ‘Die Gedenkstätte als Standortfaktor: Oranienburg gibt Sachsenhausen eine Zukunft’, *Berliner Zeitung*, 19 Mar 2001.

that characterised Libeskind's 'Auftritt' – another term suggesting that his was more of a scheduled publicity appearance than anything – his participation was apparently a blessing for Oranienburg. His arrival was described as a kind of 'happy coincidence' ('Glücksfall'), and the article did not fail to recognise that he could attract new investment to an area otherwise at risk of complete dilapidation. This impression was only reinforced further by the comments of a town planning official, who in saying that the project 'für Oranienburg an sich "–zig Nummern zu groß" ist'<sup>296</sup> and that the town alone "[es] sicher nicht realisieren [könnte]"<sup>297</sup> presented an almost provincial image of Oranienburg. The juxtaposition of Libeskind's 'star' qualities and the town's meagre financial means implied that the 'Hope Incision' project belonged to a German discourse on the past and not simply to the a narrower debate about *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* conducted within this modest Markish town.

On the evidence of certain articles in regional and national newspapers, the commercial pulling power exerted by Libeskind's name reads as almost irresistible to municipal elements responsible for construction and development in particular. In *Die Welt* on 8 Nov 1999 – almost 18 months before the 3-day colloquium deciding upon a strategy for the 'Truppenlager' – the head of Oranienburg's town planning office was cited, anticipating that 'der Name Libeskind...[bei der Suche nach einem Projektträger] erhebliche Zugkraft ausüben [werde]'.<sup>298</sup> Here in particular, the format and linguistic conventions of press reportage such as the tendency to use free indirect speech gave rise to a lack of specificity when addressing attitudes in 'the town'. The only locals noted to be in favour of Libeskind's proposal were senior municipal figures such as the mayor Hans-Joachim Laesicke.<sup>299</sup> Even then, the reasons given for their support were usually consistent with a marketing metaphor of 'rebirth' that municipal discourse in Oranienburg had begun to appropriate (I analyse this in greater detail in section four of the chapter). Laesicke's insistence that the project would bring new 'life' to Oranienburg, for instance, indicated that its appeal lay first

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<sup>296</sup> 'Konfrontation mit dem Grauen', *Immobilien Zeitung*.

<sup>297</sup> I. Hendrich, 'Architekt Libeskind soll "Schneise der Hoffnung" entwerfen', *Die Welt*, 8 Nov 1999.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>299</sup> See for instance "'Einschnitt der Hoffnung" zerschnitten', *taz*, 25 Jan 2001, p. 22; H. Eckert, "'Hoffnungsriegel" soll Dialog zwischen Vergangenheit und Gegenwart sichern', *Berliner Morgenpost*, 15 Mar 2001, p. 4; *Idem.*, 'Oranienburg hält an Planungen für Hoffnungsriegel fest', *Berliner Morgenpost*, 19 Mar 2001, p. 4.

and foremost in its rejuvenative potential.<sup>300</sup> To forego development on this area of land, by contrast, ‘würde ein Loch zwischen Stadt und Gedenkort reißen’<sup>301</sup>, leaving a damaging topographical and social cleavage in its place. The articles gave a sense of the ‘official’ line on redevelopment along the lines envisaged by Libeskind, but little beyond that.

Indeed, it was not entirely clear – especially in national and regional reportage – what exactly other groups in Oranienburg thought of the Hope Incision project. In fact, the ‘town’ appeared as a loose and almost entirely rhetorical construct when it came to impressing the character of local responses upon the readership. It was, variously, ‘die Bevölkerung’<sup>302</sup>, ‘[die] Stadtoberen’<sup>303</sup> and ‘[die] Oranienburger Stadtväter[...]’<sup>304</sup> who appeared as the principal advocates of Libeskind’s proposal, for instance. The degree to which locals participated in and welcomed the idea of the *Hoffnungsschneise* was therefore debateable; on occasion they were recruited by linguistic formulations that implied widespread support for the plans, whereas in other instances the idea seemed to have been imposed from above or arisen in the minds of prominent civic officials. Whilst mayor Hans-Joachim Laesicke was clearly eager to emphasise the active role played by Oranienburg in the decision-making process, referring to the townspeople as ”nicht Betroffener, sondern Initiator, besser gesagt sogar Hauptakteur”<sup>305</sup>, his claims rang rather hollow given the use of such rigid collective categorisations. Indeed, the distanced medium of press reportage, where stylistic conventions such as free indirect speech are prevalent, if anything served to further expose the imprecision of these comments. The same article sketched out local attitudes towards the *Truppenlager* as follows:

‘Laesicke: “Wir haben bald erkannt, dass eine Wohnbebauung nicht in Frage kommt.” Den Libeskind-Entwurf habe man in vielen Gesprächen auf das Maß verändert, den er heute mit dem Hoffnungsriegel angenommen hat. In progressiver Auseinandersetzung mit der Stiftung habe sich die Stadt auch dafür entschieden, gegen eine die Entwicklung lähmende

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<sup>300</sup> “Einschnitt der Hoffnung” zerschnitten’, p. 22.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>302</sup> S. Bernitt, ‘Holocaust-Denkmal in Sachsenhausen?’, *Welt am Sonntag*, 23 Aug 1998.

<sup>303</sup> Eckert, “Hoffnungsriegel” soll Dialog zwischen Vergangenheit und Gegenwart sichern’.

<sup>304</sup> *Idem.*, ‘Streit um Libeskind’s Hoffnungsriegel’.

<sup>305</sup> *Idem.*, ‘Oranienburg halt an Planungen für Hoffnungsriegel fest’.

Denkmalbereichssatzung vorzugehen. Man habe immer befürchtet, dass dies eine Beerdigung erster Klasse für das 38 Hektar große Areal sein würde.<sup>306</sup>

Reference to the town took on several guises here. Laesicke's use of 'wir' most likely referred to the select group of municipal officials and town planning commission members who, as elected local politicians or civil servants, were legally empowered to decide on the use of the area, though it could just as well have been a reference to the townspeople as a whole. Similarly, the terms 'die Stadt' and even the impersonal third person 'man' were used, the former denoting the town as a political entity and the latter presumably meant to imply broad consensus in Oranienburg. Combined with the use of indirect reported speech however, these statements – intended to convey support for preservation where reasonable – came across as normative pledges to prevent further dilapidation. There was little sense of who exactly was involved in actively fighting the corner of memorial professionals and others in favour of preservation, yet the reader was assured this was the case. It is interesting that this assurance was relayed in indirect speech, as the reporter (and, by extension, newspaper) was not so much channelling a palpable sense of engagement with Libeskind's proposal in Oranienburg as reproducing the rhetoric used by municipal actors.

Tellingly, where the specific opinions of members of the local community could be ascertained, support for the project appeared to be less forthcoming. Some locals even appeared to be styled as 'victims' of the proposals. An article appearing in *Die Welt* in July 1999, shortly after properties that had been part of the concentration camp grounds were placed under memorial protection order, described the situation faced by residents there:

‘Eine Erhaltungssatzung soll im wesentlichen verhindern, daß Eigentümer Gebäude abreißen und durch unpassende Neubauten ersetzen. Eine Gestaltungssatzung regelt darüberhinaus Details. Und das heißt in erster Linie: Von außen muß alles weitgehend so bleiben, wie es ist. Die Hausbesitzer dürfen die recht kleinen Fenster nicht gegen größere austauschen. Die Dächer sollen auch in Zukunft steil ansteigen und mit

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<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*

Biberschwänzen gedeckt sein. Die Fassade muß verputzt, hell angestrichen und der Sockel verklindert sein.’<sup>307</sup>

In this extract, it was clear that the owners of the former SS-houses (‘[d]ie Hausbesitzer’) felt disadvantaged. Certainly, the impression that they had been subjected to stringent property regulations was unmistakable in the catalogue of restrictions listed in the article. Elsewhere too, terms such as ‘die Oranienburger’ were more carefully delimited when intended to invoke a sense of collective victimhood. The town’s mayor, for example, posited a clear elite-mass dichotomy when he opined in the pages of the *tageszeitung* that “kluge Leute und Institutionen den Oranienburgern Vorschriften machen wollen”.<sup>308</sup> Laesicke was of course expressing his disapproval at the *format* of public debate focused on the *Truppenlager*, which was for the large part conducted as an academic debate amongst memorial specialists. Indeed, it was no coincidence that his comments coincided with a podium discussion in Berlin’s *Akademie der Künste* dedicated to the question of the SS barracks and attended by Libeskind, the director of the Sachsenhausen memorial, and academic experts.

The articles in the *Welt* and *tageszeitung* discussed above are the only examples I was able to find of more precise reference to local groups. As we have seen, newspaper articles tended to collapse together the municipality’s confrontational approach to the Nazi past with the views of the ‘town’. On the other hand, a member of the editorial team for the *Oranienburger Generalanzeiger* – a local newspaper – conceded that readers rarely engage critically with stories concerning Sachsenhausen. They did not often ‘reply’ to stories concerning the memorial by sending letters to the editor, for example.<sup>309</sup> In light of this, we must ask whether cultural discourse is not also determined, at least in these local publics, by the groups who are able (or empowered) to make their voices heard.

A sense of disenfranchisement amongst locals was certainly palpable. One aggrieved resident had even graffitied ‘Ehemals SS-Häuser – Heute ein

<sup>307</sup> A. Jahns, ‘SS-Villen müssen außen unverändert bleiben’, *Die Welt*, 26 Jul 1999.

<sup>308</sup> N. Maschler, ‘Am Reißbrett entworfen’, *taz*, 19 Mar 2001, p. 18.

<sup>309</sup> Interview with the author, 9 Feb 2010.

Denkmal?’<sup>310</sup> onto a property in the former ‘Truppenlager’ in protest, giving voice to a fear that memorialization would come at the expense of homeowners’ concerns. Another resident, by contrast, recalled feeling a sense of personal exoneration as focus shifted from individual properties in the former ‘Truppenlager’ and their occupants to the historical entwinement of town and camp more generally in the course of the debate.<sup>311</sup> A further group organised a citizens’ initiative and participated in debates with architects, memorial professionals and town planners over the Hope Incision proposal. Some commentators have taken this as evidence of the emergence of a participatory civic space, consisting of multiple publics, in the wake of post-totalitarian transition.<sup>312</sup> Whilst the processual nature of public debates on the past is well served by such a reading, my analysis of the Hope Incision debates indicates that certain discursive media such as the press in fact can and do perpetuate imbalances in power relations.

In Weimar, a process of arriving at consensual local identity narratives was also underway in the 1990s. Whilst this section concentrates on ‘Weimar 1999’, when the town held the title of European Capital of Culture, it is necessary to trace the pre-history of the discourses that crystallised in the *Kulturstadtjahr*. The Buchenwald memorial emerges as an important early protagonist here; it began debunking attempts to separate out Weimar’s classical heritage from the history of the camp almost immediately after unification, invoking or commenting on the irony of the town’s multiple historical associations. An early example of this was the foreword to an edition of the *Weimar Kultur Journal* written by Thomas Hofmann, director of the Buchenwald memorial between 1991-1994. In it, Hofmann plainly stated that the Jewish memorial, scheduled for inauguration in November 1993, was ‘ein Mahnmal für Weimar’.<sup>313</sup> He justified the assertion by pointing to the memorial aesthetic, which rendered the hollowed out foundations of what had formerly been barrack 22 as negative space. Symbolising the cultural void left behind by the targeted extermination of Europe’s Jewish population in this way would in Hofmann’s view resonate particularly acutely in the ‘Herz

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<sup>310</sup> See Caroline Wiedmer, *The Claims of Memory: Representations of the Holocaust in Contemporary Germany and France* (Ithica, NY/London: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 192-199.

<sup>311</sup> As reported by the Chief town planner in an interview with the author, 10 Nov 2011.

<sup>312</sup> Benjamin Forest, Juliet Johnson and Karen Till, ‘Post-totalitarian national identity: public memory in Germany and Russia’, *Social & Cultural Geography*, 5, 3 (2004), 357-380 (p. 367).

<sup>313</sup> Thomas Hofmann, ‘Impressum’, *Weimar Kultur Journal*, 11 (93), 2.

deutscher Kultur’ that was Weimar.<sup>314</sup> As Hofmann himself averred, the memorial form:

‘...wird an unser heutiges Kulturverständnis appellieren und, so hofft man, an der Kruste kratzen, die sich um die althergebrachte Formel vom Spannungsbogen zwischen Weimar und Buchenwald gebildet hat.’<sup>315</sup>

Following Hoffmann’s resignation, Volkhard Knigge, who had taken up the directorship at Buchenwald in 1994, continued to probe the metaphorical ‘Fallhöhe zwischen schöpferischer Möglichkeit und der Wirklichkeit eines ‘Höllenssturzes’’<sup>316</sup> at the heart of local memory culture, as the *Kulturstadtjahr* programme put it. Knigge was perhaps overly critical of Weimar, appearing to single it out for blame in a meta-narrative of failed enlightenment projects that had ultimately presaged a slide into genocidal dictatorship, chief amongst which were critical modernism and Germany’s first democratic republic in 1918. Remarking on this pointed duality, Knigge noted that Weimar had possessed both ‘die größten Chancen zum Guten [and] die höchsten Leichenberge’.<sup>317</sup> Nor did he accept that Weimar’s exceptionalism should entitle it to a sense of ‘Selbstgenügsamkeit’.<sup>318</sup> Yet the line between deriving a critical and discerning historical consciousness from the town’s undeniably unique history and slipping into a comfortable and ritualistic discourse of particularism – in short, reworking the coordinates of the federal normalization discourse around local identity – would prove to be a fine one.

At that point, the leitmotif of a ‘Janus-headed’ town that the memorial and other cultural institutions were pioneering was not in particularly wide circulation. When it was announced in March 1994 however that Weimar would be named European Capital of Culture for 1999, the same metaphor began to be invoked with increasing frequency. Soon local newspapers were routinely referring to the ‘janusköpfige Stadt’<sup>319</sup> and the ‘Binom Weimar-Buchenwald’.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>316</sup> G. Drews, ‘Buchenwald und das Kulturstadtjahr’, *Weimar Kultur Journal*, 8, 5 (1999), 11-14 (p. 11).

<sup>317</sup> ‘Neue Formen des Erinnerns’, *Weimar Kultur Journal*, 11 (1995), 10-12 (p. 10)

<sup>318</sup> C. Weber, ‘Aus historischem Pflichtgefühl’, *Weimar Kultur Journal*, 11 (1994), 16-17 (p. 17).

<sup>319</sup> See *Wochepost*, 30.5.1997.

<sup>320</sup> *TA*, 25.5.1999.

Even outside of Weimar the town's dual associations with 'high' and barbaric culture were registered, as an article in the daily newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel* illustrates:

‘Wie wohl kaum eine andere deutsche Stadt ist Weimar gleichermaßen Synonym für Aufklärung, künstlerische Avantgarde und auch für die dunkelsten Stunden in diesem Jahrhundert: die Sichtweite zum Konzentrationslager Buchenwald, das noch zum Stadtgebiet gehört.’<sup>321</sup>

Articles in the local press expressed this binary in similar terms, one noting that on the Ettersberg ‘...deutsche Janusköpfigkeit so dicht beieinander[liegt], wie andernorts kaum noch einmal.’<sup>322</sup> This particular article was written as an imagined tour of Classical Weimar, and sought to connect the town's illustrious history to the upcoming *Kulturstadtjahr*. Though it filled an entire broadsheet-size page consisting of seven columns of text, reference to Buchenwald was restricted to the final paragraph – a trope that, as we will see, was characteristic of press discourse in both Weimar and Oranienburg. Yet equally, it also mentioned the mass graves in which victims of the *Speziallager* had been buried, interrupting the otherwise neat dualism it had constructed. Indeed, the chronology the article traced was ‘[v]on Goethe und Schiller zu Hitler und Stalin’,<sup>323</sup> perhaps implying with this formulation that the true duality of historical Weimar was that of its twin legacies of Classicism and *both* National Socialism and Stalinism. Notably this had not been implied in the *Tagesspiegel* article, which juxtaposed enlightenment with the ‘Konzentrationslager Buchenwald’. An established repertoire of symbols and metaphors for representing the town's multi-faceted history had not quite yet emerged at this early juncture.

By 1999, however, certain repeating motifs could be recognised, as the range of *Kulturstadtjahr* projects addressing the historical links between Weimar and Buchenwald indicated. Though I am interested here in the normative force this process of reification brought with it, it would be grossly unfair to suggest that the projects themselves lacked innovation. If nothing else they found

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<sup>321</sup> ‘Weimar im Aufbruch’, *Der Tagesspiegel*, 7 Mar 1994.

<sup>322</sup> ‘Weimar – das “Athen an der Ilm”’, *TA*, 17 Mar 1994.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*

numerous innovative ways of engaging with the spatial intertwinement of the town's Classical and enlightenment heritage on the one hand and its associations with National Socialist terror on the other. Moreover, the projects were impressively varied, ranging from exhibitions and art installations to more conceptual workings with sound effects and outdoor trails that doubled as walking tours of historical Weimar. I first provide a brief overview of the major projects and explain how they too drew on the Goethe-Buchenwald paradigm, before critiquing some of them in the following section of the chapter, considering in particular what might have been pushed out of the historical frame of reference by their collective focus on the poles of Classicism and Nazism.

Perhaps the most widely publicized of the *Kulturstadtjahr* events to deal with Buchenwald was the so-called *Doppelausstellung* – an exhibition swap jointly organised by the memorial and the Weimar Classic Foundation. As part of the swap, the Classic Foundation showed a series of Goethe's sketches and watercolours at the memorial site, in an exhibition entitled *Gezeichneter Ort: Goetheblicke auf Weimar und Thüringen*. A second exhibition, *Vom Antlitz zur Maske: Wien – Weimar – Buchenwald 1939*, designed by the memorial site and documenting Jewish prisoners at Buchenwald who had been the subjects of racial anthropological experimentation in Vienna, was shown parallel to this in the Schillermuseum. The intention, as Volkhard Knigge explained, was to illustrate that 'in Weimar Kultur und Barbarei nebeneinander existieren konnten und daß es eine Vorgeschichte gibt, die das Ganze erklärlicher macht.'<sup>324</sup> One particularly striking aspect of this 'Vorgeschichte' pointed out by the accompanying exhibition catalogue was the presence of prominent *völkisch* and anti-Semitic circles in the town prior to 1933.<sup>325</sup> In the camp, too, many prisoners drew inspiration from or reflected with bitter irony on the rich cultural legacy that surrounded them. 'Stadt und Lager waren punktuell ineinander übergegangen', as the exhibition catalogue noted.<sup>326</sup> Indeed, the title *Gezeichneter Ort* – which can be translated as 'marked site' – itself conveys a sense of this ambiguity by

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<sup>324</sup> Drews, 'Buchenwald und das Kulturstadtjahr', p. 13.

<sup>325</sup> Volkhard Knigge and Jürgen Seifert, 'Eine Geste – ein Fund: Vorgeschichten einer Ausstellung', in *Vom Antlitz zur Maske: Wien – Weimar – Buchenwald 1939 / Gezeichneter Ort: Goetheblicke auf Weimar und Thüringen*, ed. by *idem*. (Braunschweig: Hinz und Kunst, 1999), pp. 6-14 (p. 8).

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

simultaneously implying a picturesque landscape and telescoping it onto the later existence of the concentration camp.

The Buchenwald memorial also curated a temporary exhibition for the *Kulturstadtjahr*, entitled *Leben-Terror-Geist: ZK Buchenwald: Porträts von Künstlern und Intellektuellen*. Shown in the cellar of the memorial foundation's administrative building, which also housed the library and archive, the exhibition displayed biographies of 73 renowned artists and intellectuals who had been imprisoned at Buchenwald. The location alone was enough to indicate that visiting was intended as a form of archival work in its own right. But this impression was made explicit by the highly tactile curatorial concept in which visitors were able to search out exhibits stored inside wooden boxes ('Kisten') and quite literally 'research' the biographies of former prisoners. As the boxes were laid out in no particular order or sequence and gave no indication of their contents, visitors were free to interact with them however they saw fit, and could by extension take away vastly disparate impressions of the exhibition and its subject matter.

Moreover, the boxes were intended as a comment on the link between Weimar and Buchenwald. They were exact replicas of fourteen storage boxes that had been originally constructed by Buchenwald inmates at the behest of Weimar's cultural elite, who wished to protect the town's precious cultural patrimony from bomb damage. These boxes then remained neglected in the collections of the Weimar Classic Foundation after the war until they were rediscovered in 1998. In a deliberate inversion of the context in which they were first constructed, the replica boxes used in the exhibition stored precisely the culture that the Nazis had sought to eradicate, pointing to the long-standing but repressed connection between Weimar's 'high' cultural traditions and the history of the concentration camp.

In addition to the exhibitions the memorial had a hand in creating, the *Kulturstadtjahr* programme included a number of minimalist art projects that provocatively (though just as creatively) challenged a bifurcated memory of Weimar and Buchenwald. In her installation *Mohn und Gedächtnis* ('Poppy and Memory') the artist Uwe Wrede pointed towards the historical link between the town and camp and also offered a meta-reflection on the work of memory itself by planting poppies along a section of the railway track that had brought

prisoners to Buchenwald. Rebecca Horn's *Konzert für Buchenwald*, staged in two parts across an underground tram depot and the Ettersberg palace, was a conceptual art installation that incorporated iconography and relics from the concentration camp such as a skip truck on rails and heaped layers of tree and paper ash.<sup>327</sup> Another inventive artistic comment on the town-camp connection was designed by Robin Minard, who electronically reproduced the tolling of the bell in the Ettersberg bell tower – itself formerly part of the GDR memorial – and played this at three points during the day so that it was audible across the town.<sup>328</sup> Though space does not allow for a fuller consideration of the respective aesthetic and discursive intentions behind these projects, it is clear enough from these short descriptions that the metaphorical 'Binom Weimar-Buchenwald' was a popular leitmotif across the various *Kulturstadtjahr* projects that handled this aspect of the town's history.

One of the first of the 'Buchenwald' projects to be inaugurated in 1999 was the so-called *Zeitschneise*, designed by the Berlin architect Walter Grunwald. It involved clearing and reopening a section of a centuries-old hunting track on the Ettersberg that linked the palace and the Buchenwald memorial, thereby drawing attention to the proximity of the respective sites to one other (the track was only around 1300m long). The Ettersberg palace, duchess Anna Amalia's 'muses court' ('Musenhof') where she had entertained renowned composers and writers – including, famously, Goethe and Schiller – certainly formed a marked contrast to the history of the concentration camp, as the official brochure produced by the Buchenwald memorial was at pains to point out. As it reminds the reader, the very path through the forest that Goethe often walked would later come to be known as *Blutstraße* amongst the prisoners who were forced to concrete it over to provide a road to the concentration camp. And the Ettersberg itself, described as being once the 'Ort geistvollen, höfischen Vergnügens', would later be seen as the 'Inbegriff des Grauens'.<sup>329</sup> Reporting on the inauguration of the 'Zeitschneise' in January that year, the local press played the same role that it did in Oranienburg, establishing a symbolic and linguistic canon that quickly

<sup>327</sup> See Rebecca Horn, *The colonies of bees undermining the moles' subversive effort through time: Concert for Buchenwald* (Zürich/Berlin/New York: Scalco, 2000).

<sup>328</sup> For a short retrospective piece summarising these and other projects in the *Kulturstadtjahr* programme dealing with Buchenwald, see Justus H. Ulbricht, 'Töne, Masken, Mohn und Gedächtnis', *Weimar Kultur Journal*, 9, 1 (2000), 10-12.

<sup>329</sup> *Zeitschneise: Der Ettersberg bei Weimar* (Weimar, 1999), unpaginated brochure. Archiv der Gedenkstätte Buchenwald (BWA).

normalized an otherwise potentially ambivalent picture of local identity. Headlines noted how the *Zeitschneise* captured the ‘Gleichzeitigkeit geschichtsträchtiger Orte’<sup>330</sup> in Weimar, and articles spoke of ‘die Kluft zwischen Schöpfertum und der Hölle’,<sup>331</sup> ‘das siamesische Zwillingsspaar Weimar und Buchenwald’,<sup>332</sup> and – bearing perhaps the closest resemblance to press discourse in Oranienburg – of the ‘Höhenflug und Absturz deutschen Geistes und deutscher Geschichte’.<sup>333</sup>

Neat though these rhetorical flourishes were, they nonetheless marginalized the post-1945 history of Buchenwald in their emphasis on the concentration camp. Of the eleven newspaper articles covering the *Zeitschneise* that I consulted, only one made reference to the Soviet camp, and this was in fact an article published almost two years prior to the inauguration – far closer, it should be noted, to the opening of the *Speziallager* museum at Buchenwald.<sup>334</sup> On this evidence, it seems that Buchenwald’s multiple pasts were increasingly collapsed together in the intervening period and more or less subsumed within the ‘concentration camp’ label by the time the *Zeitschneise* was inaugurated. Indeed, two other articles included maps of the route, which clearly showed it to pass the mass grave for victims of the *Speziallager*, yet the more complex series of associations this would suggest was not addressed in either.<sup>335</sup>

Though the ‘myth of ignorance’ may have been well and truly debunked in Weimar, the question of the relationship between the Nazi and Soviet camps at Buchenwald (and the place of *both* in local history in the *longue durée*) was not yet settled. Moreover, we may surmise that the local cultural ‘elite’ – that is, the *Kulturstadtjahr* organisers, local press and so on – did very much present concepts of local identity and civic governance in Weimar as antecedents of the ‘negative nationalism’ commonly attributed to Gerhard Schröder. As was intimated in an article on the *Zeitschneise* in the *Thüringer Allgemeine*, such an explicit engagement with the legacy of the Third Reich as this ‘träfe in Bonn im allgemeinen und im Bundesinnenministerium im besonderen auf eine, sagen wir:

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<sup>330</sup> M. Huth, ‘Von der Gleichzeitigkeit geschichtsträchtiger Orte’, *TA*, 23 Jan 1999.

<sup>331</sup> P.-. A. Fiedler, ‘Ein Weg des Erinnerns’, *TLZ*, 23 Jan 1999.

<sup>332</sup> H. Müller, ‘Die Nähe von Gut und Böse’, *TA*, 16 Jan 1999

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>334</sup> ‘“Zeitschneise” zwischen Ettersberg und Buchenwald’, *Allgemeiner Anzeiger*, 30 Apr 1997.

<sup>335</sup> See F. Quilitzsch, ‘Ein Weg des Erinnerns’, *TLZ*, 26 Apr 1997; Müller, ‘Die Nähe von Gut und Böse’. The map provided in the memorial site’s brochure, by contrast, did not mark the mass grave.

zurückhaltende Resonanz.<sup>336</sup> Local memory, if one believed the official rhetoric, did not so much reproduce a *dispositif* emanating in Berlin as pioneer one of its own.

Ultimately, efforts to construct local identity and memory around acknowledgement (as opposed to disavowal) of the Nazi past had become the norm in Weimar and Oranienburg by the turn of the millennium, even if the shape they took was not entirely agreed upon. Knigge and other memorial specialists evidently recognised the process that lay behind creating a culture of remembrance and accordingly treated 1999 as a significant milestone rather than an end point. In one interview Knigge indeed addressed ‘the question of finding an appropriate degree of commemoration’ (‘[d]ie Frage nach dem richtigen Maß [des Gedenkens]’).<sup>337</sup> The *Kulturstadtjahr*, as part of such a process, was for him a ‘Probierfeld’, not least as it entailed efforts at remembering and coming to terms with the Third Reich outside the walls of the memorial.<sup>338</sup> Individual exhibitions such as *Leben-Terror-Geist* also registered and commented upon the apparent beginnings of an institutionalised memory culture. In Oranienburg, the ultimate failure to realize the Hope Incision project did not signal a rejection of the confrontationalist approach to the Nazi past, but nor did it bear out claims of a consensus around confrontation found in the local press.

### ***Blind spots of local memory: the GDR***

As was intimated in the preceding section, the *Speziallager* and the GDR, not least GDR ideology as monumentalized at the *Nationale Mahn- und Gedenkstätten*, were often screened from view by municipal discourses that stressed the interrelatedness of positive and negative local cultural heritage, where National Socialism tended to stand in for negative history *pars pro toto*. In what follows I unpack how and why these blind spots have been constructed, and

<sup>336</sup> H. Goldberg, ‘Die Stimmen der Stille’, *TA*, 26 Apr 1997.

<sup>337</sup> ‘Buchenwald und das Kulturstadtjahr’, 11.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*

in doing so am able to return to the question of normalized constructions of cultural memory, identity and civic governance that runs through this thesis. Is there a ‘disciplinary regime’ at work in the cumulative efforts of a local cultural and heritage apparatus to inculcate particular historical narratives of the double past, and if so is it different from an equivalent regime operating at national or regional level? Are there, further to this, differences between the two localities? I return firstly to the *Kulturstadtjahr* exhibitions, critiquing the *Doppelausstellung* and the temporary exhibition *Leben-Terror-Geist*, and then consider how the double past is handled in Weimar’s municipal museum. The section closes with an exploration of how the *Speziallager* and the GDR are commemorated (or, more accurately, not commemorated) in Oranienburg. It follows on from the coverage of the Hope Incision debates in section one and picks up on the emergent – albeit fragile – figurative tropes that were increasingly being employed to integrate Sachsenhausen into a narrative of local history. As we will see by exploring how the memorial’s various historical phases featured in coverage of the 2001 *Preußenjahr*, the emphasis placed on the (still fractious) town-camp juxtaposition often obscured other comparisons, for instance those between the Nazi and Soviet camps, from view.

It is highly revealing that Weimar’s cultural elite linked the manifold projects dealing with Buchenwald in 1999 exclusively to finding the right proportions for commemorating ‘*victims of the Nazi regime*’ (italics RB).<sup>339</sup> Although it was not envisaged as part of the *Kulturstadtjahr* programme, the final exhibition of the ‘Neugestaltung’ dealing with the history of the *Nationale Mahn- und Gedenkstätte Buchenwald* did admittedly open in October (see chapter one), so the memorial’s pre-history in the GDR was by no means absent from this panorama. The fact that the opening signalled a formal ‘end’ to the memorial’s redesign, however, will certainly have played a role in how Buchenwald’s post-1945 history was expected to figure in local memory discourse in future. Combined with the overriding emphasis this discourse placed on Weimar’s implication in the rise of National Socialism, the completion of the ‘Neugestaltung’ only compounded a sense of a definitive break with GDR antifascism. Rather than being regarded as an *object* of local memory after 1990, the outdated antifascist paradigm was pushed to the fringes of the

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<sup>339</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

*Kulturstadtjahr* programme and presented only peripherally as a negative point of reference. Alongside the Weimar-Buchenwald comparison, a binary distinction began to emerge between the instrumentalised commemoration practiced in the GDR and the post-unification reorientation of the memorial around scientific principles of objectivity and differentiation. Press reportage in the run up to 1999 appeared to confirm this impression, observing flippantly that reunification presented a belated opportunity for the memorial ‘ideologiefrei mit historischen Fakten umzugehen’.<sup>340</sup>

In order to trace the processes by which the GDR was pushed out of municipal discourse on Buchenwald, I wish to return first of all to the *Doppelausstellung* in the memorial and the Schillermuseum. The accompanying exhibition catalogue in particular embodied the duality of the relationship between town and camp. Its designers elected to bind the sections dealing with each discrete exhibition back to back, and print both exhibitions titles on the respective cover pages. Furthermore, translucent sheets of paper onto which quotes from Goethe and recollections of Buchenwald survivors had been printed were interleaved between pages displaying Goethe’s artwork. Thus the quotations over-layering the sketches and paintings differed depending on the catalogue one was reading. As Chloe Paver has pointed out, the catalogue design aimed to convey a sense of the “double-sidedness’ of Weimar’s memory’.<sup>341</sup> She argues that though this (and other similar examples of symbolic and rhetorical figuration around 1999) certainly addressed the interrelationship between the poles of ‘Goethe’ and ‘Buchenwald’, it had the unintended effect of eliding the complex layers contained within each signifier.<sup>342</sup>

A closer look at the exhibition catalogue does not entirely confirm this. Volkhard Knigge’s contribution, which provides a cultural history of the ‘Goethe-Oak’ at Buchenwald does in fact trace its reception across the political ruptures of 1933, 1945, and 1989.<sup>343</sup> The reader in this case learns that the tree is a mutable symbol and invested with new meaning at different historical junctures. Indeed, the tree identified by Eckermann in his recollections of a visit

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<sup>340</sup> *Wochenpost*, 30.5.1997.

<sup>341</sup> Chloe Paver, “Wenn man im Falle Weimar vom “Osten” sprechen darf...’: Memory and Place in the New Bundesländer’, *Oxford German Studies*, 38, 3 (2009), 310-320 (p. 314).

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 316.

<sup>343</sup> See Knigge, “...sondern was die Seele gesehen hat.” Die Goethe-Eiche. Eine Überlieferung’, in *Vom Antlitz zur Maske*, ed. by Knigge and Seifert, pp. 64-68.

to the Ettersberg with Goethe in 1827 turns out to be located outside the concentration camp grounds, and so is evidently not the same tree Buchenwald prisoners later refer to as the ‘Goethe Oak’. Knigge also points to the role it played in the GDR as a symbol of international solidarity amongst the prisoners, fusing the legacy of antifascist resistance to that of Weimar Classicism. Finally, by remarking on a layer of symbolism – the tree as ‘[ein] Symbol des Trostes, der Würde, der Selbstbehauptung und der Anklage’<sup>344</sup> – marginalized by the GDR narrative, Knigge implicitly points to the ‘Goethe-Oak’s’ embedment within a post-unification constellation of memory. In certain places at least, the catalogue’s narrative differentiates *within* as well as between the poles of the Goethe/Buchenwald binary.

Even so, Paver’s claim that the GDR is not addressed on its own terms in local memory is justifiable.<sup>345</sup> For all its efforts to differentiate between historical phases, the catalogue really only addresses GDR *memory*, and is, broadly speaking, dismissive of it. Though hardly guilty of the ‘Selbstgenugsamkeit’ that Knigge had cautioned against, the catalogue does come close to mirroring itself in a dichotomy of its own making, namely the opposition of ideologically instrumentalised memory in the GDR and a pluralistic, objective commemorative paradigm in post-unification Weimar. To a certain extent then, the politics of negation that was perceptible in Buchenwald’s redesign (and explored in chapter one) carried over into local memory at the turn of the millennium. One could admittedly raise few objections to the new form of cultural memory that was crystallizing in Weimar at this point. The rationale behind it however, which consisted of invoking the negative example of GDR memory, did raise a suspicion that remembrance was coming to be seen in normative terms here too, just as it was at federal level. Whereas the Schröder administration had rooted ‘negative nationalism’ at the heart of German identity, there was a creeping sense that cultural memory in Weimar was beginning to orientate itself around a form of negative localism.

Other exhibitions shown at Buchenwald in 1999 demonstrated a more reflexive awareness of their position within the memory landscape that was beginning to crystallise in the *Kulturstadtjahr*. The temporary exhibition, *Leben-Terror-Geist*, in fact built reflexivity into its design and layout. I have described

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<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>345</sup> Paver, ‘Memory and Place in the New Bundesländer’, p. 316.

above how the exhibition commented upon Weimar-Buchenwald connections, both intellectual and actual. But of course, by reasserting such links, it was effectively responding to the rigidly antifascist GDR narrative of Buchenwald that had previously obscured them. As one of the curators, Axel Doßmann, remarked, re-connecting the hitherto separate legacies of town and camp formed part of the broader agenda of the *Kulturstadtjahr*, given that it informed not just the *Leben-Terror-Geist* exhibition but also the *Doppelausstellung*; in this sense it explicitly ‘responded to’ (‘reagiert[e] auf’) the GDR narrative.<sup>346</sup> Equally, where survivors had typically been reduced to symbols (of Nazi brutality, communist resistance and so on) in official memory in the GDR, in the temporary exhibition visitors were introduced to exhibits relating predominantly to prisoners’ lives before Buchenwald as well as afterwards, when living in the shadow of their experiences in the camp. The corollary of deconstructing this homogenizing identity label was to gesture towards multiple identities and authenticities, and thereby also to multiple histories beyond the flattened out poles of past and present.

In a final departure from the museology of the *Nationale Mahn- und Gedenkstätte*, the temporary exhibition showed a degree of reflexivity in relation to present-day assumptions about and constructions of ‘collective memory’. As Doßmann explained, it explicitly interrogated the Halbwachsian concept of socially constructed memory by presenting, in visual terms, a disjuncture between the ‘authentic’ quality assigned to objects of memory and the practical, geopolitical and emotional contexts that determined their cultural visibility (or indeed invisibility). Thus, compartments within certain boxes contained exhibition objects whereas others were empty, indicating where either reluctance on the part of survivors to part with ‘authentic’ relics, difficulties transporting them out of war-torn areas such as the Balkans, or other factors had prevented their inclusion in the museum space.<sup>347</sup> Certainly, by utilising a biographical approach and treating the concept of ‘collective memory’ reflexively, even dismissively, *Leben-Terror-Geist* invited critical engagement with – rather than straightforward condemnation of – historical heuristics such as antifascism. Yet

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<sup>346</sup> A. Doßmann, ‘Vereint in der Differenz: Zur Ausstellung “Leben-Terror-Geist. Kz Buchenwald: Porträts von Künstlern und Intellektuellen”’ in *Kontexte und Kulturen des Erinnerns: Maurice Halbwachs und das Paradigma des kollektiven Gedächtnisses*, ed. by Gerald Echterhoff and Martin Saar (Konstanz: UvK Verlag, 2002), pp. 181-201 (p. 190).

<sup>347</sup> Doßmann, ‘Vereint in der Differenz’, p. 187.

by the same token, it only handled the camp and town's communist past indirectly, through the original lens of the concentration camp, much like the other Buchenwald projects included in the 'Weimar 1999' programme. Considering that 1999 was, amongst other things, the 50-year anniversary of the GDR's creation and 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its demise, the East German's state's relative invisibility during the *Kulturstadtjahr* was striking.

How did the *Speziallager* figure in municipal memory discourse at this point? Bill Niven has argued recently that comparisons between Weimar and Buchenwald, which the SED drew in order to fuse the town's classical legacy to that of antifascist resistance, have since 1990 given way to the contested issue of comparing the concentration camp and special camp.<sup>348</sup> Although this was certainly the case in the early 1990s, and is a trend that largely continues at national level, I would contend that, in *local* memory culture, comparisons between the respective camps have been steadily ceding ground to renewed efforts at framing Buchenwald within a micro-history of Weimar. An interesting example of both comparisons can be found in Weimar's Municipal Museum (*Stadtmuseum*), where a permanent exhibition dealing with the History of Weimar from the first local settlements up to the town upon German reunification in 1990 is on display. The fact that it commented upon Buchenwald's double past at all separated it from many of the other Buchenwald projects that opened in 1999, though it did also break from the municipal narrative in its somewhat outdated dramatization of the connection between camp and town. For these reasons it bears looking at in more detail, as it indicates that the established comparisons and figuration underlying local memory norms were not quite ubiquitous in addition to providing certain clues as to why this might be so.

The museum building, constructed between 1780 and 1803, is named after its commissioner Friedrich Justin Bertuch (1747-1822), a prominent writer, publisher and businessman of the time. In 1903 it came under municipal administration, and has since 1954 housed the Municipal Museum. Though the current museum has understandably tailored the permanent exhibition around the particular strengths of the collection, which largely relate to 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century clothing, Bertuch's life and work, the National Assembly of 1919 and the

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<sup>348</sup> See Bill Niven, 'The GDR, Weimar classicism and resistance at Buchenwald', *Témoigner entre histoire et mémoire*, 104 (2009), 175-190.

Weimar Republic, it nevertheless addresses the history of the town during the Third Reich and in the GDR. Given that this exhibition also dovetailed with the *Kulturstadtjahr* – it opened in 1999 after lengthy restoration work lasting a decade – the present concept offers a window onto the process by which publicly remembering the double past was institutionalised on a local level in the course of the 1990s. Moreover, it points to some of the blind spots and implicit assumptions behind the dual ‘Weimar-Buchenwald’ narrative whose emergence in and around 1999 I have charted above.<sup>349</sup>

It is clear that the museum’s somewhat more sparse collections relating to the town’s post-1933 history present certain narratological obstacles, and the period 1933-1945 is indeed depicted for the most part through text, photos, and scale models. Likewise, the section of the exhibition dealing with the GDR is conspicuously short, raising the question of whether the Municipal Museum can possibly complement other institutions in the town’s densely populated landscape of museums of contemporary history. Could the museum’s comparative strengths in exhibiting especially 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century local history, combined with the presence of other sites handling more recent developments, have led to a disavowal of overt responsibility for the years between 1933 and 1989? On the other hand, is it fair to expect the Municipal Museum to devote a level of attention to this period that is disproportionate to its place in the collections, particularly when foregrounding the Third Reich in a longer chronology of local history could have resuscitated the narrative of a German *Sonderweg*? In the context of the museum’s reopening during the *Kulturstadtjahr*, these questions of institutional profiling and embedment within a broader museum landscape, and how they relate to the work of local institutions in either reproducing or challenging the emergent memory paradigm of the ‘Binom Weimar-Buchenwald’, become all the more acute.

In a number of respects the permanent exhibition in the Municipal Museum departed from the underlying narrative behind the *Kulturstadtjahr* exhibitions that addressed Buchenwald. The layout of the former did not lend itself to unpacking the question of local mobilisation in support of National Socialism as deftly as the interwoven structure of the *Doppelausstellung* did, for

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<sup>349</sup> For an overview of the museum’s history, see <http://stadtmuseum.weimar.de> [last accessed 29 July 2013]. Analysis and observations in the following section are based on a visit undertaken on 4 Mar 2012. Field notes in the author’s possession.

instance. Whilst the thrust of the exhibition swap between the memorial and the Schillermuseum had been to provide an integrated account of the dual humanistic and inhumane legacies associated with Weimar, the Municipal Museum was prone to separating out the two. In one fascinating but problematic part of the exhibition handling the rise of National Socialism, a scale model of the Weimar Gauforum is displayed in an exhibition cabinet above a scale model of the area prior to its construction. This is a visually compelling way of demonstrating the militarization and careful regimentalisation of life under National Socialism, apparent here in the erasure of parks and green spaces in favour of imposing marching grounds. Yet the visual metaphor of concreting over local life and traditions arguably overstates the imposition of National Socialism on Weimar whilst giving short shrift to local support for it. Furthermore, the opposition constructed here supposes that locals were automatically and intrinsically better disposed towards a naturalised, 'green' Weimar, suggesting an underlying, unspoilt tradition that could be invoked as a rejection of Nazism.

Where the Municipal Museum addresses the double past, however, the issue of accommodation with dictatorial regimes is handled sensitively. One particular example tackles not only the issue of this initial moral culpability for National Socialism but also its relationship to post-war justice and crimes committed against Germans. This is the biography of the local artist Bartold Aspendorf, which appears in a section of the permanent exhibition entitled 'Tod im Speziallager'. Aspendorf had been interned in the *Speziallager* at Buchenwald and died there in 1946, and so his biography speaks on one level to the tragedy that befell those Germans interned by the Soviets under shockingly inhumane conditions and without due process. Yet the exhibit accompanying Aspendorf's biography is one of his paintings, *Ecce Homo*, which captures the anxiety and unease with which the rise of the Nazis was greeted locally, at least in certain quarters. The essential tragedy of Aspendorf's death can be approximated only through the frame of the earlier National Socialist dictatorship, lending a sense of historical causality and differentiation to the moment of viewing the painting. Additionally, this is the final exhibit the visitor reaches – followed only by a very brief institutional history of the museum to close the exhibition – and is displayed in a narrow and dimly lit corridor. As such it must by necessity be viewed from close up, enhancing the reflective (and subjective) quality of

encountering it. As this particularly effective museological arrangement and staging demonstrates, the institutional context of a local history museum thus holds distinct potential for addressing the double past in a balanced manner.

Moving now to Oranienburg, I wish to return to the question of the ‘normative force’ exerted by representations of the memorial that are popularised by municipal and press discourse. Early 2001, as well as seeing the debates surrounding the *Hoffnungsschneise* intensify, also marked the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Prussian prince to be crowned king. To coincide with ‘Preußenjahr’ in Brandenburg, a new exhibition documenting Oranienburg’s history was opened in the palace museum. Newspaper coverage of the event lavished praise upon the fine baroque exhibits on display, but fell back upon the familiar trope of National Socialism as Prussia’s ‘dark chapter’ when explaining Sachsenhausen’s place in the town’s history. The following, taken from the *Märkische Allgemeine Zeitung*, is typical of this reflex:

‘Dass Oranienburg nicht nur Sinnbild für fürstliche Lebensfreude und Pflege der Musen war, sondern in der NS-Zeit mit dem nahe gelegenen Konzentrationslager Sachsenhausen auch blutbefleckter Ort schlimmster Verbrechen, wird im Schlosshof auf Schautafeln deutlich. Für Oranienburgs Bürgermeister Hans-Joachim Laesicke ist es wichtig, die Höhenflüge und die schwarzen Schatten in der Geschichte der Stadt zu zeigen. Die Eröffnung des Schlosses als Museum rücke nun den ersten Barockpalast ins Bewusstsein, den sich Brandenburg nach dem dreißigjährigen Krieg leistete.’<sup>350</sup>

This extract, which comes at the very end of the article (it is the last of ten paragraphs in total), presents the town’s baroque heritage as a counterweight to its National Socialist past, as implied by the juxtaposition of ‘Höhenflüge’ with the ‘schwarze[n] Schatten’ cast over Oranienburg by the Third Reich. Similarly, the act of metaphorically restoring the palace’s place in local memory can be read as a reassertion of positive Prussian history, and mirrors the use in another article of a quote from the director of the Prussian Palaces and Gardens Foundation, who praises the courage it has taken ‘aus der Kaserne [the palace

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<sup>350</sup> H. Caspar, ‘Ausstellung für die Ewigkeit’, *Märkische Allgemeine Zeitung*, 17 Jan 2001.

housed the SS-Totenkopfwachverband Brandenburg prior to 1936, RB] wieder ein Schloss zu machen.<sup>351</sup> Finally, a third article refers to National Socialism in a similar vein as ‘[einen] düstersten Kapitel[...]’ of German history that ‘ein Regionalmuseum [sich] auch...zu widmet [hat]’. Once again, the reference is made towards the end of the article, this time in the penultimate paragraph.<sup>352</sup> Certainly the ‘dialectic of normality’ referred to in the introduction to this chapter appears to inform this method of acknowledging the town’s Nazi past almost as if a disclaimer. More to the point, though, it is a localised ‘dialectic of normality’, propelled not by a sense of national accountability for the Nazi past but the specific local history of Prussian tolerance and the legacy of the concentration camp.

An additional local impulse was clearly provided by the acute problem of right-wing extremism in Brandenburg. In the months surrounding the Berlin symposium debating Libeskind’s project, this ongoing issue occupied many of the headlines, especially following an arson attack on a Jewish cemetery in Potsdam in early January. This in particular precipitated a flood of articles addressing the ‘Kampf...gegen Rechtsextremismus’<sup>353</sup> and noting interior minister Jörg Schönbohm’s promise to combat the right-wing scene with great determination.<sup>354</sup> The proposal by education minister Steffen Reiche that all schools in Brandenburg hold an ‘Extra-Stunde’ dealing with the issues of anti-Semitism and right-wing extremism was also picked up upon by the press,<sup>355</sup> as was a later podium discussion that coincided with the ‘nationalen Tag zur Überwindung von Rassismus’.<sup>356</sup> Furthermore, this article stresses that condemnation of the rise in extremism was universal; the podium participants ‘waren sich darin einig, dass...eine Sensibilisierung in Bezug auf das Thema Rechtsextremismus in der Bevölkerung stattgefunden habe.’<sup>357</sup> Together, these articles point to a local identification with tolerant, cosmopolitan values, in turn providing a clue as to why the ‘dialectic of normality’ took the form it did in

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<sup>351</sup> ‘Künst erster Güte im Schloss’, *Oranienburger Generalanzeiger*, 17 Jan 2001. The quote also appears in M. Voigt, ‘Oranienburg: Wertvolle Exponate’, *Oranienburger Generalanzeiger*, 17 Jan 2001.

<sup>352</sup> ‘Wo Preußens Wiege stand’, *Oranienburger Generalanzeiger*, 17 Jan 2001.

<sup>353</sup> ‘Systematische Verunsicherung’, *Oranienburger Generalanzeiger*, 9 Jan 2001.

<sup>354</sup> See ‘Anschlag auf jüdischen Friedhof’, *Oranienburger Generalanzeiger*, 9 Jan 2001; also *Ibid.*, *Märkische Allgemeine*, 9 Jan 2001.

<sup>355</sup> ‘Entsetzen über Brandanschlag’, *Märkische Allgemeine Zeitung*, 9 Jan 2001.

<sup>356</sup> C. Braun, ‘Der “irrationale Wahn”’, *Oranienburger Generalanzeiger*, 21 Mar 2001.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 Mar 2001.

Oranienburg at this point. Sachsenhausen served in these particular local identity constructions as a historical symbol of the very values the town professed to stand against, but in being used to shore up expressions of a local moral conscience it was divested of its own complex and multi-faceted past.

Indeed, though 2001 represented a significant milestone in the memorialization of Sachsenhausen's communist past, local press coverage of the annual commemorative ceremony marking the closure of the *Speziallager* and the inauguration of the museum several months later was surprisingly low-key. In the *Märkische Allgemeine*, for instance, a report on the commemorative ceremony was placed fairly inconspicuously on page sixteen of the 3 September edition under the title 'Keine Opfer zweiter Klasse'.<sup>358</sup> This was at once a reference to and dismissal of the accusation that *Speziallager* victims were not afforded the same recognition as victims of National Socialist crimes. Towards the end of the article however it was noted that several survivors of the special camp were retroactively rehabilitated by the Russian government, including the president of the ALS Gisela Gneist ('[sie] wurden von jeder Schuld freigesprochen').<sup>359</sup> The effect was to underline the unqualified victimhood of Gneist and others as well as the arbitrary grounds for imprisonment that had been characteristic of the special camps. Yet accompanying this article on the page was another, smaller piece addressing an exhibition on the *Inspektion der Konzentrationslager* (IKL) displayed in the former administrative headquarters of the concentration camp.<sup>360</sup> Such an arrangement can hardly have been coincidental, and moreover reminded readers of Sachsenhausen's initial prominent place in the network of National Socialist camps (the concentration camps fell under the jurisdiction of the IKL until 1942). By extension, placing the two articles together drew a qualitative distinction between outright perpetrators such as those who administered the concentration camps and other Germans who had – however one judged initial accommodation with the National Socialist regime, and whether or not one regarded it as deserved – been unlawfully imprisoned in the special camps. Reportage thus made a case for differentiated commemoration, but did not really afford the thorny issue of the double past much coverage in the first place.

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<sup>358</sup> K. Grunow, 'Keine Opfer zweiter Klasse', *MAZ*, 3 Sept 2001.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>360</sup> 'Die Biografien der Täter', *MAZ*, 3 Sept 2001.

Where stories concerning the *Speziallager* in 2001 were positioned more prominently in local newspapers, reportage continued to follow the principle of differentiation. In the *Oranienburger Generalanzeiger*, an article covering the same commemorative ceremony openly criticised a member of the ALS delegation who was accused of having ‘left aside’ (‘beiseitelassen’) the differences between deliberate murder of concentration camp inmates and deaths as a result of starvation and disease in the special camps. By contrast, the article detailed Günter Morsch’s rejoinder to the ALS’s criticisms of the memorial at length.<sup>361</sup> When the *Speziallager* museum was opened in December that year, it was Morsch’s stance that was adopted by the local press once more. In this case reportage cited the ‘relativisieren-bagatellisieren’ couplet (which was also used, incidentally, by Morsch in his inauguration speech).<sup>362</sup> There could be few objections to the memory narrative advocated in the pages of the local press. In the context of this discussion, however, the casualness with which the case for differentiation was made suggested that the main objects of comparison in the local sphere remained the concentration camp and town.

### ***(Counter-) cultures of remembrance in Weimar and Oranienburg***

Much of this chapter so far has highlighted specific local discursive dynamics, pointing to the ways in which established local – usually municipal – paradigms have normalized and naturalized particular terms of reference to the double past. In the third section of the chapter I turn from the monolithic municipal discourse to other local memory activists, such as civic initiatives and local branches of survivors’ organisations. Broadening the focus to include these groups allows for a fuller investigation of the dynamic produced by the *dispositifs* I have identified above. Do they produce counter-narratives of memory, or do such alternative interpretations of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen owe their existence to other traditions outside of these complexes? This additionally sheds light on the

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<sup>361</sup> ‘Gedenken an Opfer’, *OGA*, 3 Sept 2001, p. 2.

<sup>362</sup> ‘Nach 50 Jahren Opfer geehrt’, *MAZ*, 10 Dec 2001, p. 15.

question of whether local memory is relational and centrifugal or whether it is in fact polycentric, clustered around several different nuclei. Responses to the controversial commemorative speeches held at Buchenwald by Hermann Schäfer and at Sachsenhausen by Jörg Schönbohm in 2006 (see thesis introduction) form the springboard for discussion here, and I will show that, in both cases, the Holocaust-centred memory paradigm established during the 1990s was forcefully reasserted. In both Weimar and Oranienburg however, this continuity owed to specific local contexts and was effected through by different means. Having demonstrated this, I will then analyze a range of local civic groups, exploring how (if at all) they challenge established local cultures of remembrance.

In Oranienburg, response to Jörg Schönbohm's speech in local newspapers differed quite considerably from the tone of press reportage at regional level, which as I explain in the following chapter appeared to implicitly endorse his conflation of the concentration camp and the *Speziallager*. This was a neat illustration of how key junctures in public commemoration of the double past could be negotiated disparately across different public spheres. Indeed, by the time Schönbohm's remarks had been recognised as potentially incendiary, articles in local newspapers had gone to significant lengths to avoid fanning the flames of a scandal in waiting over the alignment of German commemorative culture. They mobilized not in defence of Schönbohm himself, but in defence of an existing memory paradigm. As one reporter pointed out, '[d]em "doppelten Schmerz" [i.e. the double past, RB] wird die Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen schon seit Jahren gerecht'.<sup>363</sup> Likewise, the same author insisted in an accompanying opinion piece that '[Schönbohm's] unsensible Gleichstellung... auch deswegen unnötig [ist], weil der Opfer nach 1945 durchaus gedacht wird', citing the *Speziallager* museum and the separate commemorative day on August 16 for the victims of the Soviet camp as evidence of this.<sup>364</sup>

When the scandal initially broke, Schönbohm had unsurprisingly been criticised strongly by the speaker of the *Internationales Sachsenhausen Komitee*, Hans Rentmeister, who was cited in the local press too. Yet when, several weeks later, it was discovered than Rentmeister had formerly worked for the *Stasi*, the local press once again played down the episode. The paradox of Rentmeister's work for the ISK and role in a central mechanism of the GDR surveillance

<sup>363</sup> S. Breiding, "'Föllerer und Mörder'", *Märkische Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27 Apr 2006, p. 3.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Unsensibel', *Märkische Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27 Apr 2006, p. 4.

apparatus could quite easily have brought the entire victims' organisation into disrepute, and by extension the Brandenburg Memorial Foundation, with whom the ISK cooperated. Indeed, the *Speziallager* lobby did claim that the revelations compromised the memorial site directorate, but local reportage for its part leapt to the defence of Günter Morsch and others. It focused primarily on the support shown for Morsch by Brandenburg's Minister for Culture Johanna Wanka.<sup>365</sup> Other articles restated the validity of the criticism Rentmeister initially levelled at Schönbohm, despite Rentmeister himself having been undermined by the information that had come to light about his past.<sup>366</sup> Together, the immediate moves to dismiss the challenge mounted by victims of communism and the placative tone of the articles suggest a perception of Sachsenhausen that remained rooted in a Holocaust-centred national memory discourse.

That being said, evidence of a specifically local motivation behind this principled support for differentiated commemoration was also visible in the local press. In the initial reports that neglect to mention Schönbohm's divisive comments, the passing down of a *Vermächtnis* drawn up by the various concentration camp survivors' associations is foregrounded ahead of the scandal surrounding Schönbohm himself. The *Vermächtnis* and its explicit call to preserve peace and combat anti-Semitism is evidently considered all the more important in light of recent right-wing attacks on migrant Germans in Brandenburg. The following appears in the *Oranienburger Generalanzeiger*, for example:

‘Besonders der immer noch grassierende Rassismus in Europa sowie Kriege und Gewalt in der Welt hätten das [Internationale Sachsenhausen] Komitee dazu bewogen, dieses Vermächtnis auszuarbeiten.

Dabei seien die jüngsten Ereignisse in Brandenburg eine Bestätigung der Dringlichkeit dieser Aufgabe gewesen.<sup>367</sup>

Sachsenhausen is thus quite clearly aligned with the political exigencies of the present in Brandenburg; the ‘urgency’ (‘Dringlichkeit’) of preserving

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<sup>365</sup> ‘Wanka verteidigt Gedenkstätten-Chef’, *Märkische Allgemeine Zeitung*, 12 May 2006, p. 6.

<sup>366</sup> S. Breidling, ‘Gerangel um Gedenken’, *Märkische Allgemeine Zeitung*, 9 May 2006; F. Herweg, ‘Rentmeister tritt zurück’, *Märkische Allgemeine Zeitung*, 9 May 2006, p. 14.

<sup>367</sup> M. Gansewig, ‘Gedankliches Erbe’, *Oranienburger Generalanzeiger*, 24 Apr 2006.

memory of the camp amongst younger generations is felt most acutely when evidence of right-wing extremism is also on the rise. Criticism of Schönbohm too appears to have had a local trigger, in this instance the polemical attempt of the DVU to honour post-1945 victims at Sachsenhausen on Holocaust Remembrance Day in 2005, which had made plainly clear that relativisation of Nazi crimes remained deeply controversial. As an article in the *Märkische Allgemeine* concludes: ‘der Minister [hätte dabei] gewarnt sein müssen’.<sup>368</sup>

In Weimar, meanwhile, the SPD mayor Stefan Wolf had been one of the more outspoken critics of Hermann Schäfer following his ‘Gedächtnis Buchenwald’ speech, and had also made a point of apologising personally to the survivors who had been sitting in the audience. Whilst the LAG Buchenwald-Dora e. V. could with good reason call into question the stance of the federal government towards the Nazi past in the wake of Schäfer’s remarks (see chapter five), Wolf’s actions were calculated to make clear that the commitment to remember the Holocaust was taken seriously at municipal level. Not that this was necessarily in doubt in the first place. As the opening section of this chapter has reconstructed in some detail, a local memory paradigm began to be constructed around Weimar’s intertwined legacies of Classicism and National Socialist barbarity from the early 1990s onwards, and so in many respects Wolf was merely reaffirming long-standing traditions of avowing the town’s responsibility for brown-collar crimes. Around a year later Wolf then acted as signatory for a symbolic agreement between the LAG and the municipality to pass on the legacy of the concentration camp survivors to future generations. The agreement, published in the LAG’s newsletter *Die Glocke vom Ettersberg*, is an interesting example of the complex local-national-global interplay at work in the dynamic of Buchenwald memory and how this resolves itself in the context of municipal discourse. As such, it requires closer attention.

Effectively the agreement committed the town to carry on the work of the survivors and safeguard memory of National Socialist crimes. It took the form of an initial appeal to municipal officials by the survivors, who asked ‘wer spricht und kämpft für uns, wenn wir nicht mehr sind?’, and a declaration in response from the town promising to take up the survivors’ call.<sup>369</sup> There were noticeable

<sup>368</sup> Breiding, “Fölterter und Mörder”

<sup>369</sup> ‘70. Jahrestag der Errichtung des KZ-Buchenwald: Erinnerung leben und Verantwortung übernehmen’, *Die Glocke vom Ettersberg*, 188, 4 (2007), 1-2 (quote p. 1).

similarities, both in the language of the agreement and its several references to the imminent disappearance of the generation of survivors and eyewitnesses of National Socialist barbarity, to the earlier *Vermächtnis*; both sought to enlist popular engagement with the past in the long-term. The crucial difference however was the global civic space the survivors were implicitly addressing in the *Vermächtnis* as opposed to the specifically local agreement envisioned by Weimar and the LAG. Yet as I wish to illustrate here, the town's pledge spoke implicitly to national and trans-national constituencies as well as to a local audience. Thus local discourse, or more accurately *municipal* discourse – it was, it should be pointed out, the town's official 'Vertreterinnen und Vertreter' to whom the survivors directed their plea, and Wolf who spoke on behalf of Weimar – appeared to both appropriate and inflect the official federal position on the Nazi past at the time.

First of all, the pledge expressed the town's solidarity with the truly global network of former prisoners belonging to the survivors' association. Bertrand Herz, president of the Internationales Komitee Buchenwald-Dora und Kommandos (IKBD), co-signed the formal agreement along with Stefan Wolf, symbolizing Weimar's bond with a collective of survivors drawn from many different nations in their common repudiation of 'nationalsozialistisches Gedankengut, Rassismus und Antisemitismus'.<sup>370</sup> The specific form of Holocaust memory this collective of survivors advocated was however one rooted in the legacy of resistance in the camps, as has been pointed out already in earlier chapters. Looking at the way the former Buchenwald prisoners recounted the history of the camp in their appeal at the start of the pledge, this is quite clear. Buchenwald was and is for them:

‘de[r] Ort, wo die Nazis erst Deutsche gefangen hielten, wo sie anschließend die Widerstandskämpfer und Gegner Nazideutschlands aus allen besetzten Ländern hin verschleppten, und schließlich auch Juden, Sinti und Roma, die ausgerottet werden sollten...’<sup>371</sup>

In this sequence, Buchenwald was first and foremost a site of resistance and opposition to National Socialism and only secondarily of persecution and

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<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

attempted elimination of racial ‘enemies’ of the Third Reich. Furthermore, the deliberate signing of the agreement to coincide with the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Buchenwald’s establishment in 1937 compounded a focus on the political (and particularly anti-communist) persecution characteristic of the pre-war years. Equally, the narrative allowed for a de-centering of 1945 and its attendant associations with the Holocaust, liberation, and the beginnings of a bipolar world order, all of which followed after the history of resistance, both chronologically and narratologically. There was no question, then, of inviting a ‘totalitarian’ reading of Buchenwald’s history that conflated events occurring there both prior to and after the caesura of 1945; post-war injustices did not for that matter figure at all in the rationale for committing to ‘eine neue Welt des Friedens und der Freiheit’,<sup>372</sup> as far as the camp survivors saw it. Thus the agreement, though it reflected the same basic assumptions about the singularity and centrality of the Holocaust in German memory culture held by the federal government, also foregrounded the international legacy of antifascist resistance.

That being said, the joint declaration did resemble the federal position in other important ways. Indeed, the municipality, in its response to the survivors’ appeal, left no doubt about its position on the value of remembrance as a tool of political and humanitarian education, saying:

‘Ihr Kommen bezeugt, wie unabdingbar die Ächtung der nationalsozialistischen Weltanschauung und ihrer aktuellen Ausprägungen in unserer Demokratie verankert sein und bleiben muss.’<sup>373</sup>

If one follows the logic of the declaration, the political nation is created and held together by its internalisation of the lessons of the Nazi past, and Buchenwald thus constitutes a vital agent of civic governance. This is, of course, the very same normative link between Germany’s dictatorial past and its democratic present and future that underpins the institutionalised model of commemoration I subject to closer scrutiny in this thesis. As analysis of the declaration suggests, it is a position that is reproduced to a certain extent by municipal patterns of remembrance.

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<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

As will already be apparent, however, local memory is not simply a microcosm of an institutionalised memory dynamic. The relative novelty of a formal declaration issued jointly by municipality and survivor organisation and its unique hybridity, drawing upon an international, antifascist as well as national, ‘official’ discourse, suggests there is more to the picture. Indeed, this uniqueness was not lost on the municipality, which announced the declaration thus:

‘[D]ie Stadt Weimar [setzt] heute ein Zeichen. Sie versichert, sich dafür einzusetzen, dass Ihr Vermächtnis [that of the concentration camp survivors, RB] zum Kern des demokratischen Selbstverständnisses und der politischen Kultur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland gehört und dauerhaft gehören wird.’<sup>374</sup>

Notably, all three of the overlapping local, national, and global frames are contained in this statement. It points towards both the pacific world order outlined in the *Vermächtnis* and a national political identity orientated around remembrance of the Nazi past. Beyond that, it conveys a sense of local exceptionality; Weimar is setting a precedent (‘ein Zeichen setzen’) by committing to uphold the values underlying these global and national polities. Consequently, we can register a striking degree of similarity between municipal discourse in Weimar and the equivalent official local narrative in Oranienburg. Admittedly the latter utilised a different framing device – the concept of ‘Toleranz’ – but it too countenanced local, national and universal models of remembrance. In Weimar the dialectic between national and transnational cultural frames on the one hand and the locally specific metaphor of the ‘Binom Weimar-Buchenwald’ on the other was explicitly acknowledged. In the agreement with the LAG it was noted:

‘Wir wissen, dass die Geschichte unserer Stadt mit der Entwicklung eines humanistischen Menschenbildes, der Etablierung von Demokratie, aber

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<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

auch der Zerstörung aller Menschlichkeit verbunden ist.<sup>375</sup>

With this the text fell back upon the by-now familiar dualism of culture and barbarity. The local memory paradigm established in the course of the 1990s had clearly endured into the 2000s more or less unchanged. However the joint declaration with the LAG also revealed a capacity for the paradigm to accommodate or gesture towards other memory narratives – in particular in this instance towards the resistance narrative propagated by several of the concentration camp survivors' associations.

To what extent, though, did the paradigmatic discourses in Weimar and Oranienburg feed into and inform the activities of other civic memory initiatives in the two towns? Did these groups also assimilate the respective 'double-sided' narratives, or did they instead challenge them? I wish to address these questions by looking firstly at local anti-extremist groups, namely the Förderverein für interkulturelle Bildung und Begegnung e.V (FiBB) in Oranienburg (but active in the wider Landkreis of Oberhavel), and the Bürgerbündnis gegen Rechtsextremismus (BgR) in Weimar. Secondly, I assess other antifascist positions, taking the Weimar branch of the Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes-Bund der Antifaschisten (VVN-BdA) as a case study. Lastly, I consider where in relation to local cultures of remembrance groups lobbying for commemoration of the *Speziallager* victims such as the *Initiativgruppe Buchenwald 1945-1950 e.V.* stand.

The FiBB has appropriated the motif of 'Toleranz', so central to the image that Oranienburg has sought to present of itself in recent years. Indeed, amongst the organisation's key principles are a commitment to combating all forms of racism, xenophobia and neo-Nazism, and support of 'democracy as a way of life' ('Demokratie als Lebensform').<sup>376</sup> As such, it promotes historical and humanitarian education combining reflection on the Oberhavel district's unique '[h]istorische Prägungen'<sup>377</sup> with democratic sensitization in the present. Interestingly, though the website marks out the legacy of two concentration

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<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>376</sup> See the 'Konzeptpapier' outlining the FiBB's objectives on the organisation's website: [http://www.fibb-oranienburg.de/sites/01\\_themen.html](http://www.fibb-oranienburg.de/sites/01_themen.html). Last accessed 24 May 2012; the argument that follows is based in large part on an interview with the organisation's treasurer, conducted by the author on 24 May 2012.

<sup>377</sup> [http://www.fibb-oranienburg.de/sites/01\\_themen.html](http://www.fibb-oranienburg.de/sites/01_themen.html). Last accessed 24 May 2012.

camps (KZ Oranienburg and later KZ Sachsenhausen) as the most important of these ‘historische Prägungen’, members of the FiBB point out that it in principle supports projects dealing with various different phases of local history, ranging from the pre-1933 period to the post-unification years. That said, they equally accept that the National Socialist past logically takes on an ‘übergeordnete Rolle’ given the organisation’s specific focus on right-wing extremism.<sup>378</sup> Thus a degree of overlap with both the municipality *and* the Sachsenhausen memorial is established. The FiBB’s agenda epitomises both Oranienburg’s *Leitbild* of ‘Toleranz’ and the memorial professionals’ principle of historical differentiation (labels of ‘übergeordnet’ and ‘untergeordnet’ were first used by the Historians’ Commission to establish parameters for dealing with the double past).

To a certain extent this parallels the position of the BgR in Weimar. It is also concerned primarily with combating neo-Nazism and right-wing extremism more generally, and was in fact established in 2000 precisely because of a series of incidents involving far right groups during the 1990s. As the group has a broad and heterogenous societal base, there are inevitably internal differences vis-à-vis the most appropriate means of resisting neo-Nazi gatherings.<sup>379</sup> Nonetheless, it is possible to glean an accurate picture of the attitudes of the elder cohort of the BgR who sit on its council. On this evidence the BgR, much like the FiBB, positions itself between the municipality and the memorial in Weimar’s memory landscape. The members of the council I spoke to were for instance unequivocal about the need for civic society to oppose right-wing extremism; they saw the murder of a number of Turkish-Germans (and one German with Greek roots) by members of a Thuringian National Socialist Underground (NSU) circle in the summer of 2011 as clear proof that the government was not doing enough either at local or national level.<sup>380</sup> Equally, whilst the BgR has a strong relationship with the memorial and the two jointly organise events such as discussions and presentations involving Buchenwald survivors, the council members regard the memorial as a mediator or ‘moralische Instanz’.<sup>381</sup> Thus, it can intervene in debates surrounding the politics of commemoration and provide an objective, scientific basis for discussion, and

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<sup>378</sup> Author’s interview, 24 May 2012.

<sup>379</sup> Author’s interview with council members of the BgR, 17 Apr 2012.

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*

indeed the BgR quite clearly supports the differentiated position the memorial has taken on contested questions such as the double past.<sup>382</sup>

Yet as we have seen, the organisation has its roots in the distinct local political constellation emerging in the 1990s, and at an individual level too several of the BgR's council members trace their memory activism back to circumstances they were confronted with in the GDR. Though they were aware that the history of the concentration camp presented at the NMG Buchenwald was 'überhöht', they recall the memorial nevertheless leaving a lasting impression upon them— one that, together with their exposure to the Allied films of Buchenwald upon liberation, convinced them of the heinousness of National Socialist ideology. Likewise, although they are critical of the GDR, and refer to it as 'Europe's largest prison', they have been profoundly influenced by the legacy of non-violent protest epitomized by the events of 1989.<sup>383</sup> Not only do certain GDR traditions therefore play an important role in the BgR's work; the council members actually view the post-unification municipal paradigm of the 'double-sided' town with a degree of scepticism. Indeed, they identify the turn to embrace a confrontational approach to the Nazi past primarily with the director of the Kulturstadt GmbH, Bernd Kaufmann, who had in their eyes virtually 'prescribed' this as part of the *Kulturstadtjahr*. The renovation work that 'Weimar 1999' set in train is also bemoaned in certain respects; restoration of certain National Socialist prestige buildings such as the Gauforum, for instance, has erased important and instructive traces of their pre-history during the Third Reich.<sup>384</sup> From such comments one can infer that the BgR's memory activism did not take its cue from the *Kulturstadtjahr*.

Traces of a distinctly East German commemorative discourse can be seen in the local VVN-BdA presence. In this case memory work at Buchenwald, though shaped to a certain extent by cooperation with the post-unification memorial, stands in a longer tradition of antifascist commemoration. A brief look at the biography of the speaker of the Weimar VVN-BdA association, Heinz Koch, confirms these inextricable links between post-war interaction with Buchenwald and attitudes towards the memorial since unification. Engaged in organised political resistance to Nazism towards the end of the war, Koch was

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<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*

involved in the work of local antifascist cells after 1945, and began to contribute to the pedagogical work of the NMG Buchenwald in the late 1960s, at a point when it was typically survivors who showed groups of visitors around the memorial. Koch has continued his efforts to document and communicate the history of the concentration camp as well as commemorate its victims since taking voluntary retirement shortly after unification – efforts that have frequently entailed close cooperation with the staff at Buchenwald.<sup>385</sup> An example of this is a *Wegweiser* detailing sites of persecution and resistance under National Socialism in Thuringia, which he edited; the historian and staff member at Buchenwald Harry Stein co-wrote the chapter on Weimar for this volume.<sup>386</sup>

In several other respects, however, Koch's interpretation of Buchenwald diverges from the position of the memorial professionals, and the position of the municipality too, for that matter. Rather, its emphases and blind spots resemble those of the LAG's narrative – hardly surprising, given that the LAG is also a member of the umbrella VVN-BdA organisation. For one thing, Koch sees the GDR memorial as an achievement of the survivors and not as a centrally controlled site of antifascist indoctrination. Besides noting the survivors' pedagogical responsibilities, he draws attention to the fact that approximately 100,000 of the NMG's visitors in a given year came from the FRG, thereby internationalising the memorial (and downplaying the more narrowly political equations implicit in its domestic role). Likewise, whereas memorial professionals have emphasized the 'Überformung' and specifically the minimization of built relics<sup>387</sup> that accompanied the construction of the NMG, Koch instead links topographical alterations to processes of de-nazification and de-militarization decreed by the Allies. It was, by this logic, the Potsdam Pact and not the ideological considerations of the SED that dictated the changes made to the landscape at Buchenwald.<sup>388</sup>

Koch's interpretation of the *Speziallager* and Buchenwald's double past is consistent with this view of the post-war period. He concentrates for the most

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<sup>385</sup> Author's interview with speaker for the Weimar association of the VVN-BdA Heinz Koch, 19 May 2012.

<sup>386</sup> Ursula Krause-Schmitt and Heinz Koch (eds.), *Heimatgeschichtlicher Wegweiser zu Stätten des Widerstands und der Verfolgung 1933-1945: Thüringen* (Frankfurt: Verlag für Akademische Schriften, 2003).

<sup>387</sup> Volkhard Knigge, 'Gedenkstätten und Museen', in *Verbrechen Erinnern: Die Auseinandersetzung mit Holocaust und Völkermord*, ed. by Knigge and Norbert Frei (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2002), pp. 378-389.

<sup>388</sup> Author's interview, 19 May 2012.

part on de-nazification procedures, and accordingly focuses on prisoners of the special camps such as teachers whose (moral if not criminal) complicity in the National Socialist state was relatively indisputable.<sup>389</sup> Notably, however, when referring to German society as a whole Koch rather projected guilt onto prominent industrialists and companies such as Krupp, Thyssen and IG Farben – the latter of course notoriously produced Zyklon B gas for use in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Conversely, he was dismissive of the exhibition produced by the Buchenwald memorial to address the Erfurt-based company Topf und Söhne, which had provided the SS with incineration ovens (I discuss the exhibition in chapter five); he regarded this as singling out a company for simply doing its job.<sup>390</sup> In effect, this argumentation enabled Koch to rather absolve the majority of Germans of responsibility for Nazi crimes whilst pinning the blame on large ‘Konzerne’, just as the antifascist GDR narrative had done by positing a link between National Socialism and capitalism.

Thus the local VVN-BdA, though hardly opposed to the hegemonic municipal narrative in Weimar, orientated itself around antifascist principles. For this group, it was the Buchenwald Oath rather than local post-unification developments that informed the interplay between identity, memory, and governance. In terms of the constellation of memory in Weimar, then, the VVN-BdA neither challenged nor was structured by a normative local discourse. If its memory work was posited as a challenge at all, then it was more appropriately read as a restatement of East German identity and commemorative traditions in opposition to a federal discourse that had marginalised them. This was most readily apparent in Koch’s criticism of ‘offizielle Politik’ under Kohl, Schröder and Merkel in relation to the recent German past. Attempts to discredit the narrative of the prisoners’ ‘self-liberation’ (*Selbstbefreiung*) at Buchenwald – one of the cornerstones of the SED’s commemorative politics – in particular trouble him. He is for instance clearly dismayed at the difficulties he has encountered in securing funding from the regional government for publications that reference the *Selbstbefreiung*.

Of the two towns under discussion here, local commemoration of the *Speziallager* is arguably most established and formalised in Weimar, where the Initiativgruppe has been active for well over two decades. In Oranienburg, by

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<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*

contrast, the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Lager Sachsenhausen 1945-1950 e.V (ALS), the *Speziallager* lobby, is based in Berlin – I therefore discuss this group in more detail in chapter four. The Initiativgruppe in Weimar, meanwhile, has provided a vital point of contact between survivors of the *Speziallager*, the memorial site staff, politicians, and official bodies tasked with working through the Soviet and East German past such as the Office of the Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic. Returning to the documentation of the annual *Buchenwaldtreffen* can helpfully provide a handle on the group's role in anchoring the *Speziallager* in local memory. Whilst I have already unpacked the symbolism of the on-site commemorative ceremonies in chapter two, I am interested here in the meetings (and the work of the Initiativgruppe more generally) as an expression of the memory dynamic in Weimar. It should be pointed out that the Initiativgruppe figures in a range of public spheres besides the more narrowly municipal and community-based frames I am addressing in this chapter.

Thus it is necessary to distinguish between the Initiativgruppe as a shaper of on-site rituals of commemoration, acting on behalf of victims and their relatives (analysed in chapter two); as a mobilising force in 'local' memory of the *Speziallager* (explored in greater detail below); and as part of broader regional and national lobby groups representing victims of communist injustice (see chapters four and five). Attended by a diverse range of lobbyists supporting victims of post-1945 repression, but organised by two residents of Weimar, Heidrun and Lothar Brauer, the *Buchenwaldtreffen* equally resist oversimplified characterisation as either 'national' or 'local' memory activism. Instead, they evidence once more the complex re-mediation of commemorative discourse that takes place when particular regional and national patterns of remembrance interact with local contexts. Moreover, as an event dedicated to Buchenwald's post-war past, the *Buchenwaldtreffen* provide an interesting counterpoint to other Holocaust-centred local narratives, not to mention municipal discourse in Weimar.

A testament to the complexity of the *Buchenwaldtreffen* as a memory text is that the Initiativgruppe, though it of course shared the other participating groups' fundamental concern for the victims of the *Speziallager*, articulated memory of post-war victimization in slightly different terms. Whereas the CDU

politicians speaking at the ceremonies typically drew implicit parallels between Buchenwald's pre- and post-1945 histories, and in doing so attempted to appeal to a wide electoral base by rejecting 'totalitarianism' in all its forms, the *Initiativgruppe* advocated a dual approach of documentation and historically differentiated commemoration. Indeed, it had from a very early stage ensured that members of the memorial participated in the *Buchenwaldtreffen* and relayed the current state of research into the special camps to attendees. Likewise, annual updates were provided throughout the course of the *Neugestaltung* to ensure that the process was conducted in a transparent manner. Perhaps most tellingly, the *Initiativgruppe* explicitly lent its support to the recommendations made by the Thuringian Historians' Commission, stating in 1992:

‘Die *Initiativgruppe* stimmt dem Vorschlag der Historikerkommission zu, daß sowohl an das nationalsozialistische Konzentrationslager als auch an das sowjetische Speziallager erinnert werden sollte, mit dem Schwerpunkt auf das Konzentrationslager. Ausgangspunkt der Zustimmung ist die Anerkennung der Tatsache, daß erst durch die Verbrechen des Nationalsozialismus und durch den Angriff auf andere Völker die Existenz des Speziallagers möglich wurde.’<sup>391</sup>

The *Initiativgruppe* therefore followed the memorial professionals in orientating commemoration around a chain of historical causality and accepted the primacy of the period 1937-1945 in the redesign. Even after the memorial foundation's decision to veto symbolic elements of the *Speziallager* museum had strained relations between the *Initiativgruppe* and the Buchenwald site staff, a podium discussion was convened in order to restore a measure of cooperation. Thereafter '[d]ie inhaltliche Zusammenarbeit zwischen den Mitarbeitern der Gedenkstätte und den Häftlingen und Angehörigen entwickelte sich positiv weiter'<sup>392</sup> in the words of the Brauers. Since then, the working relationship has gone from strength to strength, and the tradition of hearing annual reports from

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<sup>391</sup> 'Standpunkt der *Initiativgruppe* Buchenwald 1945 – 1950 e.V. zu den bisherigen Empfehlungen der Historikerkommission zur Neuorientierung der Gedenkstätte Buchenwald (1)', in *Speziallager 2 1945 – 1950: Rundbrief*, 4/5, ed. by Gedenkstätte Buchenwald (1992), 10-11 (p. 10).

<sup>392</sup> 'Vorbemerkungen', in *6. Buchenwaldtreffen*, ed. by *Initiativgruppe* Buchenwald 1945 – 1950 e.V. (Weimar, 1997), p. 1.

the memorial staff at the *Buchenwaldtreffen* was in fact continued until the very final meeting in 2010.

Besides the close cooperation between the memorial and *Initiativgruppe* that the *Buchenwaldtreffen* fostered, the annual meetings also consistently involved the municipality, represented by either the mayor or a member of the town council. Once again, this was not envisaged as a means of de-centering the National Socialist past in municipal discourse on the past, but rather of anchoring the *Speziallager* and communist crimes in official local Buchenwald memory alongside the concentration camp. It thus was wholly in keeping with an inclusive but differentiated model of remembrance when local councillor Dirk Hauburg, in his address at the 2007 *Buchenwaldtreffen*, recalled the joint declaration with the LAG Buchenwald-Dora signed that same year (see above) before restating the town's solidarity with the *Initiativgruppe* and the victims of the *Speziallager*.<sup>393</sup> The positions of the municipality and the *Initiativgruppe* vis-à-vis Buchenwald were far from antagonistic, even if they differed in their respective priorities.

At the same time, the *Initiativgruppe* has tended to echo the chorus of disapproval with which other speakers at the *Buchenwaldtreffen* have greeted the rise of the PDS (as of 2007 *Die Linke*). Thus it frames its memory activism not just in relation to local identity or certain commemorative institutions, but also within the CDU's discourse on the past at regional and national level. As Heidrun Brauer remarked at the meeting in 2008:

‘Wir erleben gerade jetzt wieder mit dem Auftrumpfen der Linkspartei unter [Oskar, RB] Lafontaine, dass sich in Deutschland und besonders hier in Ostdeutschland eine erschreckende Kultur der Verharmlosung und Lobpreisung des diktatorischen DDR-Systems entwickelt hat.’<sup>394</sup>

Not unlike the CDU politicians, Brauer used the occasion to engage in a politics of commemoration. Indeed, in her address at the ceremony the following year, delivered only a matter of weeks before federal elections were to be held, she pledged the support of the assembled attendees to CDU candidates (‘[u]nsere

<sup>393</sup> ‘Grüßbotschaft’ in *17., 18., 19. und 20. Buchenwaldtreffen*, ed. by *Initiativgruppe Buchenwald 1945 – 1950 e.V.* (Weimar, 2010[?]), 13.

<sup>394</sup> ‘Eröffnung des 18. Buchenwaldtreffens’ in *ibid.*, 25-27 (p. 25).

Unterstützung bei der Wahl haben Sie'), signalling an alignment with that party's 'anti-totalitarian' *Geschichtspolitik*.<sup>395</sup> Some years earlier, she had also, in much the same vein, urged the SPD to join a coalition with the CDU in Thuringia when opening the *Buchenwaldtreffen*, admitting that a CDU-SPD government would better represent the interests of the victims of Stalinism. On this evidence it is reasonable to agree with Erik Meyer and Claus Leggewie's suggestion that cultural discourse on the past be seen in relation to an underlying 'Politikzyklus'.<sup>396</sup>

Ultimately, then, the *Initiativgruppe*'s position on Buchenwald did indisputably deviate from other local narratives, which tended to focus on the dual poles of the concentration camp and Weimar Classicism but rather neglect the *Speziallager* and the GDR. Yet as we have seen, it was not strictly speaking a counter-narrative insofar as it did not aim to supplant but to complement the emergent commemorative paradigm in Weimar, which took the concentration camp as one of its points of reference. The *Initiativgruppe* plainly stated its support for differentiated commemoration of the double past at a very early stage, in line with the recommendations made by the Historians' Commission, and showed an evident interest in objective, transparent and solidly researched discussion of the *Speziallager* from thereon in. Though regional and national political constellations were certainly considered important, the *Buchenwaldtreffen* were equally linked to the pace of the 'Neugestaltung', continuing only as long as the process of memorializing and documenting the fate of *Speziallager* victims itself. In sum, the position reflected neither a straightforward adoption of the CDU's rhetoric nor of the memorial site's principles. It was determined by elements of an overarching national political discourse on the double past and longer-term patterns of cross-fertilisation specific to the locality.

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<sup>395</sup> 'Eröffnung des 19. Buchenwaldtreffens' in *ibid.*, pp. 41-43 (p. 42).

<sup>396</sup> See Leggewie/Meyer, "Ein Ort, an den man gerne geht", p. 13.

### ***Local specificity or local normativity? A prognosis***

Moving finally to the situation 20 years after German unification, this section rounds off my analysis of ‘local’ memory cultures by way of some concluding remarks on the dynamic of remembrance in Weimar and Oranienburg. Having already demonstrated the normative force that the triadic relationship between governmentality, identity and remembrance may exert, I wish to end this chapter by looking at where things currently stand in the two towns. In particular I am interested in whether established local *dispositifs* have obtained as the 20-year anniversary of 1989 has piqued popular interest in the GDR and Europe’s communist past more generally. Such questions of continuity and change are important for two reasons: firstly as they enable us to set local discourses against the official federal normalization discourse and secondly because they hold clues to the dynamic driving confrontation with the past. Finally, by relating local discourses to normative assumptions about cultural remembrance in the Berlin Republic and looking more closely at its dynamic since 1998, I am able to tease out the similarities and differences *between* the situation in Weimar and in Oranienburg, too.

Several months before the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in 2009, Oranienburg was preparing itself for festivities of a quite different sort. The fourth annual *Landesgartenschau*, running from April 25 until October 18, was to be held in the town, and was expected to attract approximately 500,000 visitors – more than Sachsenhausen (at that stage) recorded in a calendar year. Comparisons with the memorial were in some ways unavoidable, given that the *Landesgartenschau* drew comparable visitor numbers but for quite different reasons, and began in the same week as the 64<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Sachsenhausen. How was this overwhelmingly positive and forward-looking celebration of local culture presented, and how was it reconciled to Oranienburg’s unique responsibility towards the legacy of National Socialism? And what, in turn, does this say about the respective weighting given to the pre- and post-1945 phases of the memorial site’s double past in the locality?

In the run up to the opening of the *Landesgartenschau*, much was made in the local press of how the town had outgrown its questionable reputation as a ‘Bombenstadt’. The term itself was a reference to the aerial bombardment of Oranienburg in 1945, denoting the frequency with which unexploded allied bombs have been discovered there since the end of the war. As such, the imminent garden show opening signalled for one journalist a ‘[t]raumhafte Metamorphose’ that redefined Oranienburg as the town of Princess Louise Henriette.<sup>397</sup> Another article pointed implicitly to the same shift in its title, ‘Blumen statt Bomben’.<sup>398</sup> In the piece the Baroque palace, which would be restored to public memory as the centerpiece of the flower show after remaining practically off limits for decades, became the focal point of the town’s dramatic change. The article recalled its usage by SS-guard units, Soviet troops and GDR border guards respectively, noting that these associations must not be forgotten despite the more positive associations it would be taking on: ‘Der Schritt in die Zukunft ist ein Schritt in die Vergangenheit. Jedenfalls für die Stadt Oranienburg.’<sup>399</sup>

Elsewhere the palace’s different historical phases were subsumed into a single, negative counterpoint to present-day Oranienburg, thereby eliding its distinctive double history under National Socialism and Communism. In a service opening the garden show for example, the evangelical bishop Wolfgang Huber described the town’s past as ‘Bombenentschärfung, Bombenstimmung und Bombenpreise’ before declaring this rather dreary impression ‘outdated’ (‘überholt’). He believed that it was now more fitting to take pleasure in the ‘Gartenwunder[...]’ on offer in Oranienburg.<sup>400</sup> Huber was of course entirely justified in hoping for an end to the unwelcome discovery of undetonated bombs in the town, and Oranienburgers had every right to be pleased at hosting the *Landesgartenschau*. In terms of how he represented the town’s past and present, however, Huber showed that, when it came to narrating local history, the comparison between pre- and post-unification periods was still favoured by Oranienburg’s cultural elite over comparisons between the Nazi, Soviet and East German pasts. After all, it was the former comparison that lent itself more readily

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<sup>397</sup> K. D. Grote, ‘Traumhafte Metamorphose’, *MAZ*, 15 Apr 2009, p. 5.

<sup>398</sup> J. Blankennagel, ‘Blumen statt Bomben’, *Berliner Zeitung*, 14/15 Mar 2009, p. 28.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>400</sup> M. Zimmermann, ‘177 Tage festlicher Aufnahmезustand’, *MAZ*, 27 Apr 2009, p. 15.

to a narrative of progress and regeneration in which Oranienburg had successfully negotiated the post-Soviet transition to liberal democracy, even if, as I discuss below, this required taking a reductive view of the pre-1989 past.

Firstly, however, the position of the *Landesgartenschau* and the memorial site relative to one another in the local press bears some consideration. Though coverage of the *Landesgartenschau* was virtually uninterrupted throughout April, it is worth noting that it was accorded less space in local newspapers than the 64<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Sachsenhausen for the duration of the liberation ceremonies. Between April 17 and April 20, five stories appeared altogether in the *Märkische Allgemeine* and the *Oranienburger Generalanzeiger* dealing with the anniversary, as opposed to two articles in the same period focusing on the garden show.<sup>401</sup> The anniversary itself fell on April 22, and marked the beginning of a protracted search for the hitherto undiscovered mass graves of Jewish prisoners from Lieberose, a sub camp of Sachsenhausen. This story was covered more or less consistently for the three weeks that the search lasted, though revealingly there was no mention of it in the local papers on April 25 – the opening of the *Landesgartenschau* – nor on the days immediately either side of this. The garden show, by contrast, *did* make the news on April 22, with a number of articles covering a visit made by regional SPD delegates to the show grounds. The search for the mass graves was however the leading article, and mixed terse reportage with tinges of pathos such as black and white photos of the search and references to the ‘bittere Erfahrung’ of relatives who had gone years without knowing where their loved ones’ bodies lay.<sup>402</sup> Parallel coverage of the SPD delegates’ visit to Oranienburg, on the other hand, was replete with colour photos of the politicians appearing in sunglasses and looking relaxed as they enjoyed the excellent weather. The irreverent and jovial tenor of the articles also contrasted the somber tone struck by the Lieberose story:

‘Die SPD-Landtagsfraktion hatte gestern viel Spaß in Oranienburg. Fraktionssitzung im Schloss, davor Laga- (Landesgartenschau, RB) Führung. Es gibt schlimmeres. Im Tagestouri-Outfit – Sonnenbrille,

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<sup>401</sup> This is based on a systematic analysis of the press holdings in the Oranienburg town archive. See Stadtarch. Orbg., Pressespiegel 2009.

<sup>402</sup> K. D. Grote, ‘Such nach Massengrab beginnt’, *MAZ*, 22 Apr 2009, p. 5.

Rucksack, Kamera – flanierten die Politiker durch die Rabatten und waren sich einig: Die Laga wird schön.<sup>403</sup>

The comparison is not to suggest, for one minute, that it was in some way unreasonable for the local press to be reporting this story. Nor is it helpful to read facile hierarchies out of the narrative sequencing in the newspaper reportage. What is important to stress is that for the most part, neither event was reported without the other also receiving attention, pointing to the central place the ‘dual poles’ of Prussia continue to occupy in press discourse. The fact that the two stories could appear in such close proximity to one another in the first place indicates, if anything, that the local press had well and truly internalized the ‘dialectic of normality’ by this point.

If one compares this almost reflexive coverage of Sachsenhausen to the initial public competition held to determine the redesign of the former SS troop camp and SS officer residences in 1992, the progress made in confronting the site’s history in the local sphere becomes particularly apparent. It is to the great credit of the various local publics engaged in memory work that this is the case. Yet over time this memory activism from below has been embraced by federal memory politics, such that the picture in Oranienburg now seems fairly unremarkable if one looks at other examples of negotiating the ‘dialectic of normality’. As such, there is a danger of misrecognising the fact that the East German past and, more specifically, Sachsenhausen’s own tripartite history make up part of the particular dialectic confronting Oranienburg.

One such example of the parallels that are unwittingly being constructed between Oranienburg and Germany as a whole can be seen in Angela Merkel’s visit to the Dachau memorial on 20 August 2013. This formed part of a scheduled appearance in the town as part of Merkel’s election campaign, and drew mixed reactions. Whilst some, including notably the president of the Dachau survivors’ association Max Mannheimer, praised Merkel’s decision – she was the first chancellor to visit the memorial in an official capacity whilst in office – others criticized the move as blatant electioneering. Certainly the accusation was not altogether unreasonable, as Merkel’s next stop in Dachau after the memorial was a local *Volksfest* where she addressed CDU supporters

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<sup>403</sup> T. Gellner, ‘Im Garten der Lüste’, *MAZ*, 22 Apr 2009, p. 14.

gathered in a beer tent.<sup>404</sup> More to the point, however, Merkel's itinerary unmistakably resembled the dual coverage of the *Landesgartenschau* and the Sachsenhausen liberation ceremonies in local newspapers during April 2009. In both cases the concentration camps were explicitly addressed, but in neither instance did this preclude presenting less inhibited pictures of local identity, whether in the form of a flower show or, in Dachau, a *Volksfest*.

In addition, Merkel's rhetoric at the Dachau memorial rested on the exact binary division between past and present typical of municipal discourse in Oranienburg. She averred, for instance, that the work of Dachau survivors who share their testimonies with younger generations was 'eine Brücke von der Geschichte in die Gegenwart, die wir auch in die Zukunft weiterbauen wollen'.<sup>405</sup> Besides the familiar presentism, the metaphor of a bridge linking Germany's past to its democratic, morally and historically conscientious present and future had actually been used by Gerhard Schröder in a speech at Sachsenhausen in 1999 (see chapter five). It is interesting to note the assumed interchangeability of the two memorials given the latter's importance to memory of Stalinism and East German communism, which neither Schröder in his earlier speech nor municipal memory narratives appeared to reflect upon. What we may infer from both the longer tradition of employing the 'bridge' metaphor and its use at sites with no connection to the GDR is that it is not so novel after all; nor is it particularly helpful in communicating Sachsenhausen's uniquely complex and ambivalent multi-layeredness. Municipal discourse in Oranienburg has embraced memory of National Socialist crimes, but on the evidence of 2009 it may begin to see diminishing returns if it fails to break from framing devices that are becoming increasingly naturalised and in many ways screen memory of communism.

Popular opinion in the town appears to have followed largely the same pattern, judging by the responses of locals to the *Landesgartenschau*. In the swell of public pride that followed the show's final days, local newspapers printed a

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<sup>404</sup> See B. Hengst, 'Stilles Gedenken im Wahlkampffeuer', *SpiegelOnline* (online) <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/kz-ueberlebende-loben-merkels-besuch-in-dachau-a-917667.html>. Last accessed 21 Aug 2013; also S. Weiland, 'KZ-Besuch und Bierzelt – Streit über Merkels Terminplan', *SpiegelOnline* (online) <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/merkels-besuch-in-kz-gedenkstaette-dachau-loest-debatte-aus-a-917523.html>. Last accessed 21 Aug 2013.

<sup>405</sup> 'Rede von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel beim Besuch der KZ-Gedenkstätte Dachau am 20. August 2013' [online], <http://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/Content/DE/Rede/2013/08/2013-08-20-merkel-kz-dachau.html;jsessionid=105A9F30AF4A050F88ABD97E7354711B.s2t2>. Last accessed 21 Aug 2013.

series of readers' letters that showed a convergence between popular and 'elite' discourses. In fact, several letters appeared to borrow directly from the language of political rhetoric and corroborate its message of a vibrant, tolerant local identity. As a resident writing on behalf of a senior citizens' organization in Oranienburg wrote: "Wir erlebten das Aufblühen einer Stadt". This of course echoed the metaphor of a town 'in bloom' encountered in municipal marketing publications and evoked at points during the Hope Incision debates.<sup>406</sup> An editor of the *Oranienburger Generalanzeiger* likewise drew upon the metaphor of renewal and regeneration in a comment piece, opining that "[die Stadt]...sich sozusagen an den Stängeln aus dem Stumpf der architektonischen Trostlosigkeit gezogen [hat]".<sup>407</sup> In this figurative image, Oranienburg was portrayed escaping the 'dullness' ('Stumpf') and 'desolation' ('Trostlosigkeit') of the past with the help of the *Landesgartenschau*, as the reference to 'stems' ('Stängel') suggested. Though it was not made explicit, the grey, dilapidated image that the new Oranienburg had managed to outgrow appeared to infer the GDR past, which as before had not been addressed on its own terms.

What is more, the use of the term 'cabin fever' ('Lagerkoller') in the title, deliberately misspelled 'Laga-Koller' to reference the *Landesgartenschau*, which was known locally by the acronym 'Laga', only further yoked together the town's past and present.<sup>408</sup> If it was unclear in this article whether Sachsenhausen was to blame for such negative reflexes of identification in the past, there was no mistaking the claim made in another article that it had indeed been the primary association up until now in the eyes of Oranienburger. The author channeled their renewed optimism following the *Landesgartenschau*, observing: "Ab jetzt", so hoffen viele, "sind wir nicht mehr nur die Stadt, bei der man als erstes an Konzentrationslager denkt".<sup>409</sup> This sentiment was not meant to imply a disavowal of links between the camp and town; locals simply hoped that Oranienburg would no longer be associated 'primarily' ('als erstes') with the concentration camp. Seemingly however the municipal narrative and its leitmotif of the 'dual poles' of Prussia more or less matched popular opinion in the town, as an ongoing awareness of Sachsenhausen's legacy coexisted with (but showed

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<sup>406</sup> E. Starke, "Wir erlebten das Aufblühen einer Stadt", *OGA*, 24/25 Oct 2009.

<sup>407</sup> S. Kreutzer, 'Kein Laga-Koller', *OGA*, 17/18 Oct 2009.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>409</sup> I. Röd, 'Louise Henriette brachte Glück', *MAZ*, 16 Oct 2009, p. 3.

signs of being eclipsed by) a celebration of local identity and traditions in the eyes of residents too.

By contrast, the history of the *Speziallager* and of the NMG – in fact, of the period 1945-1989 more generally – hardly seemed to figure in local memory. The memorial site had evidently been eager to engage locals in the educational programme accompanying the temporary exhibition ‘Sachsenhausen Mahnt!’, and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the GDR memorial’s inauguration, with which the new exhibition opening coincided, provided an appropriate opportunity. In addition to guided tours of the exhibition and a number of public talks, a series of three *Diskussionsrunden* were held with the intention of gauging locals’ responses to the NMG and the new memorial museum. Yet only one other visitor attended the guided tour I took, and though she lived in Oranienburg, she admitted that her motivation for visiting the new exhibition derived partly from her agitation at the memorial’s stance towards the town (she believed that Morsch in particular was unduly critical of locals).<sup>410</sup> Equally, it was Berlin-based victims’ associations representing the *Speziallager* victims rather than local groups that took umbrage at the inclusion of former *Stasi* informants in a panel at the first *Diskussionsrunde*. Though the event in question took a broadly critical view of the NMG, as its title “*Wir sind ja zu so vielen Massenaufmärschen gerannt...*” – *Oranienburg und die Nationale Mahn- und Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen* implied, prominent members of the UOKG alleged that giving an audience to locals with previous connections to the *Stasi* amounted to sanitising the East German regime.<sup>411</sup>

Given that only one of the three *Diskussionsrunden* was held outside of the memorial, there are perhaps grounds for arguing that relatively few local residents readily associate the site with the town proper. That said, the event held in the St. Nicolai-Kirche on 20 October 2011 was well attended and prompted lively debate. Once again, however, there was evidence of a proclivity to draw binary distinctions, whether between the perfidious National Socialist ideology represented by the historical camp and the town’s new *Leitbild* of ‘Toleranz’ or between absolute categories of either suppression of or confrontation with the (Nazi) past. An article advertising the ‘Diskussionsrunde’ in the *Märkische Allgemeine* typified this view, posing the question of whether locals ‘sich nicht

<sup>410</sup> Visit on 24 Jul 2011. Field notes in the author’s possession.

<sup>411</sup> I would like to thank Bodo Baumunk for bringing this to my attention.

für den Terror [interessieren], der vor mehr als 60 Jahren vor ihrer Haustür stattfand’ rather than considering what form this interest took.<sup>412</sup> Falling back on the paradigms of ‘[G]eschichtsvergessen[heit]’ and ‘Auseinandersetzung’ as the article did appeared to revisit debates that were characteristic of earlier decades, and certainly precluded any consideration of nuances within each position.

Other steps taken in Oranienburg to promote a civic culture of confrontation with Germany’s 20<sup>th</sup> century past signal a further internalization of this binary view. As of 2010, the Stadt Oranienburg – that is, the municipality – and the Sachsenhausen memorial have jointly organized a biannual competition in recognition of civic initiatives that seek to combine historical and humanitarian education with the promotion of tolerance and mutual respect in the present. A jury, consisting of two municipal politicians, a representative of the memorial site, a journalist from a radio broadcaster in Brandenburg, a member of a regional anti-extremist group, a trade union delegate, and one representative each of the concentration camp and special camp prisoners, awards a prize to the most original and effective programme. An inclusive interpretation of historical engagement, by no means limited to the National Socialist period, is implicit in the jury alone. The same can be said of the call for applications that precedes the award of the *Toleranzpreis* (recently renamed the *Franz-Bobzien-Preis* after the Sachsenhausen inmate Franz Bobzien), in which applications are invited from projects that contribute ‘wirkungsvoll zu historisch-politischer Bildung und Demokratieentwicklung’.<sup>413</sup> Admittedly however, ‘special consideration’ (‘[b]esondere Beachtung’) is given to those projects that explicitly combine a focus on National Socialism with democratic forms of civic engagement. Nonetheless, it is striking that all of the projects nominated in the two rounds of the competition that have taken place so far, in 2010 and 2012, have dealt with various aspects of persecution and victimhood during the Third Reich.<sup>414</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> T. Gutke, ‘Unsere Gedenkstätte?’, *OGA*, 19 Oct 2011 (online) <http://www.moz.de/artikel-ansicht/dg/0/1/981072>. Last accessed 25 Oct 2011.

<sup>413</sup> Stadt Oranienburg, Gedenkstätte und Museum Sachsenhausen, *Franz-Bobzien-Preis für Demokratie und Toleranz: Bewerbungsverfahren 2014* [http://daten2.verwaltungsportal.de/dateien/seitengenerator/fbp\\_flyer\\_2013\\_end\\_web\\_neu.pdf](http://daten2.verwaltungsportal.de/dateien/seitengenerator/fbp_flyer_2013_end_web_neu.pdf) [accessed 2 Sept 2013] (p. 1).

<sup>414</sup> See the brochures documenting the entries from each of the two projects: Stadt Oranienburg, Gedenkstätte und Museum Sachsenhausen (eds.), *Oranienburger Toleranzpreis der Stadt Oranienburg und der Gedenkstätte und des Museums Sachsenhausen: Eine Dokumentation zur Verleihung des ersten Oranienburger Toleranzpreises 2010* (Oranienburg, 2011), 50pp.; *idem.* (eds.), *Oranienburger Toleranzpreis der Stadt Oranienburg und der Gedenkstätte und des Museums Sachsenhausen: Eine Dokumentation zur Verleihung des zweiten Oranienburger*

In Weimar, recent developments suggest a broadly similar trajectory to that registered in Oranienburg, which is to say a paradigm of Holocaust-centred memory looks likely to be upheld for the foreseeable future. Yet this has been enacted by different means, as is well illustrated by the discursive strategies underpinning Buchenwald memorial's nomination to the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2012. Interestingly, though it was the Thuringian Ministry for Education, Science and Culture (MBWK) that made the nomination, the initial impetus for applying for World Heritage status came from the Council of the Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora Memorials Foundation.<sup>415</sup> Moreover, both the municipality and the regional government of Thuringia supported the move. Indeed, Stefan Wolf and the SPD regional Minister for Education, Science and Culture Christoph Matschie joined Volkhard Knigge for the announcement of Buchenwald's nomination at a press conference held at the memorial. As such, we are not simply dealing with an imposition of a universal 'heritage' concept upon what was indisputably a popular tourist site but an active attempt by the memorial, in concert with survivors' associations, civic memory activists, political stakeholders and advisory bodies, to reconcile its own mission to that of UNESCO. Thus, by looking at the nomination we can glean not only what the local stance vis-à-vis Buchenwald was at this point, but also a sense of how it intersected in certain ways with professional, political and global heritage discourses too.

Knigge laid out the objectives behind applying for World Heritage status in a statement prepared for the press conference. In it, he drew once more upon the Weimar-Buchenwald metaphor, whilst simultaneously positioning the memorial as a global actor:

‘Mit diesem Antrag geht es darum – und deswegen konkurrenziert er an diesem Punkt auch nicht andere Bundesländer mit Gedenkstätten – den Doppelort Weimar-Buchenwald in seiner ganzen Orientierungskraft, das

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*Toleranzpreises 2012* (Oranienburg, 2012), 38pp.

<sup>415</sup> The *Stiftungsrat* approved an application at its sitting on 7 June 2012 and tasked the *Stiftungsdirektor*, Volkhard Knigge, with drawing this up. The formal nomination was announced by the MBWK on 31 August 2012, whereupon it passed to the Kultusministerkonferenz as the body ultimately responsible for drawing up a list of final nominations for submission to UNESCO. See 'Nominierung', (online) <http://www.buchenwald.de/753/>. Last accessed 30 May 2013.

Gewissen, das Herz und den Verstand bewegen zu können, in Deutschland und über Deutschland hinaus Ernst zu nehmen.<sup>416</sup>

Firstly, the reference to the memorial's resonance 'in and beyond Germany' ('in Deutschland und über Deutschland hinaus') indicated that Knigge was in no doubt about Buchenwald's international profile. Equally however, the phrasing tacitly accepted that the town's popularity with tourists rested just as much upon the history of Weimar Classicism. Indeed, 'Classical Weimar' already belonged to the World Heritage list. Recommending the addition of Buchenwald was an artful expression of the town's ambivalent and differentiated past – neatly conveyed by the term 'Doppelort' – that used World Heritage status to clever effect. Parity between Buchenwald and Classical Weimar in UNESCO's terms would of course imply a duality to the legacies of enlightenment and barbarity, with neither privileged over (or subordinated to) the other.

As a consequence, the application re-situated the Buchenwald memorial within a universal heritage discourse in order to ground it in the specific, local historical and spatial context of the 'Binom Weimar-Buchenwald'. In this way it managed to avoid erasing the memorial's specificity and subsuming it within an inflationary and imprecise global (negative) heritage valuation. Far from compromising the decentralised memory landscape, the application promoted a more clearly defined (and delimited) 'profile' for the memorial site. Thus, it actually resisted a tendency to normalize Buchenwald's past by working against the construction of facile parallels between distinct camps – a tendency that we saw reflected in the indiscriminate use of almost identical narratological and commemorative tropes at Dachau and Sachsenhausen with little consideration of their very different histories.

Whilst the UNESCO nomination and the text of the initial application largely avoided inadvertently creating equivalences between the various *KZ-Gedenkstätten* in Germany, it nonetheless reproduced established commemorative motifs and symbols of a different kind. Auschwitz, for instance, had become a World Heritage site in 1979, and so almost inevitably the Buchenwald nomination picked up on certain justifications first used in support

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<sup>416</sup> 'Weltkulturerbe-Antrag', (online) <http://www.buchenwald.de/752>. Last accessed 07 Dec 2012.

of adding that memorial to the UNESCO list. To cite just one example, the rationale for including Auschwitz, which was quoted in the press conference at Buchenwald, stressed the legacy of resistance amongst prisoners at the camp. Auschwitz was, accordingly, presented as a ‘Denkmal für die Stärke des menschlichen Geistes...’, a reading which the Buchenwald application echoed by pointing to the dual legacies of terror and enlightened humanism or even resistance there.<sup>417</sup> Together with the Buchenwald memorial’s unparalleled collection of artwork produced by camp prisoners, now displayed in the former disinfection building, resistance narratives were identified in the application as part of a positive historical legacy, which was instructive precisely because it attested to the remarkable capacity for humanity to prevail even under the most barbaric of circumstances. The foregrounding of victimisation on the one hand and solidarity as well as humanism on the other effectively reproduced the coordinates of the ‘Doppelort Weimar-Buchenwald’. Much like municipal narratives in Weimar, and following their binary structure, the UNESCO application distilled memory into interconnected but oppositional poles.

A distillation of memory could be seen at other points in the application and nomination too. Pursuing further the twin narratives of barbarity and enlightenment that featured in Kingge’s application text, the nomination traced two distinct memory threads linked to Buchenwald that had been enormously influential in trans-national post-war memory of the Third Reich and the Holocaust. The first thread began with the images of the camp upon liberation that quickly circulated across the world and shaped popular conceptions of National Socialist crimes. The second originated in the Buchenwald Oath of 19 April 1945 and its considerable impact upon post-war antifascist politics. In addition, the nomination singled out former Buchenwald prisoners such as Stéphane Hessel, Eugen Kogon and Jorge Semprún. Besides highlighting the fact that all three had sought to utilise their experiences at Buchenwald in order to secure ‘eine menschlichere Zukunft’,<sup>418</sup> it mentioned Hessel’s contribution to the drafting of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. In fact, the human rights regime was also frequently invoked in federal commemorative speeches at both Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen – and on occasion used to subtly equate National Socialist and Soviet crimes (see chapter five). Here however, universal

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<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.* Last accessed 30 May 2013.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.* Last accessed 30 May 2013.

human rights concepts were fused to particular symbols, narratives and biographies in support of a differentiated (and Holocaust-centred) model of commemoration.

Certainly on balance the UNESCO nomination, though a symptom of Buchenwald's increasing implication in touristic scales of value, did not challenge the pre-existing consensus around a critical, historically informed process of dealing with the past. If anything, the nomination has *continued* an established local discourse that emphasises Weimar's unique double-sidedness whilst simultaneously embedding it in international, multilateral networks based on universal moral standards and solidarities. Indeed, Buchenwald was nominated as an 'elementares Zeugnis der nationalsozialistischen Verbrechen und der Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts', a formulation that clearly spelt out a differentiated but historically appropriate approach to the site's history.<sup>419</sup> The National Socialist period was named first and thus clearly foregrounded, which had the additional effect of introducing the camp's post-war history not as a means of equation but according to what Caroline Pearce has termed a 'principal of contextualisation'.<sup>420</sup> That is to say, each historical phase was treated on its own terms in the nomination. The *Speziallager*, for instance, was cited as a symbol of 'die Inhumanität der sowjetischen Hegemonie Mittel- und Osteuropas' and the NMG as a form of memorialisation that posed questions about historically, politically and ethically appropriate forms of working through difficult pasts.<sup>421</sup> Whilst these were all 'Fragen, die Menschen in Ländern mit Diktatur-, Verfolgungs- oder Genoziderfahrungen zunehmend bewegen'<sup>422</sup>, the nomination framed remembrance in such a way that it was loosened from collective identity politics and reoriented around an individual, open-ended process of *Aufarbeitung*.

What does this particular memory text say about longer-term patterns of cultural memory in the local sphere? Firstly, reinforcing an argument that runs through this thesis, it shows that the globalisation of Holocaust memory has not necessarily presaged a concomitant shift from local or national to global patterns of identification. To be sure, the UNESCO nomination did frame

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<sup>419</sup> 'Nominierung'. Last accessed 30 May 2013.

<sup>420</sup> Pearce, 'An Unequal Balance?', in *The GDR Remembered*, ed. by Hodgkin/Pearce, p. 193.

<sup>421</sup> 'Nominierung'. Last accessed 30 May 2013.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.* Last accessed 30 May 2013.

commemoration of the victims of the concentration camp in a universally identifiable narrative of violating and standing up for individual rights. But it *also* reproduced the Weimar-Buchenwald leitmotif, indicating a considerable degree of overlap with municipal discourse in Weimar. In any case, as I have already alluded to (and will discuss further in chapter five), other groups appropriate human rights discourses in service of an ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’ predicated on condemnation – and sometimes equation – of the Nazi and communist pasts. There is no uniform pattern to the globalisation of memory, and these globalizing processes are determined by specific local contexts.

Nor however is there any evidence of memory in Weimar taking its cue from a federal ‘norm’. As I point out, the UNESCO nomination did not explicitly utilise the language of the ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’; if it followed a ‘norm’ at all then it was surely the municipal precedent, which was effectively written into international heritage standards in the form of the symbolic ‘Doppelort Buchenwald-Weimar’. The established paradigm had therefore not only been upheld but had actually been internalised by a range of publics to such an extent that it was fair to talk of a local normalization of the past taking place parallel to normalization at federal level. Indeed, both Bertrand Herz, the president of the IKBD, and Heidrun Brauer of the *Initiativgruppe* welcomed the nomination, praising the memorial site but also pointing out (in Brauer’s case) that a ‘historisch korrekte[...] Form’ of memory had been fostered for many years at Buchenwald.<sup>423</sup> The fact that the IKBD, the *Initiativgruppe*, the memorial, the municipality and the regional government could all agree upon this form of memory suggested, finally, that the *dispositif* I identified earlier in this chapter had indeed developed a ‘normative force’ of its own by 2012.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the locales stand out as cultural spaces in which a confrontational approach to the past has been adopted from a very early stage, even pre-empting the similar turn to confrontation initiated by Schröder when he became

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<sup>423</sup> ‘Reaktionen’ (online) <http://www.buchenwald.de/de/754/>. Last accessed 30 May 2013.

chancellor in 1998. Like the normalization paradigm developed by his Red-Green government, discourse in both Weimar and Oranienburg has centred around the Nazi past and sought to embed ongoing accountability at the heart of a more confident identity narrative. Repeating motifs such as the ‘Binom Weimar-Buchenwald’ and the ‘dual poles’ of Oranienburg’s Prussian history highlight the efforts that have been made to reconcile positive and negative aspects of local history to one another. Not least because of the physical presence of the concentration camps in the town, both historically and today still in the surviving built traces and memorial plaques, the ‘dialectic of normality’ negotiated by Weimar and Oranienburg since 1998 has been considerably more pronounced than at federal level. As a result of the binaries produced by setting the Nazi camps against more celebratory aspects of local history, however, Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen’s multiple pasts – particularly those between 1945-1989 – have been somewhat lost from view.

Certainly, there is ample evidence that certain elements of the *Kulturstadtjahr* programme and debates on the future of the *Truppenlager* in Oranienburg normativized the town-camp dualism. That said, particular exhibitions held during ‘Weimar 1999’ did in fact critique rather than reproduce the binary discourse. On balance, the paradigm remains central to if no longer ubiquitous in local processes of coming to terms with the past. Both the nomination of the ‘Doppelort Weimar-Buchenwald’ to Germany’s UNESCO World Heritage shortlist and the programme accompanying the *Sachsenhausen Mahnt!* temporary exhibition acknowledged the memorials’ tripartite histories, and explicitly problematized the contested relationship between these various historical phases. In the case of the temporary exhibition however, what little engagement it prompted fell back on the familiar Manichean opposition between repression of the past on the one hand and confrontation with it on the other. Little recognition was given to the fact that the exhibition was not so much asking whether but *how* to deal with the past. The 2009 *Landesgartenschau* also indicated a continuing proclivity for double-sided motifs, this time in the guise of a present-day town ‘in bloom’ and its negative counterpoint found in the grey, dilapidated image of Oranienburg conjured up by the GDR and the concentration camp.

It is hard to overlook the differences this chapter has registered emerging between discourse in Weimar and in Oranienburg in the course of the 2000s. Whereas local representations of Buchenwald have begun to touch upon the camp's multiple histories, attention in Oranienburg remains largely fixed on the concentration camp. I should stress that I do not intend this to be an indictment of either approach. Rather, it is worth reflecting for a moment on how we may account for these differences. Firstly, there are historical explanations for these divergent developments; it is fair to say that Weimar's 'classical' heritage is itself uniquely rich and varied, so that it is actually a misnomer to describe it as a single, positive counterpoint to the town's 'dark' heritage. Oranienburg, by contrast, boasts an impressively cosmopolitan history that is linked to Brandenburg's status in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as an *Einwanderungsgebiet*, but did not experience the same flourishing of a local educated bourgeoisie in the wake of the industrial revolution as Weimar. Present-day contexts are also influential; we should not overlook the particularly acute problem of right-wing extremism facing Oranienburg (and Brandenburg more generally).<sup>424</sup> Altogether, it seems likely that the combination of historical specificities and latter-day concerns effectively prefigures oppositions between the concentration camp and the motif of Prussian tolerance in Oranienburg. By the same token, sensitisation to Buchenwald's multiple pasts is not entirely unsurprising in a local culture that is by its very nature diverse and polycentric.

Lastly, underlying virtually all of these discourses is the assumption is that remembrance – in the majority of cases Holocaust-centred remembrance – is a civic ritual that binds together local publics. It is a ritual, moreover, that has buttressed self-identification as German and especially as a 'Weimarer' or 'Oranienburger'. As such, the Foucauldian model of a *dispositif* captures the dynamic of discourse in these spaces quite neatly. In this case we are not referring to a national *dispositif* however, but instead to local orders of discourse conveyed by the binary motifs mentioned above. This notwithstanding, section three of the chapter in particular has explored a number of local civic groups and their positions vis-à-vis the memorials and proven them to stand in a more

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<sup>424</sup> In 2009, Brandenburg was recorded as having the highest incidence of right-wing extremist attacks per 100,000 residents in the whole of Germany. See *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2009: Vorabfassung*, ed. by Bundesministerium des Innern (Berlin, 2009), p. 36. For a bleak description of the right-wing youth scene in Oranienburg, see Natalia Hantke, 'Stichwort Nazi', *taz*, 24 Jul 2004.

complex relation to *dispositifs* of any kind. To take as but one example the *Initiativgruppe* in Weimar, it is clear that it represents a hybridized form of discourse. The group's stance has emerged out of local contexts (the municipality shows considerable solidarity with the group), cooperation with the memorials in running the *Buchenwaldtreffen* and providing humanitarian support for survivors of the *Speziallager* and their relatives, and broader political constellations, which on occasion have shaped the rhetoric of these annual meetings.

## Ch. 4: Regional *dispositifs*?

### **Introduction**

In a federally organized state such as Germany, it would be impossible to evaluate the ‘official’ discourse on memorialization without assessing the situation in the individual *Länder* (federal states). Besides acting as a check and balance on the power of the *Bund*, the state governments fulfil the so-called ‘Subsidiaritätsprinzip’ by bringing democratic participation and decision-making as close as possible to citizens. Whilst their role in creating policy is relatively limited, they possess a considerable level of control over policy implementation – a task that is overseen by regional parliaments (*Landtage*). Pedagogical competencies are devolved to regional institutions too. In terms of confronting the double past, not only do regional education ministries work to raise awareness about National Socialism and the GDR; so too do non-partisan institutions such as the Regional Offices for Political Education (*Landeszentralen für politische Bildung*). Regional Commissioners for the Records of the State Security Service of the former GDR (*Landesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR*) educate citizens about the GDR as well as offering advice and support for former victims. Accordingly, though I take a holistic view of culture as in previous chapters, I concentrate here on the role of *political* culture in shaping public remembrance and representation of the memorials on account of the predominance of political institutions in this particular space.

The ‘Subsidiaritätsprinzip’ extends to memorialization of the double past. At the behest of the two Experts’ Commissions, formal steps to institutionalise remembrance in Brandenburg and Thuringia through the creation of foundations were taken in the early 1990s. The resulting Brandenburg Memorials Foundation, a public law foundation currently responsible for the Sachsenhausen, Ravensbrück, Brandenburg/Havel, and Below Forest memorials, was established

with effect from January 1993.<sup>425</sup> A similar – though dependent – foundation was established in Thuringia the following year.<sup>426</sup> Moreover, differentiation between the National Socialist and East German communist regimes was written into their respective statutes. The Brandenburg decree, for instance, listed the ‘structure and development of concentration camps in Brandenburg and their satellite camps as well as further institutions of SS-terror’ and the ‘history of NKWD-camps and the political justice system of the GDR’ as two separate aspects of the foundation’s remit.<sup>427</sup> In Thuringia, when the memorials foundation later became independent (see below), the text of the law likewise stressed that the history of the National Socialist concentration camp was to be handled ‘as a priority’.<sup>428</sup>

At least on paper, then, commemoration of the double past at regional level in Brandenburg and Thuringia has for the past two decades been guided by a careful distinction between pre- and post-1945 injustice. As such, Günter Morsch could justifiably take pride in a ‘brandenburgisches Stiftungsmodell’<sup>429</sup> that assiduously avoided a conflation of the two separate histories in the foundation’s structure and remit. Yet for all Morsch’s enthusiastic endorsement of the institutional precepts pioneered in Brandenburg and Thuringia, the post-1990 period has been marked by ongoing conflicts over the double past in these states too. This chapter surveys developments from the turn of the millennium onwards, focusing on questions of differentiation and equation as well as asking how the relationship between federal and regional discourses is best understood.

To do this, it is again beneficial to utilize a situational and relational theoretical model. Only then can we assess whether the federal narrative embodied by the ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’ exerts a kind of ‘normative power’<sup>430</sup> over discourse in Brandenburg and Thuringia. By taking Luhmann’s ‘autopoietic’ model of relationality – a model that concentrates on the operations

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<sup>425</sup> See ‘Verordnung über die Errichtung der rechtsfähigen Stiftung öffentlichen Rechts “Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten” vom 30. Januar 1993’, *Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt für das Land Brandenburg Teil II – Nr. 8* (18 Feb 1993).

<sup>426</sup> Zimmer, *Der Buchenwald-Konflikt*, p. 19.

<sup>427</sup> ‘Verordnung über die Errichtung der rechtsfähigen Stiftung öffentlichen Rechts “Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten”’, p. 49..

<sup>428</sup> See Thüringer Landtag, ‘Thüringer Gesetz über die Errichtung der Stiftung Gedenkstätten Buchenwald und Mittelbau-Dora’, Drucksache 3/3052, 8 Jan 2003, p. 4.

<sup>429</sup> Interview with the author, 25 Jun 2010; see also G. Morsch, ‘Perspektiven und Entscheidungslagen, Chancen und Risiken der Entwicklung deutscher NS-Gedenkstätten in Zeiten des Wandels’, *GedenkstättenRundbrief*, 128, 12 (2005), 3-14 (pp. 6-7).

<sup>430</sup> S. Taberner and P. Cooke, ‘Introduction’, in *Idem.* (eds.), *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006), pp. 1-15 (p. 11).

of self-referential systems – and Foucault’s concept of the *dispositif*, we can trace more precisely how and by what means particular interpretations of the double past are produced and structured in these contexts. Specifically, this chapter argues that there is a particularly pronounced connection between regional discourses on the memorials and the post-unification transitional process. As I explain in the thesis introduction, during the 1990s it was the federal government that emerged as a major player in Germany’s internally initiated transition, issuing compensation legislation (both for former victims of forced labour in the Third Reich and victims of post-1945 injustice), trying prominent functionaries and accomplices of the SED regime, and launching formal commissions of enquiry into the GDR. The 2000s by contrast have seen the pursuit of retroactive justice give way to ongoing forms of education and commemoration. As such, the onus for stewarding Germany’s democratic transition has increasingly fallen on *regional* institutions such as those identified above.

Taking documentary and commemorative measures introduced within Brandenburg and Thuringia at various points during the 2000s as its starting point, this chapter proves there to be a link between the perceived pace, depth and breadth of the transitional process and regional discourses on Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. Whilst cultural representations of the double past at the former tend to be shaped by the perceived successes of the Thuringian transition, Sachsenhausen’s double past has, particularly since the mid-2000s, been framed in a narrative of unsatisfactory transition, reflected in the term ‘Brandenburger Weg’ to describe that state’s handling of unification and its consequences. Accordingly, although certain regional discourses may gesture towards national and even trans-national frameworks of accountability and responsibility towards the past, they are more often than not underpinned by distinct regional political cultures. The chapter begins with the situation in Brandenburg and Thuringia at the turn of the millennium, before addressing the regional fallout from Hermann Schäfer and Jörg Schönbohm’s highly controversial speeches in 2006. The third and fourth sections of the chapter look at more recent developments in the run-up to the twenty-year anniversary of German unity in 2010.

## ***Institutionalising remembrance at the turn of the millennium***

Turning first to the situation in Thuringia, it appeared that the new millennium was as much of a watershed moment for memorialization of the double past at regional level as it was for Germany as a whole. Indeed, with effect from March 2003 the Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora memorials were formally brought under the purview of a public law foundation, the *Stiftung Gedenkstätten Buchenwald und Mittelbau-Dora*, thereby ‘institutionalising’ commemoration at regional level. Of course, this had in practice long since been the case – the Thuringian Minister for Education, Science and Culture had established a dependent foundation to oversee the memorials in 1994, and the decision to change this to a public law foundation was taken in 1997. 2003 merely saw the change in status come into effect, and represented little more than a formality. Nevertheless, as the Minister for Education, Science and Culture at the time Dagmar Schipanski emphasised, there was a symbolic significance to the change in status. It corresponded, in her words, to the ‘hervorragende[...] Arbeit der Gedenkstätten und deren hohe[...] internationale[...] Wertschätzung’. Moreover, belonging to a public law foundation now entitled both memorials to federal funding.<sup>431</sup> In effect, this was the regional gloss on a series of procedures at federal level, most obviously the *Schlußbericht* of the second Enquete Commission and the *Gedenkstättenkonzeption*.

As it happened, the change in the foundation’s status came only shortly after the fourth and final permanent exhibition at Buchenwald, focusing on the history of the *Nationale Mahn- und Gedenkstätte* and memory culture in the GDR, had been opened. The feeling of a watershed was further reinforced when the exhibition opened in late October 1999, with press reportage unsurprisingly picking up on the ‘end’ it signalled for the redesign process. Tellingly, the German term ‘Abschluss’ was used in several articles in relation to the ‘Neukonzeption’, implying that the overhaul of the outdated, antifascist GDR memorial was a finite process, even if remembrance itself would remain vital in

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<sup>431</sup> See Thüringer Landtag, 3. Wahlperiode, Plenarprotokoll 3/28 (12 Oct 2000), p. 1988.

years to come.<sup>432</sup> Certain other articles spoke of how the post-unification memorial site had managed to return commemoration of the victims to its rightful place at the centre of the design concept, as if it had been a question of undoing rather than ‘reconceiving’ the form of commemoration practiced prior to 1989.<sup>433</sup> As a new decade – and a new millennium – approached, it seemed increasingly as if the 1990s were now subject to historicisation in their own right as a phase on the way towards Thuringia’s now well-established post-unification memory culture.

Somewhat overlooked in this reading, but at least peripherally registered nonetheless, was the fact that Buchenwald was now a major international landmark, with over 600,000 visitors expected in 1999.<sup>434</sup> Dagmar Schipanski implied the same when she referred to the memorial’s ‘internationale Wertschätzung’. More deserving of attention however, above all in the eyes of the president of the Bundestag Wolfgang Thierse, who attended the exhibition opening, was the harassment of African visitors to the memorial by Neo-Nazis only a few days earlier. Thierse’s enjoinder to heed the lessons of the past, rendered all the more timely by the resurfacing of right-wing extremist attitudes, found its way into much of the coverage of the exhibition opening, highlighting the role authentic sites of brown-collar crimes continued to play in a *nationwide* fight against all forms of racism and intolerance.<sup>435</sup>

If the focus is broadened for a moment, however, it becomes clear that not all regional discourses on Buchenwald at this juncture treated it primarily as a symbol of the Holocaust and part of a national project of remembrance, as Thierse did. One such example is the Thuringian history curriculum from the same year. On the face of it, it would be fair to say that it resembled the Buchenwald memorial’s pedagogical programme, discussed in chapter two, more closely than anything else. Certainly it was no deficit model of classroom education, as the talk of ‘schülerbezogene[r] Unterricht’ made quite clear. Rather, the curriculum had at its core the goal of ‘empowering pupils to action’

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<sup>432</sup> See for example ‘Neukonzeption kein Stillstand’, *Thüringischer Landeszeitung* (henceforth *TLZ*), 13 Oct 1999; T. Rothbart, ‘Ende der Provisorien’, *Thüringer Allgemeine* (henceforth *TA*), 25 Oct 1999, p. 2; T. Gerlach, ‘Erinnerungslandschaft Buchenwald’, *taz*, 26 Oct 1999.

<sup>433</sup> T. Rothbart and H. Müller, ‘Der Rest war Langeweile’, *TA*, 23 Oct 1999.

<sup>434</sup> See ‘Neukonzeption kein Stillstand’.

<sup>435</sup> See for example Rothbart, ‘Ende der Provisorien’; ‘”Die Vergangenheit nicht verdrängen”’, *TLZ*, 25 Oct 1999; J. Schneider, ‘Neue Ausstellung in Buchenwald’, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 25 Oct 1999; ‘Museum im früheren KZ Buchenwald eröffnet’, *Die Welt*, 25 Oct 1999.

(‘die Schüler zum Handeln zu befähigen’)<sup>436</sup> a goal not unlike that of the *Speziallager* museum at Buchenwald. In fact, Rikola-Gunnar Lüttgenau, the head curator, had used similar language to explain the exhibition concept there, stressing that ‘[i]n der Ausstellung...es jedoch die Aufgabe jedes einzelnen [bleibt], sich mit der Vergangenheit auseinanderzusetzen, seine eigene Deutungen zu finden’.<sup>437</sup> The curriculum, likewise, expressly included ‘Kontroversität’ amongst its central didactic principles, suggesting that it too sought to respect historical and scholarly differences of opinion in the way it was implemented. Yet on closer inspection, the wording and structure of the curriculum actually undermined its claim to uphold multiperspectivity and betrayed a prescriptive approach to certain historical questions, which in turn impacted upon its presentation of Buchenwald.

In the ninth and tenth *Klassenstufen* – the two school years preceding the high school diploma course or *Qualifikationsphase* – this becomes clear. Buchenwald first appeared in the curriculum in the ninth *Klassenstufe*, when pupils took a module on National Socialism. Appropriately enough, the focus was therefore on the concentration camp before it moved to the special camp, which was handled in a unit entitled ‘Die Welt und Deutschland vom Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges bis 1949’ in the tenth *Klassenstufe*. Yet in spite of the historically appropriate sequential handling of the pre- and post-war camps, the *Speziallager* featured in the curriculum as part of an overarching comparison between ‘totalitäre Strukturen in der DDR’ and ‘demokratische[...] Strukturen in der Bundesrepublik’.<sup>438</sup> In addition, a ‘kritische Auseinandersetzung mit dem Geschichtsbild der DDR’ ran through the unit as a whole, leaving little doubt as to the context in which the special camp was to be taught.<sup>439</sup>

If anything, the curriculum arguably cemented its condemnation of the GDR in subsequent components such as the *Qualifikationsphase*. Here, pupils had the option of studying either the foundational or advanced course – the *Grundfach* and the *Leistungsfach*. In both cases, however, content from the tenth *Klassenstufe* was revisited and the dichotomous poles of Eastern European

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<sup>436</sup> Thüringer Kultusministerium (ed.), ‘Lehrplan für das Gymnasium: Geschichte’ (1999), 54pp (p. 2).

<sup>437</sup> Lüttgenau, ‘Zur Konzeption der Ausstellung’, in *Das sowjetische Speziallager Nr. 2 1945 – 1950*, ed. by Ritscher, pp. 12-13.

<sup>438</sup> ‘Lehrplan für das Gymnasium’ (1999), p. 31.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

totalitarianism and Western European liberal democracy were applied even less discriminately to post-war East and West Germany. In the *Grundfach*, for example, pupils consolidated knowledge of the ‘Funktion und Wirklichkeit der Ideologie im System der DDR’, whilst the *Leistungsfach* considered historical consciousness from a comparative perspective under the headings of ‘[s]tarres Geschichtsbild’ and ‘pluralistische Geschichtsauffassung’, denoting the GDR and the FRG respectively.<sup>440</sup> Another topic covered in the *Leistungsfach* was the handling of the Nazi past in both states.<sup>441</sup> By restricting coverage of GDR-antifascism to its propagandistic function and setting up unfavourable comparisons with the Federal Republic, the curriculum took an unequivocally critical position on memory culture in East Germany and, by extension, the East German state itself. Since the post-war camp at Buchenwald expressly featured in the unit dealing with the GDR, the curriculum clearly departed from political narratives that focused predominantly on the site’s history between 1937-1945. Whilst politicians such as Wolfgang Thierse had tied Buchenwald to efforts at confronting the legacy of Nazism, the singular association the curriculum drew between the site and the *Speziallager* – which it in turn subsumed into the topic of the GDR – rather downplayed its pre-1945 history.

Where did things stand with cultural discourse in Brandenburg? As seen in chapters two and three, the state was confronted with a serious underlying problem of xenophobic and right-wing extremist attitudes following unification. The arson attack on the Jewish barracks at Sachsenhausen in the autumn of 1992 was a prominent case in point. Mindful not least of how incidents of this sort could negatively impact upon Brandenburg’s image, the regional government drew up an action paper (‘Handlungskonzept’) entitled ‘“Tolerantes Brandenburg” – für eine starke und lebendige Demokratie’ in 1998.<sup>442</sup> In light of the wide-ranging proposals the action paper made for fostering a strong and functional democracy at regional level, it is fair to say that it represented a programmatic statement of Brandenburg’s political culture at the turn of the new

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<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38; p. 50.

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>442</sup> ‘“Tolerantes Brandenburg” – für eine starke und lebendige Demokratie: Handlungskonzept der Landesregierung für eine demokratische Gesellschaft mit Zivilcourage gegen Gewalt, Rechtsextremismus und Fremdenfeindlichkeit’, [http://www.tolerantes.brandenburg.de/media\\_fast/5791/Handlungskonzept.pdf](http://www.tolerantes.brandenburg.de/media_fast/5791/Handlungskonzept.pdf) [accessed 10 Feb 2013].

millennium. Consequently, it serves as a helpful indicator of the context within which specific debates around Sachsenhausen were to play out in the following decade.

Three frames emerge in the wording of the action paper: the regional, the national, and the international. The former and the latter are introduced immediately in the opening section outlining a *Leitbild* for Brandenburg. Indeed, the very first line described the state as ‘eine europäische Region mit Zukunft’, situated ‘[m]itten im neuen, erweiterten Europa’. Extending the frame even further, the *Leitbild* advocated a role for Brandenburg as a ‘weltoffenen Wirtschaftsstandort’. In order not to jeopardise its democratic image and hamper economic development, however, it was essential that foreigners and Germans from migrant backgrounds living in the state were not subject to any distressing treatment.<sup>443</sup> Thus, the *Leitbild* presented both a specifically regional and an avowedly international dimension to the problem of extremism: it damaged Brandenburg’s reputation on the international stage, which in turn had knock-on effects for the regional economy.

Elsewhere, the action paper appealed directly to a regional community, referring to a ‘politische Wertegemeinschaft’. The term itself effectively constructed a community of values by positing a common democratic worldview.<sup>444</sup> Yet the construct did not rely solely on associations in the present. In a subsequent section assessing the causes for the spread of right-wing racist and xenophobic attitudes, the action paper alluded to both present-day and historical self-identifications as East German amongst *Brandenburger*. Significantly, the very first cause listed was GDR antifascism, which had allegedly prevented any kind of coming to terms with institutionalised persecution and injustice. There later followed the concession that ‘biografische Entwertungserfahrungen nach 1990’ – a somewhat oblique reference to the GDR’s accession to the Federal Republic – might also have given rise to intolerance and racist resentments.<sup>445</sup> Unmistakeably, then, efforts at Brandenburg’s post-unification sensitisation to democratic values involved contending with the legacy of the GDR.

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<sup>443</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3f.

<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Any such confrontation with the GDR past would necessarily run parallel to initiatives raising awareness about the historical circumstances under which anti-Semitism, racism, political extremism and xenophobia more generally took root, however. The action paper was especially clear on the essential role ‘politische Bildung’ was to play in solidifying the bonds of the ‘politische Wertegemeinschaft’, and even singled out ‘Gedenkstättenpädagogik’ as one such means of democratic and rights-based education. In many ways, memorial sites actually featured in the action paper as a microcosm of its broader strategy, combining inward- and backward-looking, critical handling of the German past with outward-facing efforts at internationalisation. That is to say, they figured in all three of the regional, national, and international frames it mapped out. The *regional* ‘politische Wertegemeinschaft’ was the sites’ primary user, though the *national* project of confronting Germany’s dictatorial past was also a beneficiary of their pedagogical work, and a link to the *international* community was provided through the ‘Schülerbegegnungen’ that they facilitated.<sup>446</sup> Of course, all of this amounted to a formal enshrinement of the memorial sites at the centre of political culture – an enshrinement that was also effected at federal level through the introduction of the *Gedenkstättenkonzeption*. The difference here was the specific motivation for and background to the action paper in Brandenburg: it had been prompted by increasingly prevalent right-wing extremism at regional level.

Consequently, it is not possible to speak of a consensus on the double past in either state heading into the new millennium. This was in spite of significant moves towards institutionalisation at regional level, signalled by the creation of a public law foundation in Thuringia and the publication of the action paper in Brandenburg. As it was, the relationship between the memorials’ historical phases was inflected differently from state to state, and also within each state along public, political, and pedagogical dividing lines. Thus, even if the sites were at this point associated primarily with memory of the Nazi past, they were also increasingly seen in relation to Stalinist crimes in the SBZ and the GDR’s monodimensional memory culture.

What did by contrast emerge consistently in regional discourse on Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen was recognition of three distinct dimensions to

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<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

these narratives. Both memorials were at once sites of an increasingly globalised Holocaust memory, as well as of a well-established nationwide culture of remembrance, and finally of the ongoing negotiation of regional identity and memory culture following the demise of the GDR. As will become clear in the remainder of the chapter, the latter two debates increasingly figured in regional discussion of the memorials as the 2000s wore on, whilst comparatively little mention was made of their place in a trans-national culture of remembrance. The tenacity of these ‘localised’ discursive frames is an interesting finding, not least as it reminds us that, in spite of memory’s inherent mobility in terms of the globalised and transcultural technologies, symbols and conventions governing its articulation, as an act of recall it remains grounded in specific places and contexts.<sup>447</sup>

### ***2006: challenging or upholding the centrality of the Nazi past?***

This section of the chapter concentrates on two episodes that can be seen as the most serious challenges to the existing coordinates of memory faced by Brandenburg and Thuringia in the 2000s. These were the speeches by Jörg Schönbohm at Sachsenhausen during the concentration camp liberation anniversary there in April 2006, and Hermann Schäfer’s opening address at the *Kunstfest* in August of that year. Though, as I discuss in the introductory chapter, the ultimately unsuccessful CDU-led proposal to revise the Federal Memorials Strategy and the Saxony Memorials Foundations controversy in 2003-4 had already raised significant questions about the place of the Nazi past in German memory culture, neither had the same direct regional impact as Schäfer and Schönbohm’s speeches did in Thuringia and Brandenburg respectively. Furthermore, the speeches must be seen in relation to the situation at the turn of the millennium, outlined above. In light of the fact that there was, even at this earlier juncture, little consensus around remembrance of National Socialism and

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<sup>447</sup> See Susannah Radstone, ‘What place is this? Transcultural Memory and the Locations of Memory Studies’, *Parallax*, 17, 4 (2011), 109-23.

Communism, in-depth analysis of debates in 2006 can draw attention to longer-term chronologies behind the regional construction of cultural memory. To what extent had attitudes towards the double past in the two federal states changed by the mid-2000s, particularly with regard to the assumed centrality of the Nazi past to the broader debate? The following section will explore, firstly, the fallout from both speeches in political circles and the pages of the regional press, before turning later on in the chapter to the position of civic memory activists. I begin with responses to Schäfer's *Kunstfest* speech in the Thuringian press.

On one level, coverage of the story in regional newspapers upheld a normative model of post-unification memory culture, rehearsing the standard position taken by both the Schröder and Merkel administrations in which the Holocaust was rooted firmly at the centre of national identity. Despite initially engaging with the possibility that a change of course in official memory of the Nazi past had been signalled by Schäfer's speech at the *Kunstfest*, reportage was soon declaring the incident to be all but over. An article appearing in the *Thüringische Landeszeitung* (TLZ) on September 2 epitomised the *volte-face*, declaring 'Weimarer Erinnerungskultur ist leitmotivisch und angemessen'.<sup>448</sup> The headline was a quote taken from the regional Minister for Culture Jens Goebel, whom the newspaper had interviewed about the scandal, yet neither Goebel himself nor the article clarified what ought to be understood as 'appropriate' ('angemessen') in the first place. Rather, Goebel took the *Kunstfest* as tacit evidence of Weimar's (and by extension Thuringia's) exemplary role in remembering the Nazi past, describing it as a 'Ritual des Gedächtnisses'.<sup>449</sup> When pressed on the question of whether ritualistic commemoration risked becoming little more than a 'leere[...] Zeremonie', he even countered that a ritual, understood as 'etwas nach gleichen Regeln Wiederkehrendes', actually ensured the vitality of remembrance.

By restating the value of well-established commemorative rituals, Goebel was of course indicating his support – and that of the regional government – for the existing coordinates of memory in official commemorative discourse. The message was reiterated the following day in the TLZ, which reported the federal government's desire '...die Debatte über die...befürchtete Wende in der

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<sup>448</sup> W. Hirsch, 'Weimarer Erinnerungskultur ist leitmotivisch und angemessen', *TLZ*, 2 Sept 2006.

<sup>449</sup> *Ibid.*

Erinnerungskultur in Deutschland zu beenden.<sup>450</sup> As understandable as it was for the government to wish to assuage fears voiced by opposition parties and victims' groups, the reference to 'ending the debate' ('die Debatte beenden') nevertheless betrayed an underlying assumption that the parameters of Germany's memory culture were not normally open to discussion. Channelling first Goebel's plea for continuity and now the position of the federal government unmistakably aligned the press in Thuringia with an institutionalised approach to the Nazi past. A little over a month later, when Hermann Schäfer travelled to Paris to apologise in person to Bertrand Herz for the controversy his speech in Weimar had sparked, the impression given by the TLZ was of a return to normality. It declared the affair officially 'aus der Welt geräumt'<sup>451</sup> and several days later ran an article with the title 'NS-Verbrechen nicht relativieren'. Though the headline was a quote taken from Bertrand Herz, the admonishing tone nonetheless elevated his appeal to the status of a watchword for the whole of Thuringia when it came to commemorating the Nazi past.<sup>452</sup>

It is worth noting the space afforded to regional opposition politicians such as Carsten Schneider (SPD) and Birgit Klaubert (Linkspartei.PDS), who were critical of Goebel's decision to withhold comment on Schäfer's speech, in the pages of the regional press.<sup>453</sup> Schneider in particular saw potentially damaging consequences for Germany if the incident in Weimar was not clarified, and even appeared to throw down the gauntlet to the SPD's coalition party in the *Bund*, the CDU, categorically ruling out support for a 'backdoor' attempt to shift course in the handling of the past.<sup>454</sup> Indeed, he believed the current policy to be integral to Germany's newfound self-confidence, remarking that this "im Wesentlichen auch aus der Beschäftigung mit der Vergangenheit [resultiert]".<sup>455</sup> Citing Schneider, the TLZ article arrived at the same basic position on the past as the CDU-SPD government, but via a different argument: it advocated the same brand of 'negative nationalism' but drew upon an *oppositional* political discourse, represented in this case by figures such as Schneider and Klaubert, in order to make its point. The TLZ was no mere mouthpiece for the CDU, then,

<sup>450</sup> H. Kaczmarek, 'Erinnerungskultur: Bundesregierung plant keine Wende', *TLZ*, 3 Sept 2006.

<sup>451</sup> 'Entschuldigung bei den Opfern', *TLZ*, 11 Oct 2006.

<sup>452</sup> 'NS-Verbrechen nicht relativieren', *TLZ*, 14 Oct 2006.

<sup>453</sup> H. Kaczmarek, "'Es geht um die Grundfesten'", *TLZ*, 1 Sept 2006; "'Bisherigen Konsens aufkündigen?'" *TLZ*, 1 Sept 2006.

<sup>454</sup> "'Es geht um Grundfesten'", *TLZ*.

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*

but nor was this a clear-cut example of playing politics with history – the picture in Thuringia was more complex than that.

Though the Thuringian position vis-à-vis the National Socialist past was consistent with the federal government's, the means by which it arrived at this position was not. Though the press stridently opposed the relativisation of Nazi crimes, the very process of coming to terms with the past appeared to be seen from a 'regional' perspective, as if what was at stake was Thuringia's own record in *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. This was clear for one thing in the way in which Volkhard Knigge featured in regional reportage at the time. Only shortly after Schäfer's speech at the opening ceremony of the *Kunstfest*, a comment piece in the TLZ entitled 'Auf Knigge hören' appeared, urging regional and federal politicians to heed his advice.<sup>456</sup> Several days later, the paper dedicated almost two pages to an interview with him, far more space than was allotted to other commentators on the incident, and indeed more, for that matter, than to either Goebel or the federal minister for culture Bernd Neumann.<sup>457</sup> Admittedly, as both ministers were keeping a studied silence at this point, Knigge was in some respects the automatic choice for the press to speak to, but it is significant nonetheless that the TLZ chose to foreground his views. The effect of citing Knigge, who spoke of the fallout from the incident as 'eine Frage von Sensibilität und Aufmerksamkeit und Haltung',<sup>458</sup> especially when it came to the survivors of the concentration camp, was to imply an almost self-evident regard for the National Socialist past and its victims in Thuringia – he was after all speaking in his capacity as director of a prominent Thuringian concentration camp memorial. Regardless of the fact that he represented an internationally recognised institution and thus spoke for Germany's memorial industry on a broader level, Knigge was presented in the press as a regional authority and the personification of a distinct Thuringian discourse on the Nazi past.

Even if Knigge's primary concern was the survivors of Buchenwald, who he felt had been let down by Schäfer, the interview for the most part focused on the praise he gave to local and regional protagonists in the ensuing debate. For all that Knigge insisted the issue was not just a 'Parteiproblem' and that 'es...nicht mehr um das Ansehen Weimars [geht]', the headline nonetheless singled out the

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<sup>456</sup> H. Kaczmarek, 'Auf Knigge hören', *TLZ*, 26 Aug 2006.

<sup>457</sup> H. Holtmeister, 'Es kommt entscheidend auf Dieter Althaus an', *TLZ*, 1 Sept 2006.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*

vital intermediary role he assigned to the state president Dieter Althaus, whose actions would supposedly decide how the affair was handled at federal level.<sup>459</sup>

Furthermore, the article picked up on Knigge's mention of regional 'Standards' in the handling of the past that should be brought to Berlin by Althaus.

Accordingly, this was a case of exporting regional memory culture beyond Thuringia – an impression only underscored further by the depiction of Althaus as a 'Botschafter zu dem, was wir in Thüringen erreicht haben'.<sup>460</sup> Actors in Berlin, by contrast, came across as, at best, unenlightened in their own attempts to commemorate victims of Nazism. Schäfer's clumsy attempt at excusing his choice of words at the *Kunstfest* – he expressed surprise that one was still expected to mention Buchenwald when in Weimar – was conveyed with bewilderment by the *Thüringer Allgemeine* (TA), which labelled it 'mehr als peinlich'.<sup>461</sup>

In this regard, comparison with the audience in Weimar could not have been more pronounced. Newspapers made much out of the award of the *Bundesverdienstorden* to Volkhard Knigge in recognition of his work at Buchenwald, which was said to have 'set the tone' ('deutliche Akzente setzen') for Germany's memory culture more generally.<sup>462</sup> Though Knigge's record was in this sense exemplary, reportage did not restrict its praise to regional figureheads. The entire audience at the 'Gedächtnis Buchenwald' concert, somewhat misleadingly referred to as a 'Weimarer Publikum[...]’ despite the event's nationwide popularity, were congratulated in an article in the TA for audibly expressing their disapproval at Schäfer's speech. A guest from Trier was also quoted to this effect, and ventured to suggest that the audience might not have intervened had the concert been held elsewhere. By contrast, the events in Weimar were in her estimation just one step short of resembling the East German popular protests of 1989: "' [es] fehlte nur noch, dass jemand ruft 'Wir sind das Volk'"'.<sup>463</sup> Overblown though her comment was, the link to the 'Wende' was pointed, insofar as it established a line of continuity between the protesters in 1989 and post-unification civic culture in Thuringia. Even Knigge himself was moved to recall successful protests against a planned Neo-Nazi march in Weimar

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<sup>459</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>461</sup> W. Leissing, 'Fassungslos', *TA*, n.d.

<sup>462</sup> H. Kazcmarek, 'Althaus vermittelte hinter den Kulissen', *TLZ*, 2 Sept 2006.

<sup>463</sup> M. Baar, 'Keine Duckmäuser', *TA*, 28 Aug 2006.

in 2000 when interviewed by the TLZ, in effect vouching for the tradition of solidarity with the victims of National Socialism that had existed in Thuringia long before 2006.<sup>464</sup>

The Thuringian press' presentation of regional memory culture as 'leitmotivisch und angemessen' – to use Jens Goebel's words – can therefore be understood in two ways. On the one hand, its focus on the Nazi past and internalisation of 'negative nationalism' looked from the outside like a fairly straightforward iteration of the 'official' federal memory narrative. At neither regional nor federal level was the existing consensus on the place of the Holocaust and German perpetration in contemporary national identity seriously called into question by press reportage. Given the timing of Schäfer's speech, coming as it did in the wake of heated debates on the dual legacies of German suffering and Nazi crimes in the memory culture of the Berlin Republic, it was hard not to imagine it provoking impassioned responses. Yet in the event, commentators from both political and intellectual circles in Thuringia, far from positing a link between the *Kunstfest* episode and the bitter polemics that had accompanied Buchenwald's redesign in the 1990s as might have been expected, spoke almost unanimously of the state's proud achievements in facing up to the Nazi past since unification. In light of the debates raging in Brandenburg over Sachsenhausen's double past in 2005-6, moreover, it is remarkable that none of the articles surveyed here seized upon Buchenwald's own multiple histories. After all, the double past and Schäfer's speech threw up the same thorny question of how, if at all, a nation that had a historical and moral responsibility to remember the Third Reich could acknowledge its own suffering (whether at the hands of the Allies or Soviet communism) alongside crimes committed in its name.

To be sure, there were some – such as Knigge – who did recognise that the question of finding a 'historisch angemessene Proportionierung' subtended the broader debate set in motion by Schäfer's speech.<sup>465</sup> But his intervention was converted by the press into implicit praise for Thuringia's memory culture rather than engaged with in its own right. Herein lay a clue as to what the regional press might actually have meant by 'leitmotivisch und angemessen'. Reportage gave to understand that the *status quo* would not be challenged in Thuringia, for sure, but

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<sup>464</sup> Holtmeister, 'Es kommt entscheidend auf Dieter Althaus an'.

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*

it also attributed the impetus for confronting the Nazi past to regional actors and institutions as opposed to directives coming from Berlin. In a curious paradox, memory culture at state level corresponded almost exactly to a normative model, but had been constructed from the bottom up and owed to the initiative of protagonists in the regional commemorative landscape.

Unlike reportage of the story outside of Thuringia (see chapter five), the regional press made at least a notional attempt to gauge the opinions of readers, who were invited to send in letters. Even if this forum for discussion was short lived, as indicated by the speed with which the debate on Schäfer's speech died down, it was noticeable how few letters took the newspapers' positivist view of regional memory culture. If anything, the impression gleaned from the readers' letters is one of scepticism towards a debate on the past that was seen to exclude most *Thüringer* and be confined to a political elite. In two instances, it was rather cynically suggested that the debate was intended above all to raise Weimar's profile, challenging Volkhard Knigge's claim that it went beyond the matter of the town's reputation. The first letter suspected that the audience's interruption of Schäfer's speech – attributed more narrowly to a 'hustende[...] und klatschende[...] Gruppe auf dem Balkon' – was in fact premeditated and triggered by high-profile audience members 'issuing instructions' ('Anweisungen geben') from the front rows.<sup>466</sup> The second letter feared that Thuringia was being used as a stage upon which 'westliche Alt-Achtundsechziger und Neo-Konservative' could revive familiar disputes over the Nazi past.<sup>467</sup> In both cases the implication was clear: locals were all but excluded from the entire affair, and shaping memory culture in Thuringia remained the preserve of external actors – whether in the guise of West Germans or 'Prominente' intent on attacking Schäfer's narrative of 20<sup>th</sup> century German history.

On one level, the response to Schäfer's speech within Thuringia appeared to be fundamentally 'East German'. Besides several readers' obvious irritation at archetypal 'Western' figures such as the 'Achtundsechziger' or 'Neokonservative' hijacking the *Kunstfest*, the press argued that it was in fact Berlin that had something to learn from the memory culture established in Thuringia rather than the other way around. This was even reinforced *ex negativo*

<sup>466</sup> B. Wiederanders, 'Wirkungsvolle (Zer)Störung', *TLZ*, 2 Sept 2006.

<sup>467</sup> E. Döbler, 'Wird alter Streit in neuem Gewand ausgetragen?', *TLZ*, 2 Sept 2006.

in several instances. The TLZ for one thing responded touchily to Schäfer's discussion of post-war flight and expulsion in his speech, alleging that he had lectured the audience ('obrigkeitlich sprechen') and 'shown a low opinion of East Germans' ('die Ostdeutschen...gering geschätzt') by assuming they were ill informed about the topic.<sup>468</sup> In other words, it was in the newspaper's estimation untenable to argue collective memory in post-unification Thuringia was any longer constrained by taboos dating from the GDR.

Likewise, a reader who had written in to the newspaper chided locals for failing to live up to Weimar's historical tradition of free and enlightened thought. Particularly provocative in this context was the letter's allusion, by way of negative comparison, to first and second generation Germans 'who all too readily revered the Führer' ('[die] nur allzu bereit dem "Führer huldigten'). The same could be said about mentioning a 'narrow, conservative' Weimar in which everything was 'predetermined [from above]' ('vorgegeben').<sup>469</sup> It is unlikely that the totalitarian shades of this presumably GDR-era Weimar escaped the attention of the East German readership. Certainly the decision to print the letter seemed calculated to instil confidence in Thuringia's recent memory work, since the subtext was essentially that GDR mentalities and memory culture had, but for this uncharacteristic blip, been left behind for good. Moreover, the fact that the letter appeared in the TLZ alongside another article relaying Dieter Althaus' intermediary work in Berlin only reinforced the expectation that the new federal states should now lead the way when it came to remembering National Socialist crimes.

Consequently, the differentiated positions of certain readers did not affect the overwhelmingly positivist tone adopted by the regional press when it came to remembering Buchenwald and the National Socialist past more generally. Even where readers had voiced scepticism about the very concept of 'memory culture' or questioned its inclusiveness, newspaper reportage maintained that East Germans – and above all *Thüringer* – were committed to working through brown-collar crimes all the same. Even if the motivation for doing so derived in part from a specifically East German desire to shake off the stereotype of a population beholden to 'verordneten Antifaschismus', it did not preclude supporting the federal government's stance on remembering the dual legacies of

<sup>468</sup> Holtmeister, 'Es kommt entscheidend auf Dieter Althaus an'.

<sup>469</sup> 'Lasst euch nicht die Butter vom Brot nehmen', *TLZ*, 2 Sept 2006.

National Socialism and Communism. No doubt the conventions of press reportage, such as quoting from a small elite consisting almost exclusively of politicians and prominent memory activists, helped to reinforce this normative picture. However, turning now to discussion of Sachsenhausen's double past in the Brandenburg press, we will see that it is not memory media alone that shape discourses on the past.

Several months prior to Schäfer's disastrous speech at the *Kunstfest*, the SPD-CDU coalition government in Brandenburg became embroiled in a controversy of its own surrounding Sachsenhausen's double past. Just as in Thuringia, the incident revolved around a speech given at a ceremony commemorating the victims of the concentration camp. In this instance, the speaker was the CDU Interior Minister for Brandenburg, Jörg Schönbohm, who as a senior official in the East German army had overseen the absorption of the *Nationale Volksarmee* (NVA) into the Army of the Federal Republic of Germany in the early 1990s before moving into politics. Speaking at the commemorative ceremony marking the 61<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camp, and in front of survivors from that camp, Schönbohm had elected to also commemorate the victims of the *Speziallager*, pointing out that they had been entirely denied the right to commemoration prior to unification.

Predictably, his comments met with strong protest from the concentration camp survivors' organisation, the *Internationales Sachsenhausen-Komitee* (ISK), whose spokesperson Hans Rentmeister described the speech as an 'Unverschämtheit'. Rentmeister cast the *Speziallager* in over-simplistic terms when he spoke flatly of the prisoners there as 'Mörder, Peiniger und Quäler'<sup>470</sup> of the survivors of the Nazi camp, but he and others in the ISK had justifiable grounds for denouncing Schönbohm. After all, he had been speaking at the central site in the redesigned memorial dedicated to victims of the concentration camp, the former *Station Z*. This cynical name denoted the final phase of a prisoner's time at Sachsenhausen, just as entering the camp through *Turm A* marked the beginning. *Station Z* was, moreover, the site of mass murders by the SS, such as the targeted liquidation of approximately 12,000 Soviet POWs in autumn 1941. It did not, by contrast, belong to the topography of the special camp. As for Schönbohm himself, he was speaking in his capacity as deputy

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<sup>470</sup> 'Eklat beim Jahrestag: Schönbohm brüskiert KZ-Überlebende', *Spiegel Online*, 23 Apr 2006 <<http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,412667,00.html>> [accessed 23 Mar 2011].

President on behalf of the entire regional government at the ceremony, standing in for the convalescent Matthias Platzeck. In the following, reactions to Schönbohm's speech in the regional press will be mapped out before comparing the positions taken in Thuringia and Brandenburg on the respective 'crises' that erupted in 2006.

Coverage of Schönbohm's speech at Sachsenhausen concentrated overwhelmingly on political actors, just as reportage in Thuringia would later do in the wake of Schäfer's remarks at the *Kunstfest*. In this case, however, the scandal caused by Schönbohm was seen almost exclusively in party-political terms. Virtually as soon as the story had broken, the *Potsdamer Neueste Nachrichten* (PNN) detailed a range of reactions to the speech, which pointed to a divide within the coalition over its exact implications. Whilst the CDU denied that Schönbohm had any intention of conflating the two separate histories of the concentration camp and special camp at Sachsenhausen, or, worse, of relativising the Nazi past, the head of the SPD faction Günter Baaske accused him of giving the 'wrong speech at the wrong place at the wrong time'.<sup>471</sup> A day later, it appeared that the situation had reached a head. The PNN now reported demands for Schönbohm's resignation from members of the SPD and noted the 'considerable tension' ('erhebliche Spannung') within the party, clearly exasperated by the damage done to the government's reputation by its coalition partner at Sachsenhausen.<sup>472</sup>

Along with its narrow focus on the political ramifications of the speech, regional reportage also concentrated its attention on Schönbohm, resulting in Sachsenhausen and the broader issue of the double past being pushed to the sidelines. Newsworthy though the deputy president's precarious position was, the over-emphasis on his embattled place in the coalition came at the expense of pausing to consider what the implications of his speech for Brandenburg's memory culture actually were, and why this was important in the first place. Instead, it sufficed to reference the criticism Schönbohm's comments came in for, leaving the reader to draw the implicit conclusion that they were problematic. Remarkably, only one article broaches this issue at all, and even then in the space of a single sentence relaying Günter Morsch's reaction to the speech. Morsch noted that it was an 'Abweichung bisheriger Praxis' to

<sup>471</sup> 'Reaktionen auf Schönbohm's Sachsenhausen-Rede', *PNN*, 25 Apr 2006.

<sup>472</sup> M. Mara, 'Schönbohms Rücktritt in SPD gefordert', *PNN*, 26 Apr 2006.

commemorate victims of *both* camps at the concentration camp liberation ceremony, and therefore raised the question of the coordinates of regional memory culture.<sup>473</sup> Regional reportage was, however, conspicuously silent on the matter.

In this sense, it paralleled nationwide coverage of the incident, which also personalised the story rather than concentrating on the regional government's memory politics. An article in the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* neatly illustrates this. It went as far as to suggest that Schönbohm deliberately courted controversy as part of a distinctive personal brand of conservative politics; 'starke Sprüche als Markenzeichen', as the author put it.<sup>474</sup> By this logic, the speech at Sachsenhausen was merely in keeping with Schönbohm's uncompromising character, career path, and personal quest to discredit the GDR. Indeed, he is even referred to as the 'Exgeneral' at one point, perhaps hinting at his style of politics, and his desire to 'castigate' (geißeln) the East German state is said to outweigh even his concern about offending the attendees at the Sachsenhausen ceremony. What this added up to, of course, was a reaction to the speech that deflected attention away from the testing questions of continuity and change in Brandenburg's official stance on the double past.

A second prominent feature of regional reportage was its conjoining of Schönbohm's speech at Sachsenhausen and an ongoing dispute he was engaged in with the *Bundesgeneralanwalt*, Kay Nehm, regarding a violent attack on a German-Ethiopian resident of Potsdam. Though the victim was still in critical condition some time after the attack and an extremist motivation seemed highly probable, Schönbohm vigorously refuted the attack's connection to Brandenburg's right-wing scene, and expressed irritation at Nehm's attempt to wrest jurisdiction of the case away from regional authorities. The PNN made clear the extent to which one issue had become inseparable from the other when it reported on the 'zwei Fronten' Schönbohm now faced, referring to opposition firstly within the ranks of regional government after his speech at Sachsenhausen and secondly to his stance on the earlier attack in Potsdam.<sup>475</sup> What was remarkable about reportage in this case was the way in which the underlying issue of right-wing extremism in Brandenburg had permeated into the discourse

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<sup>473</sup> P. Tiede, 'Schönbohms Debatten', *PNN*, 25 Apr 2006.

<sup>474</sup> K. Bauer, 'Starke Sprüche als Markenzeichen', *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 25 Apr 2006.

<sup>475</sup> Tiede, 'Schönbohms Debatten'.

on the double past, and vice versa. Take for instance the PNN's perspective on the two incidents. Reporting accusations levelled by Schönbohm's critics, the newspaper stated that the Sachsenhausen speech had 'damaged' the fight against *extremism* by 'weighing up' ('aufwiegen') Nazi crimes against other historical atrocities. Likewise, Schönbohm's refusal to acknowledge extremist motives behind the attack in Potsdam 'trivialised' ('bagatellisieren') the matter – a term that had itself gained currency in debates over how to commemorate victims of National Socialism and of Stalinism.<sup>476</sup> Regional reportage appropriated the 'relativisation-trivialisation' couplet at the heart of the 'Faulenbach Formel', which had long been the maxim for addressing the double past, and recontextualised it to fit with ongoing efforts at combating right-wing extremism in Brandenburg.

Several days later, the PNN published a series of readers' letters relating to the 'aktuelle[...] Politik des Innenministers Jörg Schönbohm', once more lumping together the distinct stories under a common rubric.<sup>477</sup> Two letters took Schönbohm to task for his handling of the Potsdam attack, decrying this as further evidence of Brandenburg's 'traurige[n] Rekord' in tackling extremist violence. A third expressed disappointment that his Sachsenhausen speech had been misused to air party political disputes, but apparently saw a connection to the extremism discourse too. Here the terminology was particularly revealing: politicians and the press were alleged to have consigned the speech to the 'rechte Ecke', suggesting just as earlier articles had that the real issue facing Brandenburg (and especially Schönbohm) was the threat of the radical right. The coordinates of regional memory culture played at most a secondary role in the incident.

In addition to couching the controversy at Sachsenhausen in a regional discourse on right-wing extremism, the PNN accorded CDU politicians a considerable amount of space in its coverage of the story. Unsurprisingly, Schönbohm's party defended his decision to honour victims of both camps at the commemorative ceremony. More unusual was the argumentation the head of the CDU faction, Thomas Lunacek, used to justify joint commemoration, which rested on the fact that Brandenburg's SPD president, Matthias Platzeck, had honoured the victims of the *Speziallager* at Jamlitz the previous year. That

<sup>476</sup> Mara, 'Schönbohms Rücktritt in SPD gefordert'.

<sup>477</sup> 'Kontroverse Äußerungen des brandenburgischen Innenministers', *PNN*, 2 May 2006.

Platzeck had attended a ceremony marking the opening of that camp 60 years previously, and not a ceremony commemorating victims of National Socialism, did not deter the CDU from drawing the comparison with Schönbohm's speech anyway.<sup>478</sup> Furthermore, the justification drew upon two important arguments that, as we will see, reappear frequently in regional discourse on the *Speziallager* at Sachsenhausen. The first argument foregrounded imprisonment of children in the special camps in order to divert attention away from many of the older prisoners' active or passive support of the National Socialist state. The second emphasised that Social Democrats who had opposed the forced merger with the KPD in the Soviet Occupation Zone (SBZ) had also been held in the camps. By this rationale, the special camps had less to do with Stalinist crimes than they did with the GDR and its prehistory in the SBZ. By extension, the debate on the two camps at Sachsenhausen was reducible to the question of the relationship between memory of National Socialism and East German Communism. As Andrew Beattie has recently pointed out, addressing the singularity of brown-collar crimes through comparison with the GDR, as opposed to Bolshevism or Stalinism, marks a fundamental change in the tenor of German memory contests since the Historians' Dispute (the *Historikerstreit*).<sup>479</sup> On the evidence of Sachsenhausen's place in Brandenburg's memory culture, which I discuss at greater length later in the chapter, this trend appears set to continue.

A final dimension to the controversy surrounding Schönbohm's Sachsenhausen speech exposed a creeping tendency to equate National Socialism and Communism in the Brandenburg press. When news later surfaced that Hans Rentmeister, one of Schönbohm's most outspoken critics, had in fact been a long-serving employee of the *Stasi*, reportage revisited the initial incident at Sachsenhausen and now appeared to side with Schönbohm and the CDU, at least if the zeal with which it attacked the GDR was anything to go by. Shortly before Rentmeister resigned from his position in the ISK, the Brandenburg Memorials Foundation formally terminated cooperation with him in light of the new revelations – a move which the press seemed to greet. An article in the PNN for

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<sup>478</sup> Mara, 'Schönbohms Rücktritt in SPD gefordert'.

<sup>479</sup> Andrew H. Beattie, 'Ein neuer Historikerstreit? Kommunismus und Nationalsozialismus in der deutschen Erinnerungs- und Geschichtspolitik seit 1990', in *Ein Kampf um Deutungshoheit: Politik, Opferinteressen und historische Forschung: Die Auseinandersetzungen um die Gedenk- und Begegnungsstätte Leistikowstraße Potsdam*, ed. by Wolfgang Benz (Berlin: Metropol, 2013), pp. 16-36 (p. 24).

instance relayed the praise given by Thomas Lunacek and the Minister for Research, Science and Culture Johanna Wanka (also CDU) for this decisive action, evidently sharing their relief that potential damage to regional memory culture had been ‘averted’.<sup>480</sup> Although Rentmeister insisted that his initial criticism of Schönbohm remained valid, newspapers did not lend much credibility to his position. Instead, the *Berliner Morgenpost* averred that concentration camp memorials in East Germany had served the ‘Legitimierung der SED-Ideologie’, preventing a ‘seriöse Darstellung der Vergangenheit’ here until unification.<sup>481</sup> Besides condemning the practices and ideology of the SED, this position also appeared to normalize Schönbohm’s comments by banishing the truly inappropriate commemorative practice at the memorial to the period prior to unification. The speech at Sachsenhausen in 2006 might have been controversial, but by this logic it nevertheless belonged unequivocally on the ‘right’ side of 1990.

Tellingly, both Rentmeister himself and Pierre Gouffault, the president of the ISK, registered the mounting hostility. Gouffault stated with some irritation that no-one could ‘force’ (‘zwingen’) the survivors of the concentration camp to honour the ‘Verantwortlichen des NS-Terrors’, by which he meant the prisoners of the *Speziallager*.<sup>482</sup> His choice of words perfectly illustrated the underlying assumption on the part of the survivors’ association that powers in Brandenburg were now actively lobbying in support of post-war victims. Rentmeister, for his part, commented dryly on the irony of the situation. Punning on the recent unearthing of the file incriminating him, he alleged that the regional government had ‘drawn a card’ of its own (‘eine Karte gezogen’) in response to criticism of Schönbohm: outing his work for the *Stasi*.<sup>483</sup> Gouffault and Rentmeister’s agitated retorts in the press indicate that, at least in this particular medium, consensus had perhaps moved away from the ‘singularity’ theory and towards a position that equated the National Socialist and Communism pasts. Certainly, the willingness of the press to largely disregard Rentmeister’s original criticism of

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<sup>480</sup> T. Metzner, ‘Stasi-Fall im Sachsenhausen-Komitee’, *PNN*, 8 May 2006.

<sup>481</sup> S. F. Kellerhoff and U. Müller, ‘Stasi-Offizier spricht für KZ-Opfer’, *Berliner Morgenpost*, 7 May 2006.

<sup>482</sup> K. Bischoff, ‘Ex-Stasi-Mann vertritt keine Nazi-Opfer mehr’, *Berliner Zeitung*, 9 May 2006.

<sup>483</sup> K. Bischoff, ‘Sachsenhausen-Komitee kannte Stasi-Vita seines Generalsekretärs’, *Berliner Zeitung*, 10 May 2006.

Schönbohm for the sake of distancing himself from him suggested that the coordinates of memory had begun to shift.

These impassioned disagreements about how to commemorate the two camp phases at Sachsenhausen must be seen in the context of a particular scepticism in Brandenburg as to the rigorousness with which the region's GDR past has been addressed since unification. Against this background, it is not hard to see how and why equationist readings of Sachsenhausen's double past (detailed below) have begun to creep into regional discourse. Comparing events here to developments in Thuringia only further reinforces the impression of a distinct 'Brandenburger Weg'. Whilst Volkhard Knigge was able to surmise that the multiple 'round' anniversaries in 2005 (of the liberation of the concentration camps, and the establishment – or dissolution, depending on how one looked at it – of the special camps) passed more or less without incident at Buchenwald, the same cannot be said of Sachsenhausen.<sup>484</sup> Here, the regional DVU faction provocatively laid a wreath at the memorial on January 27 explicitly honouring victims of Soviet special camps, despite the day's connection to and focus on victims of National Socialism.<sup>485</sup> Though the DVU's action was calculated to stir up controversy (the memorial staff were left with little choice but to remove the wreath), it also attested to the difficulties inherent to discussion of the double past in Brandenburg. Looking at a more diffuse range of newspaper articles on the post-war camp at Sachsenhausen, as well as on the GDR past more generally, sheds some light on these factors.

The title of an article in *Die Welt* in the summer of 2006, appearing in the wake of Schönbohm's controversial speech at the concentration camp liberation ceremony, epitomised the hypersensitivity towards communist injustice in Brandenburg. Under the headline 'Stalins Opfer gehen in die Offensive', the article detailed the complaints levelled at the Sachsenhausen site staff by the chair of the ALS, Gisela Gneist, and the litany of shortcomings in addressing the East German past identified by CDU politicians.<sup>486</sup> Gneist claimed that the survivors of the *Speziallager* felt like 'Opfer 2. Klasse', whilst senior CDU

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<sup>484</sup> Volkhard Knigge, 'Die Umgestaltung der DDR-Gedenkstätten nach 1990. Ein Erfahrungsbericht am Beispiel Buchenwalds', in *Woran erinnern? Der Kommunismus in der deutschen Erinnerungskultur*, ed. by Peter März and Hans-Joachim Veen (Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2006), pp. 91-108 (p. 94).

<sup>485</sup> See Wolfram von Scheliha, 'Sackgasse Totalitarismus', *Deutschland Archiv*, 39 (2006), 283-290.

<sup>486</sup> G. Mallwitz, 'Stalins Opfer gehen in die Offensive', *Die Welt*, 16 Aug 2006, p. 33.

figures such as Schönbohm himself and the head of the parliamentary faction Thomas Lunacek recommended that the injustices suffered by the camp inmates be ‘made clear’ (‘deutlich machen’) and the camps be addressed in school history lessons (‘im Geschichtsunterricht...vertiefen’).<sup>487</sup> Sandwiched between Gneist’s allegation and the coverage of CDU demands was a very brief section detailing the position of the *Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten*. As a result of this sequencing, the foundation was made to seem as if it had a considerable amount to answer for. The fact that the organisation’s speaker, Horst Seferens, was forced to correct Gneist (‘[der Stiftungssprecher] sagt dagegen...’)<sup>488</sup> and reiterate the foundation’s fundamental opposition to playing off victim groups against one another suggested an oppositional rather than cooperative relationship between the memorial site and the ALS. Moreover the coverage of CDU-backed moves to scale up a working through of the GDR past highlighted an underlying assumption that there had been a failure to do so satisfactorily thus far.

Gneist had been reacting to a quote from an earlier article in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, in which Günter Morsch was cited warning of ‘revisionistische Kräfte’ at work in efforts to commemorate victims of the *Speziallager*.<sup>489</sup> In fact, the article had taken Morsch’s quote out of context, and moreover it noted the separate commemorative ceremonies held on consecutive days by the memorial and the ALS in 2005 as well as Gneist’s hostility towards Morsch. This only added to the impression of a supposed inability to adequately confront post-1945 injustice in Brandenburg (and specifically at Sachsenhausen).<sup>490</sup> The same conclusion could surely be drawn from comments made by Brandenburg’s Minister for Science, Research and Culture, Johanna Wanka, who advocated the ‘Ausbau’ of memory culture in the state. Given that Wanka’s pledge came after she remarked that the special camps had been a taboo topic in the GDR and that, in this spirit, a new *Speziallager* museum had been opened at Sachsenhausen in 2001, it can only be assumed that ‘Ausbau’ here meant an increased focus on injustice committed in the SBZ and GDR.<sup>491</sup> It is in

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<sup>487</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>488</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>489</sup> R. Probst, ‘Die zwei Wahrheiten von Sachsenhausen’, *SZ*, 13 Jul 2006, p. 32.

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>491</sup> M. Mara, ‘Opfer gegen Opfer’, *Der Tagesspiegel*, 18 Aug 2006, p. 13.

the context of this ongoing broader debate about working through the East German past in Brandenburg that the *Speziallager* must be understood.

Taking a situational and relational view of press discourse on the Schäfer and Schönbohm episodes reveals both the distinct drivers behind regional engagement with the double past and the differences within this regional space from state to state. First of all, newspaper coverage of the two speeches, though broadly conforming to the federal normalization paradigm as it stood in 2006, did not simply reproduce it. Rather, both speeches were placed in the context of specifically East German attempts to break decisively with the GDR past, whether this context was the proclaimed achievements of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* on a regional level (as in Thuringia) or the proclaimed lack of attention paid to post-1945 injustice in the initial post-unification period (as in Brandenburg). Indeed, the ‘deficit’ trope relating to Brandenburg’s perceived failure to implement rigorous transitional justice measures informed how the press framed responses to Sachsenhausen’s double past. In Thuringia, however, a comparable framing device was not as forthcoming. As a result, Volkhard Knigge was able to state retrospectively that the mid-2000s at Buchenwald were relatively free of controversy.<sup>492</sup> Günter Morsch, by contrast, was of quite the opposite mind when reflecting upon the same period at Sachsenhausen, noting that external attempts to steer the work of the memorial site had perceptibly increased during this time.<sup>493</sup> The events of 2005-6 discussed here certainly seem to bear out his assessment.

Furthermore, the evidence suggests that the clusters of newspaper articles dealing with the speeches, when constituted as discourses, are entwined with the exercise of cultural hegemony. Giving a voice primarily to political or elite actors and focusing for the most part on regional political disputes, newspaper reportage legitimizes dominant interpretations, and therefore has a normative function. In Thuringia, this took the form of defending regional efforts to come to terms with the past, which were presented as ‘leitmotivisch und angemessen’. In Brandenburg, the slippage of a consensus around Holocaust-centred commemoration was effected in the regional press by condemning Hans Rentmeister’s work for the *Stasi*, thereby undermining his criticism of Schönbohm and offering a damning indictment of the GDR. This was an

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<sup>492</sup> Knigge, ‘Die Umgestaltung der DDR-Gedenkstätten’.

<sup>493</sup> Interview with the author, 25 Jun 2010.

altogether different position to that of the local press in Oranienburg, which had concentrated not just on Schönbohm's speech but on the ISK's *Vermächtnis* and therefore on the legacy of the concentration camp.

Looking closely at the controversies of 2006 has indeed shown distinctive patterns of engagement with the double past emerging in Brandenburg and Thuringia, the principle of equation appearing to characterize the former and the principle of differentiation applying to the latter. It has also pointed to the mechanisms by which these positions are normativized, finding that, on balance, regional 'orders of discourse' and the conventions of press reportage are more influential than a precedent coming from Berlin.

### ***National Socialism and Communism in regional pedagogy***

In the third section of this chapter, we will turn to the latter half of the 2000s, during which time a series of centrally initiated steps were taken in Brandenburg and Thuringia that were to have direct consequences for engagement with the double past. These came in the form of revisions to the existing history curricula in both states around 2010, and a decision by the Brandenburg regional government to draw up guidelines for 'active civic confrontation with the SED-dictatorship' in 2007. By comparing them to contemporaneous texts produced by the memorials and their intermediaries for use in the classroom or in the context of visits to the sites, it is possible to trace, firstly, continuity and change in the shape of the respective regional memory cultures over the course of the 2000s. Thus we get a sense of the extent to which patterns of hierarchical, Holocaust-centred commemoration in Thuringia and equationist commemoration in Brandenburg emerging already in the first half of the decade become entrenched by the end of it. Secondly, the comparison further elucidates the 'travelling' character of memory by pointing to the transmission of certain memory narratives across distinct discourses both within each state and between the two.

What is immediately clear from the comparative analysis that follows is that discourse on the double past in these states has retained an inward-looking, localised frame of reference. As for the interrelationship between National Socialism and East German communism, this continues to be inflected quite

differently, though the trends identified above – differentiation in Thuringia versus equation in Brandenburg – do appear to persist. I will demonstrate this by looking firstly at the 2007 government proposal in Brandenburg and reactions to it, before turning to the pedagogical materials used in both states. Finally, I will reflect on the recent revisions made to history curricula and their implications for memory of the double past.

In March 2007, Brandenburg's regional government suggested putting forward a *Konzept* that was intended to encourage active civic confrontation with the SED dictatorship. Tellingly, the formulation 'SED-Diktatur' was repeated throughout the draft document and seemingly considered interchangeable with the more value-neutral 'GDR' when referring to East Germany. The draft concept itself took an explicitly didactic approach to the GDR past, made clear in its subtitle 'Umgang mit Geschichte zur Stärkung der Demokratie'.<sup>494</sup> The inference was that, whatever form this confrontation ultimately took, it should serve to strengthen democracy and in particular improve awareness amongst school age Germans in Brandenburg of the differences between democracy and dictatorship. The proposal went on to state:

'Um Freiheit und Demokratie als Werte zu vermitteln und dauerhaft zu sichern, stehen wir in der Verantwortung kommenden Generationen den fundamentalen Unterschied von Diktatur und Demokratie zu vermitteln und ein lebendiges Verhältnis auch zu unserer jüngsten Geschichte zu entwickeln.'<sup>495</sup>

The overtly political goal of the concept was emphasised once more in the recommendation that it be integrated into other 'Maßnahmen der Demokratiebildung', foisting a rather large burden of responsibility upon it considering that the proposals largely concerned curricular strategies of teaching and learning about the GDR.<sup>496</sup> Elsewhere in the concept the tone was not dissimilar from Günter Morsch's when he spoke of the 'Emanzipation' of visitors to the Sachsenhausen memorial in his speech at the inauguration of the

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<sup>494</sup> Landtag Brandenburg, 'Konzept zur aktiven gesellschaftlichen Auseinandersetzung mit der SED-Diktatur', Drucksache 4/5325, 8.11.2007.

<sup>495</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>496</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

*Speziallager* museum. In the concept too, an awareness and understanding of history was advocated as a means of vouchsafing ‘Emanzipation’, but in this case it was also assumed to lead to ‘Verantwortungsbewusstsein und die Bereitschaft zur Teilhabe an der Gesellschaft’.<sup>497</sup> Although it was not made explicit, the educational tools and institutions dealt with by the concept – including Sachsenhausen, of course – were clearly understood to function collectively as an ‘exhibitionary complex’.

This was apparent not least in the timing of the concept. It preceded the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the peaceful revolution by enough time for the parliament to enjoin political parties, the regional government and other public institutions to participate in the ‘Kulturland Brandenburg’ campaign of 2009, which had chosen democracy and democratic movements as its theme. The concept even recommended how to use a comparison between present-day parliamentary democracy and the criminal GDR could be utilised to best effect:

‘In der Auseinandersetzung mit der Geschichte spielen Themen wie Menschenrechtsverletzungen und antidemokratische Herrschaft eine wichtige Rolle, da aus diesen Erfahrungen Konsequenzen gezogen wurden, die für die Gestaltung der Grundordnung der Bundesrepublik und des politischen Lebens in Deutschland essenziell und kennzeichnend sind.’<sup>498</sup>

First of all this contradicted the concept’s professed support for an ‘open’ process of historical-political education by prescribing closed definitions of the GDR and the Federal Republic and loading them with normative value for German ‘political life’. Secondly, it contributed to a black and white picture of the GDR in which the East German state was reduced to the binary of repression and resistance. For besides the litany of negative examples the GDR provided in support of parliamentary democracy, the concept was keen to stress the instructive value that opposition to the SED regime held as well. It praised not only the oppositional movements that contributed to bringing about the end of the GDR, but also stressed the need for an (Eastern) European dialogue on the forms of resistance utilised against the Communist dictatorship in former Soviet

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<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

satellite states. These were referred to collectively as ‘Ansätze für Traditionen demokratischen Engagements in Europa.’<sup>499</sup>

Comparing the terminology and focus of the *Konzept* to the report of a Historians’ Commission tasked with drawing up directives for the work of the *Geschichtsverbund Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur* in 2006 bears out suggestions that the former adopted a binary approach. The report of the Historians’ Commission recommended that the *Geschichtsverbund* base its work around the concepts “Herrschaft – Gesellschaft – Widerstand”, thus incorporating a more nuanced approach that also dealt with everyday life in the GDR.<sup>500</sup> The Brandenburgian concept, by contrast, evidences a fixation for the most part on ‘Herrschaft’ and ‘Widerstand’, to the exclusion of everyday experiences. This is best demonstrated by an extract that begins with reference to the ‘spannungsvolle Wechselbeziehung zwischen Akzeptanz und Auflehnung, Begeisterung und Verachtung, Loyalität und Nischenglück’ that characterised GDR society. Despite this apparent concession to the ambivalent nature of the East German state, it is then on the very same page reduced to the ‘SED-Diktatur’:

[Die Landesregierung] strebt...eine breite und vertiefte Kenntnis über die Geschichte der DDR in der Gesellschaft an mit dem Ziel, einen grundsätzlichen gesellschaftlichen Konsens über die historische Einordnung und die Bewertung der SED-Diktatur zu fördern.<sup>501</sup>

Having ostensibly promised a differentiated handling of the GDR, the concept then virtually in the same breath advocated a consensual historical evaluation, one that evidently revolved around the state’s essentially criminal nature as implied in the use of ‘Diktatur’. As I will show, this served an equationist cause at memorials such as Sachsenhausen, even though the concept in itself was hardly a radical departure from prevailing commemorative trends. Furthermore, it was evidence of a ‘political’ code that blurred the lines drawn by

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<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>500</sup> Documented in *Wohin treibt die DDR-Erinnerung? Dokumentation einer Debatte*, ed. by Martin Sabrow (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).

<sup>501</sup> ‘Konzept’, p. 32.

parliamentary *Geschichtspolitik*, cross-cutting ideological divides over the double past.

In a section that followed an initial clarification of the concept's tasks and guiding principles ('Leitlinien'), the responsibilities of the regional government were outlined and organised by governmental department. Of particular importance to the discussion here is the jurisdiction of the *Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur* (henceforth MWFK), which extended not only to memorial sites such as Sachsenhausen, but also other museums and research institutions in Brandenburg whose work was of relevance to the concept. It is telling that the concept could name only three institutions under the department's purview dedicated primarily to a socio-cultural history of the GDR. What is more, the definition of 'Alltag' – 'everyday life' – was rather restrictive, narrowing its focus to the ways in which the dictatorial East German state impinged upon the life of its citizens.<sup>502</sup>

Thus the definition of 'Alltag' was not linked to the experiences of East Germans, but rather seen as emanating from the state, in particular through what it could offer to or withhold from its charges. This is quite consistent with the overwhelming numerical dominance of memorial sites at East German penitentiary institutions and other sites of persecution in the overview of the MWFK's spheres of activity. The first of these to be discussed were the *Speziallager*, described as follows:

'Sie waren Instrumente der stalinistischen Geheimpolizei und gehören zeitlich in den Gründungsprozess der kommunistischen Diktatur. Sie schufen ein Klima von Unrecht, Gewalt und Terror, das zur Durchsetzung der kommunistischen Herrschaft beitrug.'<sup>503</sup>

Whilst the description undoubtedly captures several crucial characteristics of the special camps, it makes no mention of the Allied denazification procedures jointly agreed upon at conferences in Yalta and Potsdam amongst others that *also* explain their genesis. The ambivalent beginnings of the special camps are lost in the focus on their role in propping up the communist dictatorship. The omission

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<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

is curious given that the double past of many of the memorials listed in the concept is mentioned only a few pages later:

‘Die genannten Beispiele sprechen ... für die zunehmend gleichberechtigte Aufmerksamkeit der demokratischen Gesellschaft gegenüber der zweifachen Vergangenheit dieser Orte. Bei einer Bewertung des bisher Erreichten darf nicht vergessen werden, dass das Unrechtssystem der DDR erst 18 Jahre zurückliegt, eine Zeitspanne, die für eine umfassende historische Aufarbeitung eher kurz ist. Zudem ist verständlich, dass die Betroffenen ein berechtigtes Bedürfnis nach schneller und gründlicher Aufklärung und Dokumentation aller menschenunwürdigen Geschehnisse haben.’<sup>504</sup>

The concept is quite justified in highlighting the deficits in working through the GDR past in relation to the more extensively documented National Socialist history of many of the named memorials. This applied not least to Sachsenhausen, where the site director had already in 1998 pointed out the likelihood to members of the regional government working-group for Science, Research and Culture that the *Speziallager* museum would open no earlier than 2006.<sup>505</sup> Likewise, the temporary exhibition on the special camp that had opened there in 1993 was described by the StBG as ‘inhaltlich überholt[...]’ and no longer corresponding to the ‘historischen Erkenntnisstand über das System der sowjetischen Lager in der SBZ.’<sup>506</sup> Yet referring to the right of those affected to see prompt explanation and documentation of *all* inhumane historical events immediately after admitting shortcomings specifically in handling the GDR past arguably set an accent on the post-1945 period. This perhaps even unwittingly nourished hopes of a paradigmatic change in the coordinates of regional memory culture by seeming to endorse a rush to make up ground in the working through of the GDR history at sites with a double past.

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<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>505</sup> Landtag Brandenburg, Ausschuss für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur, 58. Sitzung, Ausschussprotokoll 2/938, 18.02.1998, Bibliothek des Landtages Brandenburg, pp. 4-5.

<sup>506</sup> ‘Anlage 3: Projekt: Dauerausstellung über das sowjetische Speziallager Nr. 7 (Nr. 1) Sachsenhausen in einem Museumsneubau an der Gedenkstätte und Museum Sachsenhausen im Jahr 2000’, Landtag Brandenburg, Ausschuss für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur, 58. Sitzung, Ausschussprotokoll 2/938, 18.02.1998, Bibliothek des Landtages Brandenburg, p. 2.

Political discourse in Brandenburg thus showed signs that a creeping desensitisation to the differences between National Socialism and East German Communism had set in. This was not helped by an image of the GDR characterised by the binary of repression and resistance. But political discourse in the regional parliament is of course not interchangeable with regional discourse *per se*, or even for that matter with *elite* discourse, so the picture requires fleshing out somewhat.

On the face of it, discussion of the *Konzept* in the regional parliament shows a more or less identical rehearsal of the party-political positions towards the double past evident in debates at memorials outside of Brandenburg.<sup>507</sup> The political left, for instance, showed greater concern at the concept's focus on the criminality of the GDR, making a plea instead for greater differentiation. For the regional faction of Die Linke, this meant vociferously defending against attempts to demonise the GDR in favour of 'eine um Verstehen bemühte Perspektive'.<sup>508</sup> As might be expected of the successor party to the SED, however, Die Linke eschewed a frank elaboration of the manifest restrictions on civil liberties that existed in the GDR, choosing instead to mention only the tame-sounding curtailment of 'political freedoms'.<sup>509</sup> As for the SPD, they too argued for more differentiation in the treatment of the GDR, making a point in particular of placing East Germans (as opposed to the SED) at the centre of the processes of confronting history:

'Wir sollten stets fragen, weshalb Menschen unter bestimmten Bedingungen so und nicht anders gehandelt haben. Dann werden wir die Auseinandersetzung so führen, dass wir selbst diese Auseinandersetzung als Teil unserer demokratischen Entwicklung begreifen und handhaben. Das bedeutet vor allen Dingen, Achtung vor dem Menschen zu haben, was das Verständnis seines Handelns, seiner Größe und seiner Irrtümer einschließt.'<sup>510</sup>

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<sup>507</sup> See for instance Andrew H. Beattie, 'The Fight in the Prison Car Park: Memorializing Germany's 'Double Past' in Torgau since 1990', in *Memorialization in Germany since 1945*, ed. by Niven/Paver, pp. 328-338.

<sup>508</sup> Landtag Brandenburg, 60. Sitzung, Plenarprotokoll 4/60, 14.12.2007, p. 4451.

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4452.

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4454.

This did not stop the speaker for the SPD, Sieglinde Heppener, from supporting an outright condemnation of state-perpetrated injustices and the criminal activities of the *Stasi*; both ought to be ‘schonungslos gebrandmarkt’ in her words.<sup>511</sup> The point was that state and society both warranted scholarly as well as popular attention. By contrast, the CDU saw no problem in equating the GDR with National Socialism, regarding both as products of anti-Semitism and imperialism. The CDU speaker Wieland Niekisch even ventured a revival of 1950s anti-totalitarian thought, citing Hannah Arendt’s 1951 work *The Origins of Totalitarianism* with approval and arguing that the regional government could build upon the ‘menschliche[...] und wissenschaftliche[...] Leistung aus den 50er Jahren’ in its search for a means of interpreting the GDR.<sup>512</sup>

This parliamentary debate could well be viewed through the lens of ‘Geschichtspolitik’, given that the interpretation of the GDR (and the double past) underlying the *Konzept* was clearly subject to political competition amongst the respective *Landtag* factions. But this is to say little of how the wrangling over the historical narrative at stake here related to regional cultural discourse on the double past more generally. The parliamentary hearing and the text of the concept reveal, for one thing, a cross-party consensus on the governmental function that confrontation with the past ought to serve. For another thing, the same did not necessarily apply to other discourses; memorial professionals for instance did not share the view that governmentality was the object of engaging with historical sites of injustice. Rather than extend the concept of memory politics to the wider cultural formation, then, we must look beyond differences in the memory-identity interplay to grasp how different discourses on Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen are constituted. As we see, the regional parliament was not only an arena for the political contestation of the past but also the locus of a distinct governmental discourse.

Shortly before discussions surrounding the *Konzept* began, Günter Morsch submitted a list of guidelines for commemorating the double past to the regional government working-group for Science, Research and Culture. The document illustrated several crucial differences between politics and academic discourse when it came to setting commemorative paradigms. In the very first point on the

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<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4453.

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4455.

list, for instance, Morsch emphasised that:

‘Politik [sich] darauf beschränken [sollte], die Rahmenbedingungen demokratischer Erinnerungskultur allgemein zu schaffen. Die Inhalte der Erinnerungskultur dagegen sollten weitestgehend durch Wissenschaft und Zivilgesellschaft im demokratischen, pluralistischen, freien und öffentlichen Diskurs ermittelt, konzeptualisiert und kommuniziert werden.’<sup>513</sup>

Though the position adopted in the concept was hardly incompatible with Morsch’s plea for a ‘democratic, plural, free and public’ discourse on the double past, it was impossible to overlook the more marginal role he accorded to political institutions. The content of memory culture should be established, as far as Morsch was concerned, by civic society – that is, from ‘below’ – in dialogue with the standards set by historical research.

It was no small surprise that Brandenburg’s CDU minister for Science, Research and Culture and chair of the working-group, Johanna Wanka, took umbrage with such a division of responsibilities. She viewed sceptically the argument that politics should only shoulder the responsibility of setting parameters for memory culture, taking it to mean merely the ‘Bereitstellung von Geldern’. Furthermore, she believed Morsch’s theses afforded ‘Wissenschaft’ alone the privilege of determining memory culture’s content, unjustly ignoring the fact that he had actually assigned the task to ‘Wissenschaft *und Zivilgesellschaft* im ... öffentlichen Diskurs’ (italics RB).<sup>514</sup> Even the SPD delegate in the working-group, Klara Geywitz, appeared to have reservations about Morsch’s proposal. She argued that the role Morsch envisaged politics playing was in fact the exact role it already did play within Brandenburg. On the evidence of the later *Konzept* though, it is debateable whether her contention that regional politics restricted itself to setting ‘die notwendigen Rahmenbedingungen

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<sup>513</sup> ‘Anlage 2: Thesen zur Darstellung der Geschichte und zum Gedenken an die Opfer des Konzentrationslagers sowie des sowjetischen Speziallagers an Orten zweifacher Vergangenheit’, Landtag Brandenburg, Ausschuss für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur, 26. Sitzung, Ausschussprotokoll 4/425, 17.01.2007, Bibliothek des Landtages Brandenburg, p. 1.

<sup>514</sup> Landtag Brandenburg, Ausschuss für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur, 27. Sitzung, Ausschussprotokoll 4/446, 07.03.2007, Bibliothek des Landtages Brandenburg, p. 4.

für die Schaffung einer demokratischen Erinnerungskultur' remained the case.<sup>515</sup>

Likewise, Geywitz stressed a need for close discussion between politics, academic research, and the victims of both National Socialism and the SED in determining these 'Rahmenbedingungen'.<sup>516</sup> Evidently the rest of the SPD faction shared her view, and indeed when it later came to discussing the *Konzept* in the regional parliament, the SPD minister for Education, Youth and Sport, Holger Rupprecht, marked out a specific intervention he felt politics should make in steering the debate:

'Ein aus meiner Sicht besonders hervorzuhebender Grundsatz des vorliegenden Konzeptes lautet: Wir wollen in der Geschichte der DDR jene Ansätze demokratischen Denkens und Handelns sichtbar machen und herausstellen, die dazu beigetragen haben, dass die friedliche Revolution 1989/90 die SED-Herrschaft beenden konnte.'<sup>517</sup>

As laudable an intention as this was, it made quite clear that factions across the political spectrum advocated a didactic approach to the double past, and in particular to the history of the GDR. Günter Morsch, by contrast, seemed happier to uphold the inherent historical ambivalences that characterised sites of memory such as Sachsenhausen. As he clarified in another point on his list:

'[D]ie Entstehungsgeschichte der Speziallager [lässt sich] von der NS-Diktatur und dem Zweiten Weltkrieg als Ursachen nicht abkoppeln. Andererseits sind die sowjetischen Speziallager mindestens ebenso ein Ergebnis der jahrzehntelangen Praxis kommunistisch/stalinistischen Terrors. Diesen Dualismus der Ursachen, der zu vielen Widersprüchen führte, gilt es anzuerkennen und auszuhalten.'<sup>518</sup>

Morsch therefore wished to recognise the contradictions behind the special camp system – itself a composite of Stalinist terror and fundamentally legitimate post-war internment practices. Unlike the concept, however, in which the special

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<sup>515</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>517</sup> Plenarprotokoll 4/60, p. 4450.

<sup>518</sup> Ausschussprotokoll 4/425, Anlage 2

camp memorials featured primarily as illustrative examples of state repression in the Soviet Occupation Zone and GDR, he did not attempt to either prescribe (or indeed proscribe) any particular interpretation. The recommendations in many ways echoed the on-site museological concept that had been adopted at Sachsenhausen (see chapter two). Just as the ‘dezentrales Museumskonzept’ attempted to do justice to the site’s complex, multifaceted history and safeguard the ‘Emanzipation’ of visitors, Morsch too espoused the principles of multivalence and open-ended yet historically contextualised learning, this time in relation to political-pedagogical discourse in Brandenburg.

As we have seen, the debates surrounding the *Konzept* in Brandenburg revealed two distinct approaches to the double past, one advocated by political actors more or less across the board, and the other consistent with the ideas of the memorial professionals already implemented in the redesign of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen during the 1990s and early 2000s. But which vision for communicating the double past and the specific history of Sachsenhausen in particular has filtered down to other educators and memory activists in Brandenburg? Is there evidence that the position of the memorial professionals has gained traction in these circles, or have the views of regional political parties reflected in the *Konzept* had the most influence? The following section will consider teaching materials produced by the sites and their intermediaries that handle both the concentration camps and the special camps at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, beginning with the latter.

The link between individual memorials dedicated to aspects of the National Socialist and East German past in Brandenburg and the teaching of Germany’s double past in the region’s schools is established through a total of seventeen so-called *Gedenkstättenlehrer*. These are educators who work closely with schools in designing educational projects that explore the history of certain memorials as well as organising and leading group visits to memorial sites – a scheme that is the only one of its kind in the Federal Republic.<sup>519</sup> Their time is divided evenly between the classroom and external on-site activities. Though not

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<sup>519</sup> One or more *Gedenkstättenlehrer* are assigned to a total of eleven memorial sites in Brandenburg (in Sachsenhausen’s case it is three). These include the Ravensbrück Women’s Concentration Camp, the Brandenburg-Görden prison, the former Special Camps in Mühlberg and Ketschendorf (Fürstenwalde), and the Lindenstraße 54 prison in Potsdam, amongst others. See <http://bildungsserver.berlin-brandenburg.de/gedenkstaetten.html#c5075> [last accessed 25 Mar 2013].

employed by the memorials (they are financed by the ministry of education), the work of the *Gedenkstättenlehrer* directly supports sites in their efforts at providing a multifaceted pedagogical programme and, crucially, can reach groups – particularly of school age – that could otherwise not be supervised or given a guided tour of the memorial by members of the in-house staff. At Sachsenhausen, where visitor numbers are now above 450,000 p/a, the shortfall in meeting rising demands for some form of pedagogical support amongst visitor groups is particularly pronounced. The site director Günter Morsch painted a bleak picture of the situation the site now faces in a recent statement, in which he explained that around 50% of requests have to be turned down on account of limited staff capacity (the recent introduction of official certification for external guides will however offset a good deal of this deficit).<sup>520</sup>

In the documentation summarising the role of the *Gedenkstättenlehrer*, close cooperation with the sites is listed as one of five central responsibilities. Significantly, the document also circumscribes any kind of impingement upon the autonomy of the memorial sites and reiterates their right to operate without fear of political instrumentalisation (‘keine Vereinnahmung, Autonomie bewahren’).<sup>521</sup> Whilst the *Gedenkstättenlehrer* do also coordinate initiatives that are administered by the regional Ministry for Education, Youth and Sport, such as talks in schools given by eye-witnesses, they do not appear to share the regional government’s vision for a ‘grundsätzliche[r] gesellschaftliche[r] Konsens über die historische Einordnung und die Bewertung der SED-Diktatur’ as proposed in the 2007 *Konzept*.<sup>522</sup> As far as pedagogical activities involving the memorials are concerned, the *Gedenkstättenlehrer* have in fact upheld the principles of open-ended, reflective historical learning advocated by the memorial professionals.

Projects devised for the *Konzentrationslager Sachsenhausen* by the *Gedenkstättenlehrer*, for instance, follow the example of the ‘dezentrales Museumskonzept’ adopted by the memorial professionals in the wake of unification in their structure and thematic focus. Just as the *Museumskonzept* foregrounds historical relics (‘Überreste’) by tying on-site exhibitions to the

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<sup>520</sup> Günter Morsch, ‘Stellungnahme’, Ausschuss für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur, Ausschussprotokoll 5/26, 18 Jan 2012, pp. 7-12.

<sup>521</sup> ‘Historische Themenfelder und Aufgaben der Gedenkstättenlehrer’, 6 Mar 2012, 2 pp. (p. 2).

<sup>522</sup> ‘Konzept’, p.32.

original camp architecture and muting any kind of overarching museological narrative, the projects begin with independent work conducted in small groups at a number of ‘stations’ corresponding to sections of the historical camp.<sup>523</sup> It is only *after* each focusing in detail on one specific site that the small groups reconvene to tour the memorial, and even then the goal is a ‘Gegenseitiges Führen’ in which the respective small groups present their findings to the others at the appropriate juncture in the tour.<sup>524</sup> The reflective element of the project is underlined in a concluding section, in which participants discuss their impressions of the tour and the method of delivery before having the chance to ask questions or address uncertainties.<sup>525</sup> By contrast, the role of the project leader is relatively secondary to the processes of self-reflection and independent learning; he or she ‘greift, wenn nötig, koordinierend und korrigierend (taktvoll) ein’, but is otherwise fairly peripheral.<sup>526</sup>

Günter Morsch has observed that definitions of concentration camp memorials and their role in society have typically fallen into two categories (with few, even in the academic community, agreeing upon which is the more fitting): either a ‘Bewahrungsort humanistischer Gesinnung’ or an ‘Ort selbstkritischer Suche nach wissenschaftlich präzisen Darstellungen und Erklärungen.’<sup>527</sup> To my mind the projects coordinated by the *Gedenkstättenlehrer* follow Morsch by drawing upon both definitions without explicitly favouring either. Indeed, there is evidence of both an interest in the fates of those victimised at the hands of the Third Reich *and* a commitment to verifiable factual standards in the way they are structured; the small group work encourages engagement (and empathy) with stories of victimization, whilst the (albeit restrained) corrective role of the project leaders – that is, the *Gedenkstättenlehrer* – prohibits a slide into historical relativism and establishes some kind of accepted factual basis.

What about projects focusing on the *Speziallager*? Do they advance – even if only inadvertently – the equationist reading of the double past found in

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<sup>523</sup> For an overview of the ‘museumpädagogische Grundüberlegungen’ behind the decision to adopt the *Gesamtkonzept*, see Günter Morsch, ‘Zur Entwicklung der Pädagogik in der Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen’, in *Geschichte als Last und Chance: Festschrift für Bernd Faulenbach*, ed. by F.-J. Jelich and S. Goch (Essen: Klartext, 2003), pp. 55-67.

<sup>524</sup> ‘Thema: Angeleitete Selbstführung durch Gedenkstätte und Museum Sachsenhausen: Das ehemalige Konzentrationslager Sachsenhausen 1936 – 45’, 16 Dec 2011, 2 pp. (p. 1)

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>527</sup> Morsch, ‘Sachsenhausen – auf dem Weg zur Neugestaltung’, in *Gedenkstätten im vereinten Deutschland*, ed. by Dittberner and von Meer, p. 50.

the *Konzept*? It is striking that the projects utilise approaches that are person- and space-based, whereas political discussion of the Soviet Occupation Zone (SBZ) and GDR concerned itself for the most part, as we have seen, with the mechanisms and characteristics of the state – in particular those that could be deemed repressive. Whilst this meant that subjective appraisals of life in the SBZ/GDR were all but squeezed out of the *Konzept*, it is precisely this subjectivity that the projects can address through the use of biographical case studies.

A number of worksheets used in these projects set out tasks that involve researching the biography of an individual prisoner of the *Speziallager*. In most cases the task entails creative work too, such as writing a fictitious *Kassiber* that has been smuggled out of the camp and is addressed to the family of a prisoner who appears in the special camp exhibition. The worksheet outlines the task as follows:

‘Das Speziallager Sachsenhausen war ein sogenanntes Schweigelager. Dies bedeutete u.a., dass es fast über den gesamten Zeitraum seiner Existenz den Häftlingen nicht gestattet wurde, Briefe nach Hause zu schreiben.

Manchmal boten sich aber Möglichkeiten, geheime Briefe (Kassiber) aus dem Lager zu schmuggeln.

Wähle eine Biografie eines Speziallagerhäftlings aus und studiere sie genau.

Versuche, dich in seine Lage zu versetzen und schreibe einen solchen Brief.

Überlege genau, was du deiner Familie mitteilen würdest!’<sup>528</sup>

Beyond the obvious room for creativity built into the task, it is noticeable that an empathetic relationship to the historical victim is also established. The individual or group taking on the activity is asked to ‘put themselves in the situation’ of the prisoner (‘sich in seine Lage versetzen’) and thus adopt his perspective in writing the *Kassiber*. Another task involves writing the inner monologue of a prisoner forced into falsely confessing to belong to a National

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<sup>528</sup> ‘Thema: Speziallager Sachsenhausen Nr. 7/1 1945 – 50’, undated worksheets, 5 pp. (p.1).

Socialist ‘Werewolf’ unit. Here too the adoption of the prisoner’s perspective is stipulated in the wording of the task.<sup>529</sup> Further activities seek to highlight the inherent difficulty of defining the special camps, either on account of the Cold War political climate of the late 1940s and early ‘50s or the historical issue of German culpability for National Socialist crimes. For instance, the task of writing a newspaper article based on the biography of a *Speziallager* prisoner invites reflection upon the differences in interpretation that exist between the ‘Boulevardpresse’ and ‘seriöse Zeitungen’ in terms of objectivity and realism.<sup>530</sup> Whilst the parliamentary debate on the *Konzept* in Brandenburg betrayed a proscriptive approach to categorising what were in many cases experiential dimensions of life in the SBZ/GDR, the project materials problematize complex phenomena such as the special camps by taking the question of perspective into account.

Unquestionably then, the pedagogical activities relating to the *Speziallager* uphold differentiation and careful distinction between the two camps at Sachsenhausen. As I have attempted to show, they do this by adopting the concepts and language of the memorial professionals. That is, they adhere to empirical standards and scientific verifiability; they embrace controversy and plurality as a means of critiquing both historical and contemporary assessments of the site’s double past; and they are structured around an empathetic approach to victims.

Pedagogical materials relating to the Buchenwald concentration camp and special camp draw upon language and concepts virtually identical to those used by the Sachsenhausen memorial and the Gedenkstättenlehrer in Brandenburg. As I have demonstrated, a dissemination of the ideas behind the *dezentrales Museumskonzept* at Sachsenhausen has accounted for similarities between professional and pedagogical narratives on the double past in Brandenburg. In Thuringia too, the pedagogical concepts developed on-site have carried over into classroom materials. Indeed, it may be the regional Ministry for Education, Science and Culture and the federal Ministry for Culture and Education who finance the worksheets used in Thuringia, but it is members of the Buchenwald site staff who author them. Furthermore, the Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora Memorials Foundation publishes the worksheets together with

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<sup>529</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

the Thüringer Institut für Lehrerfortbildung, Lehrplanentwicklung und Medien (ThILLM). Like the projects run by the Gedenkstättenlehrer, many activities are ‘dialogisch angelegt’, utilising the familiar format of a group tour followed by small team work and a final series of presentations, moderated by a member of the pedagogical team.<sup>531</sup> The emphasis on critical engagement with authentic material and biographical ‘traces’ of the historical site is incorporated too – so much so that the small group fact-finding work is explicitly referred to as a type of ‘Spurensuche’. As at Sachsenhausen, the format upholds multi-perspectivity by constructing, ‘Stück für Stück’, a holistic impression (‘ein neues Gesamtbild’) from the respective group presentations.<sup>532</sup>

In two collections of worksheets intended to support group visits to Buchenwald, one relating to the concentration camp and the other to the special camp, an identical overview introduces visitors to the cornerstones of ‘[f]orschendes Lernen in der Gedenkstätte Buchenwald’.<sup>533</sup> These are defined as ‘Sehen’, ‘Begreifen’, ‘Reflektieren’, and ‘Kommunizieren’, immediately distinguishable in their subjective, processual character from terms such as ‘Stärkung der Demokratie’ and ‘Bereitschaft zur Teilhabe an der Gesellschaft’ favoured by the Brandenburg parliament.<sup>534</sup> In fact, the framework outlined in the pedagogical materials resonated clearly with the approach taken on-site at Buchenwald, prioritising the historical site as the ‘Ausgangspunkt’ in a learning process that would empower visitors to think critically about how and under what circumstances basic humanistic instincts and values have historically been contravened. The overview stressed that knowledge acquisition was ‘handlungsorientiert’ – in other words the basis for a discerning, self-aware ‘Grundsolidarität mit dem Menschen als Mensch.’<sup>535</sup> Thus it sought to promote ‘selbstständige historisch-ethische Urteilskraft’ in relation to concepts of

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<sup>531</sup> *Konzentrationslager Buchenwald 1937 – 1945: Arbeitsmaterialien für Projektstage in der Gedenkstätte Buchenwald*, Heft 143A, ed. by Stiftung Gedenkstätten Buchenwald und Mittelbau-Dora, Thüringer Institut für Lehrerfortbildung, Lehrplanentwicklung und Medien, revised 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Weimar, 2011), 40pp.; *Sowjetisches Speziallager Nr. 2 1945 – 1950: Arbeitsmaterialien für Projektstage in der Gedenkstätte Buchenwald*, Heft 149, ed. by *idem.*, revised 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Weimar, 2011), 38pp (p. 3; p. 9).

<sup>532</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>534</sup> ‘Konzept zur aktiven gesellschaftlichen Auseinandersetzung mit der SED-Diktatur’, Drucksache 4/5325, p. 1; p. 7.

<sup>535</sup> *Arbeitsmaterialien*, Heft 143A, p. 3; *Arbeitsmaterialien*, Heft 149, p. 3.

perpetration and victimhood on an individual level rather than fix broader interpretations of political systems in stone.<sup>536</sup>

Worksheets relating to the *Speziallager* in particular indicate how the site staff's characterisation of the post-war camp at Buchenwald and the special camp system in general, especially relative to the concentration camps and other post-war internment and de-nazification camps, has permeated into regional pedagogy. An activity relating to 'Jugendliche' in the special camp, for example, balances a sense of pathos with an acknowledgement of the camp's functional relation to the culpability of many Germans in National Socialist society. The task itself requires visitors to search out biographies of young prisoners in the *Speziallager* museum, but the contextual information provided on the worksheet, though clarifying that some prisoners held in the special camp were as young as thirteen, concentrates primarily on the internecine relationships between older and younger prisoners. Notably it is the dismay felt by many younger prisoners at the complicity in the National Socialist state of their elders and fellow inmates, given the blanket label of 'NS-Funktionäre' here, that is described – the majority are said to have viewed the elder generation as 'Verführte des NS-Staates.'<sup>537</sup> The moral culpability of older special camp prisoners in the functioning of the Third Reich therefore pervades the entire exercise.

On the other hand, the worksheet lists a number of biographies that visitors can research in the museum in which a sense of complicity in Nazi crimes is either minimal or entirely illusory. Gerhard Nattke, one of the prisoners listed in the worksheet, was arrested by the NKWD on the evidence of a photograph showing him on a school excursion ('Klassenfahrt') in 1942; he was not formally rehabilitated until 1995, and in fact was rearrested for alleged 'Boykotthetze' in Cottbus in 1954.<sup>538</sup> Likewise, Elli Marshall was denounced and interned at Buchenwald for using a newspaper dating from the Third Reich to wrap goods in a store she worked at. A document addressed to Walter Ulbricht and displayed in the special camp museum advises that, in the case of prisoners such as Marschall who were released rather than tried at Waldheim in the early 1950s, their time in the *Speziallager* ought to count towards the sentences they were originally given by Soviet authorities in order to avoid the impression that

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<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3

<sup>537</sup> 'Arbeitsblatt 12' in *Arbeitsmaterialien*, Heft 149, p. 35.

<sup>538</sup> *Das sowjetische Speziallager Nr. 2 1945 – 1950*, ed. by Ritscher, pp. 268-69.

they had been ‘unschuldig inhaftiert’.<sup>539</sup> As if to counterbalance the incriminating contextual information given in the worksheet, these biographies serve to illustrate the striking arbitrariness of imprisonment in the *Speziallager* and the extreme cynicism of the SED when it came to dealing with victims of the camps.

A further example of this balanced approach can be found in a worksheet dealing with the so-called ‘Beerdigungskommando’ at the *Speziallager*, a work detail responsible for burying the dead in unmarked mass graves. The exhibit used as the basis for the activity here is an illustration by the prisoner Otto von Kursell, a sparse pencil drawing that depicts the work detail dragging a wooden cart loaded with dead bodies.<sup>540</sup> Whilst obviously establishing a link to mass death in the camp as well as highlighting the callous cynicism of the Soviet and GDR regimes – the worksheet describes how members of the work detail were sent to the USSR upon closure of the camp in order to maintain secrecy – the exhibit is itself embellished with sober factual detail. Deaths are carefully attributed in large part to hygienic conditions and food shortages through reference to the ‘Hungerwinter’ of 1946/7, and research into Kursell’s own biography in the museum forms part of the task on the worksheet. Accordingly, visitors are confronted with the reality of his participation in the Munich Beer Hall Putsch and membership in the SS, and cannot overlook his moral responsibility for National Socialist crimes. Yet equally, his biography is located next to a slit window in the museum that looks out on to the mass graves for prisoners of the *Speziallager*. In a final association, his artwork – on one level an artistic testimony conveying the abysmal conditions in the *Speziallager* – is also a reminder of the blurring of boundaries between victims (of post-war injustice) and perpetrators (of crimes during the Third Reich) in the special camps. Kursell had been director of the Hochschule für Bildende Kunst in 1944, yet his plea for a director’s pension was later rejected by a court on the grounds that it was his close connection to the National Socialist regime and not artistic merit that got him the post in the first place.<sup>541</sup> A newspaper article outlining the court’s decision is displayed as part of his biography in the *Speziallager* museum, carefully balancing the commemorative impulse established through the visual

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<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 260-65.

<sup>540</sup> ‘Arbeitsblatt 6’ in *Arbeitsmaterialien*, Heft 149, p. 23.

<sup>541</sup> See Ritscher (ed.), *Das sowjetische Speziallager Nr. 2*, p. 251.

link to the mass graves and the subject of his drawing with a critical sense of historical perspective.

The worksheet's fusion of pathos and condemnation borrows from the empathetic, biography-driven approach of the site exhibition. It also shows how a commemorative paradigm that is 'doppelt geprägt' in the sense of mourning both an original moral failure to resist Nazism and the continuation of injustice after 1945 – a paradigm originating, moreover, in the redesign of the Buchenwald memorial – has travelled beyond the site itself. Indeed, the site director Volkhard Knigge's own interpretation of the special camp could quite easily sum up the thrust of the worksheet:

‘Die Trauer um die Opfer des sowjetischen Speziallagers ist [...] doppelt geprägt. Dem Innewerden des geschehenen Unrechts und des erlittenen Leides entspricht das Erschrecken an der Tatsache, wie wenig Deutsche sich Hitler verweigert haben und in welchem hohem Maße willentliches Wegschauen und Mitmachen “im Kleinen” im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland an der Tagesordnung waren.’<sup>542</sup>

How did the materials designed and published by the sites compare to contemporary school curricula? And did these in turn represent a continuation of the Brandenburgian *Konzept*, or mark a decisive break from it? This final section will analyse the place of the double past in recent school curricula, beginning with Thuringia. Following on from previous sections covering political and professional pedagogical discourses, it will in particular consider the extent to which concepts from these have found their way into classroom teaching.

In 2009, a revised and updated history curriculum for the *Qualifikationsphase* was released in Thuringia. Besides changes to the course structure – the *Grundfach* and *Leistungsfach* were replaced by the *grundlegendes Anforderungsniveau* (gA) and *erhöhtes Anforderungsniveau* (eA) – a notable emphasis was now placed on reflexivity in the style and delivery of the course content. As such, pupils taking the eA were expected ‘sich sachgerecht mit Geschichtskultur und Rezeptionsgeschichte auseinander[zusetzen]’.<sup>543</sup>

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<sup>542</sup> V. Knigge, ‘Vorwort’, in *Das sowjetische Speziallager Nr. 2*, ed. by Ritscher, pp. 7-10 (p. 10).

<sup>543</sup> Thüringer Kultusministerium, ‘Ziele und inhaltliche Orientierungen für die Qualifikationsphase der gymnasialen Oberstufe im Fach Geschichte’ (2009), 16pp. (here p. 9).

Significantly for the teaching of the double past, this shift in approach also carried over into the structure of individual units on the National Socialist past and divided German. Furthermore, the *Qualifikationsphase* was to consist from now on of core courses and an additional range of elective subjects as opposed to the four prescribed thematic units in the 1999 curriculum (one for each half-year of the two-year course). The core and elective subjects were organised around five headings, each of which spanned several centuries in its chronological scope.

Thus, the Third Reich as well as the GDR and FRG were subsumed under the theme of '[p]olitische Ordnungsvorstellungen und Gestaltungskräfte im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert'. Questions relating to the post-war 'Umgang mit Schuld und Verantwortung', meanwhile, belonged to a unit on 'Konflikte und Konfliktlösungen', in which the Potsdam Pact for instance was analysed against other historical peace treaties rather than placed in the context of the emergent block system, as it was in the previous curriculum.<sup>544</sup> Both the considerably broader chronological sweep of this curriculum and the emphasis it placed on methodological reflexivity profoundly impacted upon the possibilities for communicating the history of Germany's 'short twentieth century'.

Given the focus here on developments in the *longue durée*, one could be forgiven for expecting an exclusively diachronic approach to the double past in which developments either side of 1945 were looked at sequentially. In fact, however, there is considerable evidence of a synchronic approach to political ideologies and systems of rule in the revised curriculum. Though the teaching of Germany's post-war division was once more guided by the 'democracy' and 'dictatorship' labels that featured in the previous curriculum, consideration was also given to 'everyday experiences ('Alltagserfahrungen') in both states. Equally, political structures were handled under the rubric of 'Selbstverständnis, Demokratieanspruch und –wirklich-keit', which appeared to acknowledge a discrepancy between ideology and historical reality.<sup>545</sup> This was markedly different to the essentialist position taken the 1999 curriculum, which had presented historical circumstances in divided Germany as the 'Ergebnis unterschiedlicher Anschauungen und Zielsetzungen der Besatzungsmächte'.<sup>546</sup>

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<sup>544</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12; p. 14.

<sup>545</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>546</sup> 'Lehrplan für das Gymnasium' (1999), p. 38.

Its 2009 counterpart, by contrast, combined analysis ‘from above’ with a more open-ended comparative approach, not least when addressing the matter of how the Holocaust was remembered in the GDR and FRG. Pupils taking the eA were additionally tasked with comparing National Socialism and Stalinism, and evidently expected to look at the historiography of the comparison; by way of orientation, the curriculum referred to both the ‘Totalitarismusdebatte’ and the ‘Kontroverse um die Singularität des Holocausts’.<sup>547</sup> At other points in the curriculum too, such as in the ‘Revolution und Reform’ unit, pupils enrolled on the eA dealt with ‘Geschichtskultur’ – in this case contemporary remembrance of the Nazi past. Here one subheading read “‘NS-Verbrechen weder relativieren, noch kommunistische Verbrechen bagatellisieren’ – Auseinandersetzungen um Erinnerungskultur’.<sup>548</sup> Once again, the topic was framed in a way that invited critical discussion and directly broached the issue of comparison. Yet just as with the Holocaust singularity debate, some orientation was provided, this time in a quote paraphrasing the ‘Faulenbach Formel’.

It is interesting that the curriculum should adopt a maxim first developed by the memorial site professionals when it came to redesigning the GDR *Nationale Mahn- und Gedenkstätten* after unification. Undoubtedly it had a great deal more in common with the pedagogical programmes at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen than it did with the *Konzept* in Brandenburg, which was more interested in cementing a negative image of the GDR that concentrated on state repression and the top-down exercise of power. The ‘reflektiertes und (selbst)reflexives Geschichtsbewusstsein’<sup>549</sup> promoted by the Thuringian curriculum closely resembled the ‘handlungsorientierende[...], kritische[...] historische[...] Selbstreflexion’ Volkhard Knigge himself recommended as an appropriate means of confronting the German past.<sup>550</sup> Indeed, cross-fertilisation of this kind took place several discourses in Thuringia; as illustrated above, regional teaching materials also appropriated the language and principles underlying the memorial site exhibitions and the history curriculum.

Before concluding, it is worth looking briefly and by way of contrast at the most recent history curricula in Brandenburg. If the new curriculum in

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<sup>547</sup> ‘Ziele und inhaltliche Orientierungen für die Qualifikationsphase’ (2009), p. 12.

<sup>548</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>549</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>550</sup> Volkhard Knigge, ‘Zur Zukunft der Erinnerung’, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 25-26 (2010), 10-16 (here p. 10).

Thuringia was symptomatic of a stable and established consensus around the ‘Faulenbach Formel’ there, then its counterpart in Brandenburg showed up the lack of any such consensual paradigm for handling the double past in that state. This was all the more remarkable for the fact that the Brandenburg curricula were not all that dissimilar to the 2009 version in Thuringia, at least on the face of it. Indeed, the same principles of multiperspectivity, controversy and subjectivity were explicitly written into the curricula at both *Sekundarstufe I* and the *Qualifikationsphase*.<sup>551</sup> Nor were the thematic units drastically different to what was taught in Thuringia, as familiar-sounding titles of ‘Demokratie und Diktatur in Deutschland und Europa 1918-45’, ‘Konflikt und Konfliktlösung in der Welt seit 1917’, and ‘Ereignis und Struktur am Beispiel der doppelten deutschen Geschichte’ indicate.

Where the difference does become clearer is in the more pronounced presentism of the Brandenburg curriculum. This is not to say that the version in Thuringia denied or ignored the role latter-day contexts played in the interpretation and assessment of history. Nevertheless, a passage from the preamble to the Brandenburgian *Sekundarstufe I* curriculum went one step further, stressing that the choice of themes ‘sich...an gesellschaftlichen Schlüsselproblemen [orientiert]’.<sup>552</sup> The thematic units (‘Langschnitte’) that synthesised certain topics covered elsewhere in chronological sequence also responded explicitly to these current problems, and considered ‘in particular the establishment of democracy’.<sup>553</sup> Since, by this logic, the history curriculum should essentially follow from the most pressing issues of the day, it is perhaps no surprise that unresolved debates on how to define and explain the GDR – since Jörg Schönbohm’s Sachsenhausen speech a priority of the regional government and civic activists, as I have shown – were taken up here. Thus, pupils were to learn about democracy in the ‘Langschnitte’ primarily by engaging with the National Socialist past, the GDR, and the ‘dictatorship of the

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<sup>551</sup> See Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport Land Brandenburg, ‘Rahmenlehrplan für die Sekundarstufe I: Geschichte’ (2010), pp. 9-10; Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport Land Brandenburg, ‘Vorläufiger Rahmenlehrplan für den Unterricht in der gymnasialen Oberstufe im Land Brandenburg’ (2011), p. 17.

<sup>552</sup> ‘Rahmenlehrplan für die Sekundarstufe I’ (2010), p. 10.

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

SED'.<sup>554</sup> It was no coincidence that, in this tripartite definition of undemocratic systems of rule, the GDR featured on two counts.

Elsewhere in the Brandenburg curricula there was a discernable narrowing of focus on the criminality of the GDR. The *Sekundarstufe I* curriculum, for example, included a unit on 'Deutschland im Ost-West-Konflikt', which covered amongst other things 'politische Systeme und Herrschaft in beiden deutschen Staaten, Alltag und Menschenrechte'.<sup>555</sup> Balanced enough as this was, it did not seem to carry over into the history curriculum for the *Qualifikationsphase* introduced in 2011. In this case, the unit covering Germany's divided post-war history had evidently dispensed with the 'Alltag' label altogether, mentioning only 'Menschenrechte und Verfassungswirklichkeit' as focal points. Likewise, the reference to 'in both German states' had been omitted, somewhat downplaying the comparative approach; indeed, one could even have inferred a sole focus on East German contraventions of human rights.

Unlike in Thuringia, the recent history curricula in Brandenburg were decidedly political in their structure and wording. More than anything else they appeared to be responding to perceived deficits in the working through of the GDR past – a perception that itself increasingly held sway with many political groups and memory activists in the state. On one level this was rather surprising, since the regional government in Brandenburg has been since 2009 a coalition between the SPD and Die Linke, neither of which has pursued a condemnatory agenda when it comes to public memory of the GDR (and particularly of its crimes), as many CDU politicians have. Seen in another light, however, the example actually strengthens the case for reassessing how we define cultural discourse on the double past. On the basis of the evidence presented by the curricula in Brandenburg and Thuringia, it would be an over-simplification to simply collapse patterns of remembrance together with political objectives. In reality, the relationship is more complex and interdependent.

Politics may of course seek to influence and instrumentalise memory, as was the case with the *Konzept*, initiated by an SPD-CDU grand coalition. Equally however, a repertoire of cultural symbols and narratives may be required before political articulations of memory can take shape at all, as appeared to be the case with the curricula. In Thuringia, this was evident first and foremost in

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<sup>554</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>555</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

the transmission of a principle of differentiation, in the form of the ‘Faulenbach Formel’ and the ‘singularity’ theory, across several discourses on the double past. In Brandenburg, by contrast, voices in favour of differentiating between National Socialism and Stalinism – or indeed East German communism – appeared isolated, as the prevailing cultural narrative of a ‘deficient’ regional working through of Germany’s ‘second dictatorship’ began to filter into pedagogy and politics.

### ***An end to the ‘Vereinigungskrise’? The double past after 20 years of German unity***

It is perhaps instructive to look in this final section at the most recent ‘round’ anniversary ceremonies in 2010, the 20-year anniversary of German unity, which were marked quite differently by the special camp victim organisations in Brandenburg and Thuringia. Of course, 2010 was a loaded year for more than one reason; January marked the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, and in April similar anniversary events were held at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. Yet whilst commentary on the latter anniversaries attested to the global resonance of the camps, mentioning the dwindling cohort of survivors and thereby implying that a transition from communicative to mediated memory was under way,<sup>556</sup> the special camp anniversaries were primarily regional milestones. As a closer look at both anniversary ceremonies will demonstrate, a reading of the memorials that situates them in a landscape of increasingly globalised Holocaust memory – a reading implicit in the responses to the concentration camp anniversaries in 2010 – has not eclipsed their relevance to the process of German unity. Commemorating the double past at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, at least at regional level, remains inextricably bound up with this question, as we will see first in Thuringia and then in Brandenburg.

At the Thuringian ceremony, a convivial ‘Tag der Begegnung’, the *Initiativgruppe-Buchenwald e. V.*, the Buchenwald memorial and the regional government celebrated 20 years of cooperative work researching and

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<sup>556</sup> See for instance C.-D. Steyer, ‘Wer zu spat kommt’, *Der Tagesspiegel*, 19 Apr 2010.

commemorating the *Speziallager* and its victims. Symbolically, the Initiativgruppe chose to end publication of the annual ‘Buchenwald-Treffen’ with the proceedings from the ‘Tag der Begegnung’, indicating their obvious satisfaction with what had been achieved in the intervening decades. As the introduction to the final volume of the ‘Buchenwald-Treffen’ stated:

‘Die Geschichte der sowjetischen Lager nach 1945 in Deutschland ist durch die Historiker, die uns bisher jährlich über ihre wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnisse berichtet haben, so gut erforscht, dass grundsätzliche neue Ergebnisse nicht mehr zu erwarten sind.... Dass wir zwanzig Jahre nach der Wende umfassend über die Ereignisse im Speziallager der Sowjets in Buchenwald informiert sind, hat mehrere Ursachen.

[...]

‘Eine... Ursache ist, dass die Bundesregierung und die ostdeutschen Länder, besonders Thüringen und Sachsen, Gedenkstätten und Einrichtungen schufen, in denen Wissenschaftler alle Möglichkeiten hatten, um effektiv die Zeit nach 1945 und die Repressionsmaßnahmen der sowjetischen und deutschen Kommunisten zu erforschen, darzustellen, und zu publizieren.’<sup>557</sup>

At Sachsenhausen, by contrast, Johanna Wanka’s successor as Minister for Science, Research, and Culture, the independent candidate Martina Münch, echoed her predecessor’s demand for an extension of regional memory culture, stressing the importance of making the site ‘noch präsender..., um ihn noch stärker ins Bewusstsein der Menschen zu bringen.’<sup>558</sup> As Münch was speaking at the commemorative ceremony marking the opening of the *Speziallager*, her comments unmistakably applied first and foremost to making the post-war camp and its history more visible. In very much the same vein, and only shortly

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<sup>557</sup> Heidrun Brauer and Lothar Brauer, ‘Vorbemerkungen’ in *17., 18., 19., und 20. Buchenwald-Treffen*, ed. by Initiativgruppe Buchenwald, pp. 1-2 (p. 1).

<sup>558</sup> ‘Ansprache zum 65. Jahrestag der Verlegung des sowjetischen Speziallagers Nr. 7 nach Sachsenhausen - Gedenkveranstaltung der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Lager Sachsenhausen 1945-1950 e. V. und der Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten am 04.09.2010 in Oranienburg’, text kindly provided by Victoria Heydecke.

after the ceremony at Sachsenhausen, a former political prisoner of the GDR published a withering critique of the ‘Aufarbeitung des [DDR-]Unrechts’ since unification in the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* that focused above all on Brandenburg. In it, the author referred to the many members of the regional parliament, ‘die hauptamtlich oder als Spitzel für den DDR-Staatssicherheitsdienst tätig waren’, as proof that the revolution of 1989 had now turned on the very changes it had initially promised to bring about (‘hat ihre Kinder gefressen’).<sup>559</sup> He rejected the term ‘friedliche Revolution’ in favour of the more negatively connoted and disembodied ‘Wende’. Whereas it was precisely the first term that had been insisted upon by the Bürgerbündnis gegen Rechts in Weimar in order to present a sustained and unbroken tradition of civic engagement in support of democracy, in the Brandenburg context ‘Wende’ was used to convey a turning *away* from the values of civic protest embodied in the events of 1989 and return to the suppression of communist crimes typical of the GDR.<sup>560</sup> Unsurprisingly, the *Speziallager* and Sachsenhausen’s double past featured in the article as a testament to the supposed ‘Ungleichbehandlung der Opfer der beiden deutschen Diktaturen’ – meaning in this case an unfair treatment of the victims of *communism*, as additionally implied through the reference to the ‘Schattendasein’ led by the special camp museum.<sup>561</sup>

If anything, the ‘deficit’ narrative has only become stronger in Brandenburg in recent years, resulting in a pronounced polarisation between those advocating the primacy of the Holocaust and those adopting an equationist position when it comes to interpreting the double past. The commemorative ceremonies held in 2011 by the ALS in particular illustrate a hardening of fronts in several respects, and can undoubtedly be attributed to political and cultural developments in Brandenburg.

A ceremony marking the anniversary of the special camp’s relocation to Sachsenhausen from Weesow in 1945 provided occasion for the ALS to reissue a *Vermächtnis* (‘legacy’) that they had first presented publicly the year before. Much like the *Vermächtnis* symbolically passed down to the president of the Bundestag Norbert Lammert by survivors of the concentration camps in 2009,

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<sup>559</sup> A. W. Bauersfeld, ‘Die Opfer der DDR-Diktatur sind noch immer benachteiligt’, *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 25 Sept 2010, p. 5.

<sup>560</sup> See interview with the author, 17 Apr 2012.

<sup>561</sup> ‘Die Opfer der DDR-Diktatur’, p. 5.

this particular legacy enjoined younger generations to continue the work of the ALS and preserve the memory of the *Speziallager* victims. At first glance there were apparent similarities between the two; indeed, the concentration camp survivors' call for a 'gerechte, friedliche und tolerante Welt'<sup>562</sup> resembles the importance accorded to 'die Achtung des Anderen, Toleranz und Versöhnung' by the *Speziallager* survivors.<sup>563</sup> Conversely, the ALS articulated a desire for 'peace over the graves' ('Friede über den Graben').<sup>564</sup> Whilst this was an embodiment of the pacifist message underlying their *Vermächtnis*, it also appeared to advocate an end to uncomfortable discussions of certain prisoners' initial complicity in National Socialism that have hung over the camp since unification.

In this latter sense, then, the ALS seemed to be proposing a type of remembrance and reconciliation that actually screened ambiguity, and was therefore consistent with the structure and language of earlier commemorative ceremonies they had held on site (see chapter two). Certainly the legacy's attempt to present a 'complete' ('vollständig') picture of Sachsenhausen came closer to suggesting, in the way it was formatted and presented, a sense of parallelism rather than causality when separating the concentration camp from the post-war special camp:

'Macht Schluss mit dem selektiven Gedenken! Zeigt klar und deutlich, was Sachsenhausen lehren sollte:

Dies war ein Ort nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen.

Dies war ein Ort kommunistischer Verbrechen.'<sup>565</sup>

Beyond its somewhat reductive interpretation of 'completeness', the *Vermächtnis* betrayed the assumption that what had hitherto been missing from practices of commemoration at Sachsenhausen was recognition of post-war

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<sup>562</sup> A German version of the text can be accessed at [http://www.gedenkstaettenforum.de/nc/offenes-forum/offenes-forum/news/preserve\\_remembrance\\_conserve\\_authentic\\_places\\_assume\\_responsibility/](http://www.gedenkstaettenforum.de/nc/offenes-forum/offenes-forum/news/preserve_remembrance_conserve_authentic_places_assume_responsibility/). Last accessed 20 Oct 2013.

<sup>563</sup> Arbeitsgemeinschaft Lager Sachsenhausen 1945 – 1950 e. V., 'Vermächtnis', 31 Jul 2011 (online) [http://www.uokg.de/sachsenhausen/archiv/AG%20Sachsenhausen-Vermaechtnis\\_2011.pdf](http://www.uokg.de/sachsenhausen/archiv/AG%20Sachsenhausen-Vermaechtnis_2011.pdf). Last accessed 19 Feb 2013.

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.* Last accessed 19 Feb 2013.

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid.* Last accessed 19 Feb 2013.

crimes, as if filling in the gaps required simply greater attention to the victims of the special camp. Though this was problematic on a number of levels, not least because of the overtly anti-totalitarian mode of commemoration foisted upon *both* camps, the *Vermächtnis* took essentially the same view as the *Konzept*, which also sympathized with ‘die zunehmend gleichberechtigte Aufmerksamkeit der demokratischen Gesellschaft gegenüber der zweifachen Vergangenheit [solcher] Orte’.<sup>566</sup> Likewise, it could be argued that the *Konzept*, insisting as it did upon the right of victims of *all* inhumane treatment to proper redress, was comparing the ‘bisher Erreichte[...]’ in working through the GDR to restitution for and symbolic recognition of the victims of National Socialism – hardly a fair historical yardstick against which to judge an *Aufarbeitungsprozess* that had begun only seventeen years ago.<sup>567</sup> In any case, the interpretation of the National Socialist past as all but ‘mastered’ did seem to resonate in the *Vermächtnis*. As the ALS itself underlined upon first unveiling it in 2010, it was now essential for both state and society “die auch nach dem Ende der braunen Diktatur und des schrecklichen Krieges verübten Verbrechen deutlicher als bisher öffentlich zu benennen.”<sup>568</sup> In both the *Konzept* and the *Vermächtnis*, the handling of the Nazi past was not a matter for critical reflection but instead represented a benchmark that could be applied to confrontation with the GDR past. Though it goes without saying that all parties, whether victims of pre- or post-1945 injustice, have a right to expect equal standards when it comes to historical redress, the evident rush to make up ground in working through the history of the SBZ/GDR in Brandenburg was not unproblematic. At sites such as Sachsenhausen in particular, it in effect opened the floodgates for a paradigmatic shift away from Holocaust-centred commemoration.

Of course, it was not especially surprising that the ALS and UOKG perceived there to be ground to make up in the first place. The UOKG, after all, had formed in 1992, in the wake of sensational debates surrounding the *Stasi* and the *Speziallager* and at a moment when, as commentators such as Bernd Faulenbach have noted, popular interest in the GDR and its history was at high

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<sup>566</sup> ‘Konzept’, pp. 24-25.

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>568</sup> Quoted in R. Probst, ‘Sachsenhausen – der Ort des langen Leidens’, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 6 Sept 2010, p. 6.

ebb.<sup>569</sup> Yet for several survivors of the special camp at Sachsenhausen who supported (and in many cases actively assisted) moves to document the Soviet camp, public response – in particular from survivors of the concentration camp – fell far short of their expectations. Whilst the *Speziallager* survivors themselves were flatly dismissed as Nazis, the ‘Initiativgruppe’ representing them was suspected of being a ‘Tarnorganisation zum Schutz von Schwer- und Schwerstbelasteten’;<sup>570</sup> a deeply sceptical view that paralleled Pierre Durand’s later ‘Vertreter unserer Henker’ slight at the hearing of the Enquete Commission at Sachsenhausen in 1996. In light of these undifferentiated reactions, which effectively branded all special camp survivors perpetrators, it is perhaps little wonder that they should have regarded themselves as ‘zweite Wahl’<sup>571</sup> behind the victims of the concentration camp, or indeed as ‘Opfer zweiter Klasse’, as Gneist had alleged. Sustained lack of interest in the fate of *Speziallager* prisoners on the part of the ILK goes some way to explaining the belief, prevalent amongst the special camp victim organisations, that the injustice that occurred after 1945 had not yet been properly addressed.

Why though, in that case, did the issue come to a head much later in Brandenburg than it did in Thuringia? In many respects the debates being conducted around Sachsenhausen resembled those that had first emerged at both memorials in the aftermath of unification, when a similarly equationist position had been taken by conservative sections of regional politics and the press. Then again, the debates in the early 1990s and early 2010s did both take place at points when the persistent legacy of the GDR could be most acutely felt: the former at a time when Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen were still synonymous with the antifascist mythology that had been relentlessly peddled by the SED, and the latter amidst concerns about the background of many East German politicians and leading officials in Brandenburg. The difference was simply where this supposed continuity of GDR mentalities and politics was perceived to lie. In Thuringia, the problem was seen to be one of personnel at Buchenwald and their credentials (several had belonged to the SED and had worked closely with the overwhelmingly communist concentration camp survivor associations). In

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<sup>569</sup> See Faulenbach, ‘Diktaturerfahrungen und demokratische Erinnerungskultur in Deutschland’, in *Orte des Erinnerns: Gedenkzeichen, Gedenkstätten und Museen zur Diktatur in SBZ und DDR*, ed. by Anne Kaminsky (Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, 2007), pp. 15-24.

<sup>570</sup> See Haustein, *Geschichte im Dissens*, p. 101fn42.

<sup>571</sup> ‘Stalinismus-Opfer bleiben zweite Wahl’, *FG*, 599 (2002), p. 2.

Brandenburg, however, it was the Rot-Rote Koalition between the SPD and Die Linke and the comparatively *laissez-faire* approach to investigating the involvement of ministers and public officials with the *Stasi* prior to 1989 that caused concern. Here the issue was not so much with Sachsenhausen itself, but rather a projection of fears that one-time GDR functionaries and informants now held a monopoly of power onto the memorial. If Buchenwald had previously been ‘total Stasi-verseucht’,<sup>572</sup> according to the more polemical headlines of the day, then it was now Brandenburg that was home to the ‘Nomenklatura-Kader der ehemaligen SED’,<sup>573</sup> as it were.

It is certainly striking how closely the rhetoric in Brandenburg matches that of the conservative press in Thuringia in the early 1990s. Here too, when the controversy surrounding Buchenwald’s staff and the future of the memorial was at its peak, the prospect of a return to GDR traditions evinced great concern. Newspapers such as the conservative *Thüringische Landeszeitung* provocatively asked whether ‘die restaurativen Kräfte, die einem neuen Konzept [for the memorial, RB] kritisch gegenüberstehen, an Boden [gewinnen]’,<sup>574</sup> and even prophesized ‘Schlüsselpositionen’ within the memorial for those whose activity prior to 1989 rendered them ‘belastet’.<sup>575</sup> Equally, the doubt cast on the incoming (West German) site director Ulrich Schneider’s competence by reportage focused on his KPD-membership in retrospect set a pattern that later reappeared in the highly personalised attacks on specific figures in Brandenburg. Indeed, just as the criticism of Buchenwald’s redesign appeared to be reducible to questions of the directorate’s ‘Lauterkeit’<sup>576</sup> and the ‘ungeheure[...] Herausforderung’<sup>577</sup> several staff members’ backgrounds presented for victims of the SED, so too was the failure to adequately work through the GDR past in Brandenburg frequently attributed to presidents of the regional parliament such as Manfred Stolpe and Matthias Platzeck.

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<sup>572</sup> ‘Zum Heulen! Buchenwald total Stasi-verseucht’, *Bild Thüringen*, 6 Feb 1995. As Hasko Zimmer has pointed out, the allegations, for all their zeal in attacking the memorial and its staff, in fact stood in stark contrast to the efforts of many at Buchenwald and across the political spectrum in Thuringia to pacify the controversy. See Zimmer, *Der Buchenwald-Konflikt*, pp. 81-122; 220-223.

<sup>573</sup> Bauersfeld, ‘Die Opfer der DDR-Diktatur’, p. 5.

<sup>574</sup> H. Kaczmarek, ‘Machtkampf um Zukunft Buchenwalds’, *TLZ*, 22 Feb 1994.

<sup>575</sup> *Idem*, ‘Schlüsselposition für alte Kräfte?’, *TLZ*, 22 Feb 1994.

<sup>576</sup> ‘Zweifel an der Lauterkeit’, *Thüringer Tageblatt*, 13 Mar 1993.

<sup>577</sup> ‘Endlich sauber aufarbeiten!’, *Thüringer Tageblatt*, 13 Mar 1993.

At the ALS ceremony too, sideswipes at reluctance to pursue a more extensive working through of the East German past, this time directed at regional politicians, were barely concealed. One speaker, a professor belonging to the Historical Institute at Munich's Universität der Bundeswehr, made a startling metaphorical allusion to the practice of selecting prisoners for extermination at the National Socialist *Vernichtungslager* in his address. With the situation in Brandenburg in mind, he opined that: '[s]elektive Erinnerung... selektive Bewertung [ist] und selektive Bewertung führt erst gedanklich und dann wirklich zur „Selektion“'.<sup>578</sup> Though this may have gone further than others in the ALS by suggesting that inattentiveness to the victims of injustice in the SBZ and GDR was simply the thin end of the wedge eventually leading to genocide, it was nonetheless quoted by the chair of the ALS in a report of the ceremony, published in the newsletter of the UOKG. Even if it did not necessarily share the belief that 'selektive Erinnerung' was actually mendacious, the report certainly did not neglect to reiterate the criticism that 'in Sachsenhausen das Gedenken an die Opfer der Kommunisten immer noch nicht anständig und wahrhaftig sei'.<sup>579</sup> Besides referring once again to the victims of communism as opposed to Stalinism (see above), the report also bemoaned the 'Gleichgültigkeit, mit der die Gesellschaft den Opfern der Kommunisten begegnet', thereby embedding the commemoration of the post-war camp at Sachsenhausen in the broader context of GDR memory in Brandenburg.<sup>580</sup>

Only speeches from the first of two distinct commemorative ceremonies are discussed in the article. Though rather glossed over in the wording of the text, which referred to a ceremony consisting of 'two parts', it is clear that the ALS had proceeded to independently plan a programme of its own and hold the ceremony, later described by the speaker of the Brandenburg Memorials Foundation as a 'Konkurrenzveranstaltung', immediately prior to the second event, jointly organised by the ALS and memorial staff.<sup>581</sup> Both the separate ceremonies and the response from the memorial staff indicate the considerable

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<sup>578</sup> "'Sachsenhausen mahnt uns". Grußwort von Prof. Dr. Michael Wolffsohn anlässlich des 66. Jahrestags der Verlegung des Speziallagers Nr. 1 von Weesow nach Sachsenhausen', Jul 2011 (online) [http://www.uokg.de/sachsenhausen/archiv/Sachsenhausen\\_Grusswort\\_Wolffsohn-2011.pdf](http://www.uokg.de/sachsenhausen/archiv/Sachsenhausen_Grusswort_Wolffsohn-2011.pdf). Last accessed 22 Feb 2013.

<sup>579</sup> V. Heydecke and M. Pense, 'Wildwuchs am Ort der Verbrechen', *Stacheldraht* (7/2011), pp. 10-11 (p. 10).

<sup>580</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

<sup>581</sup> H. Seferens, 'Einspruch', *Stacheldraht*, 8 (2011), p. 16.

rift between the two groups, who each appeared to suspect the other was engaging in ‘competition’ over the interpretation of the *Speziallager* and the double past.

Moreover, the ALS could now count on support from Brandenburg’s Commissioner for working through the GDR past, Ulrike Poppe, as well as several others from CDU circles, all of whom had voiced concern at how victims of East German political injustice were integrated into the memorial landscape at a hearing of the regional Enquete commission into Brandenburg’s handling of the ‘SED-Diktatur’ earlier in the year. Poppe even issued a press release calling for Martina Münch, who as Minister for Science, Research and Culture also acted as chair of the Brandenburg Memorial Foundation’s Council, to use her position to ensure funds earmarked for the *Speziallager* were made use of.<sup>582</sup> Others such as Klaus Schroeder, the *Sachverständiger* nominated to the commission by the regional CDU faction, also directed criticism at the Brandenburg Memorials Foundation for its handling of the victims of post-war injustice. At the same time, Schroeder spoke out against an appraisal of the GDR that was ‘ergebnisoffen’ – proposing in effect that a normative characterisation of the state as ‘dictatorial’ should guide how it was taught in schools.<sup>583</sup> Victoria Heydecke, then the chair of the ALS, pointed out that prejudice shown towards the victims and the ALS came from victims of National Socialism and their representatives in the advisory council of the Brandenburg Memorials Foundation too.<sup>584</sup> Indeed, much of her statement to the commission consisted of complaints about institutional structures such as the division of the Foundation’s advisory council into a (larger) group concerned with matters pertaining to the concentration camp and a second group consulted on the special camp. Tellingly, she noted that there were ‘viele Kommunisten’ amongst the first and supposedly more influential group.<sup>585</sup>

The result of this was to (perhaps unintentionally) revitalise the notion held by many survivors of the special camps at both Buchenwald and

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<sup>582</sup> Beauftragte des Landes Brandenburg zur Aufarbeitung der Folgen der kommunistischen Diktatur, ‘Opfer kommunistischer Verfolgung fühlen sich in den Gedenkstätten im Land Brandenburg unzureichend vertreten’, Pressemitteilung 06/2011, 18 Mar 2011, [http://www.aufarbeitung.brandenburg.de/sixcms/detail.php?template=archiv\\_lakd&skip=135](http://www.aufarbeitung.brandenburg.de/sixcms/detail.php?template=archiv_lakd&skip=135) [accessed 6 May 2011].

<sup>583</sup> Landtag Brandenburg, Protokoll-Enquete-Kommission 5/9, 18 Mar 2011, p. 14.

<sup>584</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 48-52; p. 67; p. 68.

<sup>585</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

Sachsenhausen in the immediate aftermath of unification that communists continued to call the shots at the memorials. In this case, however, alleged institutional bias was for the ALS over-layered by societal prejudice: it was now the special camp survivors who were ‘immer wieder von Neuem verletzt’ at Sachsenhausen, treated by the survivors of the concentration camp with an ire that was out of all proportion to German society’s responsibility towards the victims of National Socialism.<sup>586</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In summary, it is essential to recognize the challenges presented by unification and the post-GDR transition as the key underlying context if we are to understand how debates on the memorials have unfolded in the political culture of Brandenburg and Thuringia since 1998. How these challenges were perceived to have been handled (or indeed not handled) largely determined the ways in which the double past at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen was represented. Once again a Foucauldian approach proves useful in revealing how contexts specific to the new federal states have restructured the very language of coming to terms with the past, creating networks of discourses. What these networks suggest is, in short, a wider proliferation of the principle of differentiation in the way the double past is approached in Thuringia, and more prevalent equationism in Brandenburg. I will briefly recapitulate the findings of this chapter below, beginning with Brandenburg and finishing with a summary of the position in Thuringia.

If the ‘Jagd auf rote Socken’ at Buchenwald shortly after unification appeared to foreshadow the debates that later followed in other eastern federal states, then this can be of little surprise given the almost identical transitional situation in which they were framed. Whereas Buchenwald was viewed through the lens of anxieties about the continuation of SED structures and personnel fairly early on, this has only belatedly come to apply to Brandenburg. Nonetheless, it can explain the perceptible shift towards an equationist discourse

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<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

around Sachsenhausen. Increasing calls to refocus attention on post-war injustices at the site are tied to unease about the ‘Brandenburger Weg’, a term that implies – somewhat inaccurately – that there has been a *laissez faire* regional approach to former SED functionaries and *Stasi* informants in public sector positions and a form of politics by consensus for the sake of societal cohesion. Indeed, looking at how the victims of *Speziallager Nr. 7 / Nr. 1* have been commemorated in recent years, there are signs that both conservative political and press discourse as well as the organisations representing the victims of Communism have appropriated the trope of a deficient working through of injustice in the SBZ/GDR.

What this ultimately shows is that the term ‘Vereinigungskrise’, used by Hasko Zimmer to describe Buchenwald’s post-unification redesign, can now more accurately be applied to the situation at Sachsenhausen.<sup>587</sup> Fourteen years after Zimmer’s study, and in spite of an increasingly transnational cultural memory characterising the concentration camp memorials in the new millennium (a development to which I turn in the next chapter), the example of Brandenburg reveals that Sachsenhausen at least cannot be seen in isolation from ongoing regional struggles with the process of German unity. What, then, has determined how Buchenwald is remembered? To a certain extent the conclusions here relating to more recent years are negatively drawn, insofar as there is significantly less evidence of disputes between protagonists in Thuringia after 2005 (a fact that the memorial director Volkhard Knigge himself vouches for).<sup>588</sup> Indeed, stakeholders such as the *Initiativgruppe* if anything sounded remarkably appeased when reflecting in 2010 on the steps taken since unification to research and document the *Speziallager* as well as commemorate victims of the camp. What is clear from the preceding discussion is that there has been a broader proliferation – and acceptance – of the principle of differentiation in Thuringia since 1999.

As responses to Hermann Schäfer’s speech at the Weimar *Kunsthfest* in 2006 show, this owes to a specific regional *dispositif*. Upholding the centrality of the Nazi past was explicitly aligned with preserving Thuringia’s exemplary record in confronting the double past. An interesting question that presents itself at this juncture is the extent to which the *dispositif* manifesting itself in the

<sup>587</sup> See Zimmer, *Der Buchenwald-Konflikt*, p. 32.

<sup>588</sup> Knie, ‘Die Umgestaltung der DDR-Gedenkstätten’.

Thuringian press has itself become ‘normalized’ over time. Given the prominent place the medium affords to regional political groups and the regional filter it tends to apply even to events of nationwide proportions such as the Schäfer scandal, it may be more appropriate to foreground its role in perpetuating memory discourses than to look to it for evidence of dissenting voices. Indeed, it would be rather selective to view Thuringia solely as a space for the contestation and revision of federal discourse without considering whether this presents norms of its own. Rather than taking at face value an opposition between national normalization of the past and regional exclusion from or incompatibility with this discourse, then, the possibility of both German and Thuringian permutations of normative memory must be taken seriously.

Of course, the fact that the Buchenwald staff are directly responsible for producing pedagogical materials used in Thuringia to prepare school visits accounts for a degree of this proliferation too. We can recognize certain biographies such as the prisoner Otto von Kursell or the trope of mourning both an original moral failure to oppose Nazism and the injustices of Soviet Occupation – what Volkhard Knigge termed ‘doppelt geprägte Trauer’ – in both discourses. Circulation of these tropes and symbols extended, moreover, to classroom teaching, as reflected in the content and approach of the revised history curriculum, which explicitly appropriated the ‘Faulenbach-Formel’. This was noticeably different to the situation in Brandenburg, where the proscriptive *Konzept* and history curricula stood virtually in direct opposition to the approach to the double past advocated by the memorial professionals. However one chooses to interpret these localised frameworks, the fact remains that they have proven particularly consequential in both Brandenburg and Thuringia since 1999. Regional commemoration of the memorials and their double pasts was and is, in the final analysis, inextricably bound up with the transitional situation that East Germany still finds itself in.

## Ch. 5: On national and trans-national discourses

### *Introduction*

Having demonstrated in the previous three chapters how sub-national discourses have shot through a national memory culture, in this final chapter I approach the place of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen in an ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’ from the opposite direction. That is to say, I show that the memorials are in fact appropriated by multiple ‘national’ discourses, as well as others that are trans-national; across the four thematic chapters of the thesis I therefore cover a comprehensive spectrum of cultural representations ranging from the local to global. The very fact that there are, first of all, various federal discourses vying for hegemony at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen confirms that the sites can indeed be seen as national *Lieux de mémoire*. This should not be mistaken for implying they are, after all, ‘Fixpunkte des antitotalitären Konsenses’ in a normative sense. Whether or not the concept of a homogenous German memory culture corresponds to realities on the ground, however, the fact remains that the national significance of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen has been repeatedly invoked and demonstratively linked to an ‘official’ memory paradigm since 1998. Secondly, efforts beginning in the 2000s both in Europe and globally to root civic identity in memory of mass injustice have posed a challenge to the frame of the nation state in managing public discourse on the past. The latter half of the chapter addresses this trend, considering what it reveals about the current (and future) role of the memorials to the double past in the memory culture of the Berlin Republic.

Returning to the national profile of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, one can justifiably argue that their prominence placed them in direct relation to, and arguably even confrontation with, concurrent plans to memorialize Jewish

victims of the Holocaust in the centre of Berlin.<sup>589</sup> It is worth pointing out that the former had both historically been, at one stage or another, ‘central’ sites, whether as the ‘ZK der Reichshauptstadt’ during the Third Reich in Sachsenhausen’s case or as the GDR’s most important *Nationale Mahn- und Gedenkstätte* in Buchenwald’s. But did their historical centrality carry over into the post-unification period? The questions the opening section of this chapter sets out to answer are, firstly: do the memorials remain central to a nationally defined memory culture in the Berlin Republic, or have they now been subordinated to other central sites such as the *Neue Wache* or the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe? Secondly, do they help perpetuate official memory culture or articulate dissent? Several exemplary episodes serve to ground the analysis in empirical case studies. The section begins by looking at debates surrounding the relationship between the *KZ-Gedenkstätten* and the Berlin ‘Holocaust Memorial’, before turning to the various models of ‘national’ commemorative discourse that could be read out of the Schäfer scandal in 2006.

Recent years have seen a globalisation of Holocaust memory in more general terms, symbolized most pointedly by the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust in 2000. Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider have spoken aptly of a ‘cosmopolitan’ Holocaust memory, in which memory of the historical event itself has on the one hand become a universally valid morality tale – a ‘symbol of transnational solidarity’, in their words – but interacts on the other hand with local contexts at its point of reception.<sup>590</sup> Thus global transmission has not led to a totalizing meaning of the Holocaust; rather, this meaning is context-specific. More recently Michael Rothberg has developed the concept of ‘multidirectional memory’ in recognition of the fact that memories of separate forms of historical injustice are not necessarily mired in a ‘zero-sum struggle for preeminence’.<sup>591</sup> Instead, efforts at representing other, especially colonial, histories may productively gesture towards the Holocaust and vice versa.

Yet as Dirk Moses has recently pointed out, universalizing the historical trauma of the Holocaust does not always usher in articulation of other injustices or a concomitantly global sensitization to human rights culture; it may just as

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<sup>589</sup> Leggewie and Meyer, “*Ein Ort, an den man gerne geht*”, ch. 1.4.

<sup>590</sup> Levy and Sznaider, ‘Memory Unbound’, p. 93. See also Levy and Sznaider, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter: Der Holocaust* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2001).

<sup>591</sup> Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 3.

well lead to a ‘‘calamitization’ of politics’<sup>592</sup> whereby the Holocaust is used to justify even the most hostile and terroristic action on behalf of particular groups or states. He focuses on the Israel-Palestine conflict, and whilst I do not mean to suggest a simple parallel between that unique case and the memory debates addressed here, his intimation that the trans-national pathways of Holocaust memory can trigger instrumentalisation of history as much as intercultural understanding is valid nonetheless. The transmission of memory across cultures is, in Rothberg’s idealistic sense, multidirectional and dialogic, but it is important not to overlook the fact that interactivity in increasingly global, connected spaces may well continue to take the form of zero-sum competition.

Section two of this chapter looks for evidence of multidirectionality and memory competition in the role the memorials have played in shoring up (or indeed critiquing) constructions of a common European history and identity. The analysis focuses on how various stakeholders at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen have responded to the initiative to introduce a European-wide memorial day for victims of 20<sup>th</sup> century totalitarian regimes on 23 August (see thesis introduction). Given that what is at stake here is not German but European identity, and given that the context is not German unification but the broader transitional process following the collapse of the Eastern bloc, discourse on the memorials’ double past can logically no longer be viewed as part of a German ‘Vereinigungskrise’. Whereas regional discourse, as we have seen, is clearly implicated with processes of transitional justice that are by definition orientated around end goals of ‘unification’ and ‘inner unity’, a European discourse imposes different demands on the commemoration of the double past. It has created a new identity *dispositif* that demands greater cohesion across various discourses but, at the same time, has the potential to produce deeper and more divisive competition. This has inevitably affected not just memory activism at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, but also the position of the memorial sites as agencies in the pursuit of objective historical truth.

Beyond Europe, the memorials serve global constituencies as generic symbols of dark pasts in an age in which both human rights concepts and

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<sup>592</sup> A. Dirk. Moses, ‘Genocide and the Terror of History’, *parallax*, 17, 4 (2011), 90-108 (p. 91).

memory are enjoying a ‘new conjuncture’.<sup>593</sup> Beginning, as recent scholarship argues, in the 1970s with the rise of humanitarian organisations such as Amnesty International and agreements such as the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, today’s human rights regime is by no small coincidence contiguous with an increased interest in memory. After all, without ongoing memory of human rights abuses there would be nothing to justify calls for such rights in the first place. One of the results of this inherently political and moral mission to sensitize against and prevent future human rights abuses has been the emerging global phenomenon of the ‘memorial museum’.<sup>594</sup> Taking into consideration Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen’s implication in this universal rights regime, section three of the chapter illustrates the ways in which it is nonetheless reconciled to narrower identity constructs. Political discourse, for instance, fuses the universalist message of the memorials to a nationally-defined ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’, whilst concentration camp survivors’ lobbies link the rights paradigm to antifascist activism. Consequently, my findings refute the proposition that trans-national narrative frames have entirely eclipsed national and parochial contexts even as we have entered an age of global memory.

As in other chapters, I adopt a systems-theory approach alongside tools taken from critical discourse analysis and cultural memory studies to explain the formation and transmission of discourse on the memorials’ double past. This triadic approach avoids over-privileging memory as a method of historical analysis.<sup>595</sup> For their part, the concepts of a *dispositif* and ‘travelling’ memory cast the debates on Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen in relation to underlying structures, whether an ‘order of discourse’ (in the case of the former) or a borderless, connected cultural space (in the case of the latter). The concept of autopoiesis, by contrast, can open up discourse to conceptualization as the ‘komunizierbare Differenz von Handeln und Beobachten’<sup>596</sup> – that is, a kind of internal self-organisation of discourse through interaction with its environment – rather than as the result of an external structure. As such, we need not necessarily assume changes in a discourse’s environment – in this case the emergence of

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<sup>593</sup> Andreas Huyssen, ‘International Human Rights and the Politics of Memory: Limits and Challenges’, *Criticism*, 53, 4 (2011), 607-624 (p. 607); see also S. Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>594</sup> See Williams, *Memorial Museums*, p. 131f.

<sup>595</sup> On this point, see Alon Confino, ‘Telling about Germany: Narratives of Memory and Culture’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 76, 2 (2004), 389-416 (p. 390).

<sup>596</sup> Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme*, p. 408.

national and trans-national cultural frames – dictate how the discourse evolves. Indeed, I propose that identifiable ‘codes’ according to which certain stakeholders at the memorials interpret the double past are to an extent apparent on the national and trans-national stage too.

### ***Germany’s ‘other’ Holocaust memorials?***

In this opening section of the chapter I begin by tracing the establishment and contestation of the normalization paradigm under Gerhard Schröder on the ground. I do this by engaging with some of the discussions surrounding the planned Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin, commonly known as the Holocaust Memorial, which opened in May 2005 after a more than fifteen year gestation period. During this time, and as the proposed memorial increasingly generated an almost frenzied level of public interest, several colloquia were held by the project organisers and the federal government, at which the memorial specialists (including both Knigge and Morsch) as well as politicians, academics and civic memory activists gave lengthy statements. Additionally, the memorial was subject to criticism from certain groups even after its inauguration, not least from victims of communism and their representatives, indicating the extent to which it was identified with a political project to embed remembrance of the Holocaust at the centre of German identity. I hone in on a public hearing of the parliamentary Committee for Culture and Media in April 1999, a speech given by Schröder at Sachsenhausen later that year, and a scathing polemic against the memorial and the red-green government delivered at Sachsenhausen by the right-wing author and publicist Ulrich Schacht in the summer of 2005. Together these moments convey a sense of the internalisation of the Nazi past in political culture during Schröder’s two terms in office and of the challenges that were mounted against this project.

Political change followed not long on the heels of the Holocaust Memorial’s inauguration, as the CDU/CSU-SPD coalition led by Angela Merkel was elected into power in September 2005. To a considerable extent, the politics

of the past practiced by the Merkel administration were characterised by continuity with those developed by the Social Democratic government after 1998, as outlined in the introductory chapter. At most one could perhaps speak of a broadening of the existing paradigm under Merkel's chancellorship, whereby the federal government continued to unequivocally accept responsibility for the Holocaust whilst simultaneously commemorating Germans as victims of war and dictatorial repression too.<sup>597</sup> Consequently, the section concludes by assessing how the project of normalization has negotiated political transition in 2005 and the consequences this has had for commemorating the double past. It returns to the scandal precipitated by Herman Schäfer's speech at the *Gedächtnis Buchenwald* concert already discussed in chapter four, this time gauging the fallout in the national press in order to establish whether the coordinates of Germany's culture of remembrance are drawn in the same way as in Thuringia. Furthermore, by accounting for the (very different) response the speech elicited from victims' associations – namely the LAG Buchenwald-Dora – it pinpoints continuing uneasiness in relation to any kind of 'nationally' defined German identity, even one predicated on the very recognition of German criminality under National Socialism.

Several memorial experts, and particularly the directors of the *KZ-Gedenkstätten* in the new federal states, actively participated in the early debates surrounding the proposed Holocaust Memorial. Prominent figures in the Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen directorates also weighed in with a number of criticisms of the proposed memorial in a parliamentary hearing on 20 April 1999. These were both consistent with the group's broader misgivings with centralised commemoration and indicative of a significant degree of homogeneity across the respective memorials involved in the debate. As early as 1995, Jürgen Dittberner, director of the Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten at the time, questioned the logic of setting aside several million Mark to a centralised memorial whilst authentic sites faced considerable financial hardship. He recommended that the

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<sup>597</sup> See in this regard Bernd Faulenbach, 'Eine neue Konstellation? Der Umgang mit zwei Vergangenheiten in Deutschland nach 1989', in *Aufarbeitung der Diktatur – Diktat der Aufarbeitung? Normierungsprozesse beim Umgang mit diktatorischer Vergangenheit*, ed. by K. Hammerstein, U. Mähler, J. Trappe, E. Wolfram (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2009), pp. 37-47 (here p. 44); also Ruth Wittlinger 'The Merkel Government's Politics of the Past', *German Politics and Society*, 26, 4 (2008), 9-27.

planned memorial in Berlin be reconsidered on a more ‘modest’ scale.<sup>598</sup> Whilst he perhaps over-exaggerated the dichotomy of federal funding decisions in implying that *either* centralised *or* decentralised commemoration of the National Socialist past would be financed, his concern with the implications for Germany’s existing decentralised memorial landscape was emblematic of the memorials experts’ position more generally.

Undoubtedly the Berlin memorial project compounded the sense of a growing opposition between artificial, central memorials and authentic, pre-existing sites of National Socialist crimes. Indeed, it can have been of little coincidence that the Arbeitsgemeinschaft der KZ-Gedenkstätten in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland was formed in March 1997, in the midst of a series of experts’ colloquia in Berlin dedicated to the Holocaust Memorial.<sup>599</sup> It is important to recognise however that the memorial experts did not necessarily oppose the construction of a central memorial out of hand; nor was the AG der KZ-Gedenkstätten interested in seeing the proposal dropped.<sup>600</sup> The pressing issue that required clarification was, for the representatives of the memorials, the uncertain relationship between the proposed central site and the existing memorial landscape. It was resolving this matter that gave the concentration camp memorials impetus to more forcefully articulate their own position, as indicated by the decision to establish a national network in the form of the AG. More to the point, the discrepancy between ‘official’ federal commemorative policy and the stance of the memorials at this juncture indicates the limited use of reading Germany’s culture of remembrance in terms of a simplified opposition between differentiation and relativisation. Both discourses upheld the singularity of the Holocaust, but by different means and to different ends.

This was well illustrated by a point Günter Morsch made in his statement at the 1999 parliamentary hearing. In it he asserted that the ‘durchaus begründbare Singularität des nationalsozialistischen Völkermords an den Juden’ was in fact obscured in the memorial’s design concept, which in addressing a variety of phenomena, from the persecution of political prisoners to latter-day

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<sup>598</sup> *Welt*, 29 Jun 1995.

<sup>599</sup> Jan-Holger Kirsch, *Nationaler Mythos oder historische Trauer: Der Streit um ein zentrales “Holocaust-Mahnmal” für die Berliner Republik* (Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau, 2003), p. 98.

<sup>600</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

camps in Serbia, presented the Holocaust as a ‘Metatheorie’.<sup>601</sup> Thus he dismissed the catchall rubric as an effective means of addressing the National Socialist dictatorship at an inauthentic central commemorative site. More advisable in his estimation was to continue to encourage confrontation with the Nazi past in situ, where the link between crime (‘Tat’), perpetrator (‘Täter’), and site of the crime (‘Tatort’) and therefore the ‘broader societal responsibility’ (‘gesamtgesellschaftliche Verantwortung’) for persecution could be explained.<sup>602</sup> At the same time, Morsch delegated the parallel task of embedding the Third Reich into a chronology of German history in the *longue durée* to historical museums, in effect suggesting a slightly different division of labour in Germany’s commemorative landscape than had been outlined in the revised Holocaust memorial design by architect Peter Eisenmann. As with Jürgen Dittberner’s earlier criticism, this did not constitute an outright objection to a central Holocaust memorial. Rather, Morsch was (re-)stating the value of decentralised, site-based memory work in response to the centralised and symbolic form of commemoration provided by the Berlin memorial.

Defining German memory culture at the turn of the millennium was not therefore reducible to the Manichean dilemma of whether to oppose or support a central Holocaust memorial. As Morsch intimated in his comments at the hearing, the task at hand was to establish which commemorative paradigm the federal government would pledge its support to. The first option, represented by the Holocaust Memorial, was to embrace a form of memorialisation predicated on abstract mourning and *Betroffenheit* – implying in Morsch’s opinion a simultaneous turn away from ‘historisches Wissen und Kenntnisse’.<sup>603</sup> The second, which Morsch spoke out in favour of, was to adopt the consensus view on memorialisation reached by a broad spectrum of politicians, civic activist groups, and museum and memorial professionals in the hearings of the second Enquete Commission into the GDR past. Here Morsch picked up on the Commission’s *Schlußbericht*, published in 1998, which embraced the principle of decentralisation and the transformation of the memorials from sites of

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<sup>601</sup> Günter Morsch, ‘Stellungnahme in der öffentlichen Anhörung des Ausschusses für Kultur und Medien des Deutschen Bundestages in Berlin am 20. April 1999’ in *Der Denkmalstreit – das Denkmal: die Debatte um das “Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas”*: eine Dokumentation, ed. by Ute Heimrod, Günter Schlusche and Horst Seferens (Bodenheim: PHILO, 1999), pp. 1276-1279 (p. 1277).

<sup>602</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1277.

<sup>603</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1276.

mourning and commemoration to ‘Orte[...] zeithistorischer Museen und aktiven Lernens’.<sup>604</sup> In both form and function, memory work of the kind advocated by Morsch consequently had less in common with the new SPD-Green government’s normalized terms of reference to the past than the common foregrounding of the Third Reich may suggest.

On one issue, Morsch did fall back on the binary reading of the German memory landscape that his contribution to the parliamentary hearing had otherwise avoided. This was the matter of what exactly one understood by the term ‘authentic’. The definition Morsch offered was in this instance fairly imprecise, resting primarily on a demarcation from inauthentic – that is, interpretative, post hoc – memorials erected at sites bearing no direct relation to National Socialist crimes and/or their victims. Yet when it came to sites such as Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald, which had seen successive reuse as *Speziallager* and GDR Sites of Memory and Warning respectively after 1945, authenticity was a somewhat problematic concept anyway. The topography of the original concentration camp therefore possessed an at best secondary (or even tertiary) authenticity, refracted through its post-war re-designation as special camp and, later, memorial. Though the memorial professionals very effectively problematised the concept of ‘authenticity’ in the post-unification redesign concepts (see chapter two), Morsch now, albeit out of necessity, defined the concentration camp memorials *as a counterpoint* to the Eisenmann concept in order to restate the case for a decentralised culture of remembrance. Almost inevitably, this resulted in a rather flattened out and rhetorical notion of ‘authenticity’.

Here, Morsch appeared to contradict himself. He stressed that ‘historical sites’, unlike an artistic, central memorial that if anything stood to benefit from an absence of contextualisation, should be furnished with historical information.<sup>605</sup> Implicitly however, the need for exposition meant that the sites derived context and meaning from prevailing interpretations of the past. In turn, their status as ‘authentic’ depended upon existing within a time and epistemology that attributed this quality to them. Morsch regarded calls for a central Holocaust

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<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1276.

<sup>605</sup> As Morsch asserted with the planned Berlin memorial in mind: ‘die Halbwertszeit der künstlerischen Anmutung eines Denkmals [steht] im umgekehrt proportionalen Verhältnis zu seiner Eindeutigkeit’. See *ibid.*, p. 1278.

memorial as the result of a paradigmatic ‘introvertierte Betroffenheit’,<sup>606</sup> but seemed to understand ‘authenticity’ (when applied to relics of the National Socialist period) as a fixed, ontological label. He would later broach the embedment of memorials and their work within current cultures of remembrance when addressing commemorative politics in Europe, and once more take a somewhat contradictory stance (see below), but in the meantime it is important to note the connection between his position and the nature of the memory debate being conducted in 1999. Indeed, the commemorative paradigm he advocated cannot be understood in isolation from the federal government’s explicit support of Eisenmann’s revised proposal and the fact that the memorial itself, when completed, would represent a de facto ‘Nationalisierung negativen Gedenkens’, to borrow Volkhard Knigge’s phrase.<sup>607</sup> It was primarily the *Bund*’s involvement in remembering the Nazi past that precipitated the memorial professionals’ use of ‘authenticity’ as a rhetorical tool with which to engage in *Erinnerungspolitik*.

The role the Red-Green administration assigned to the concentration camp memorials was epitomised by Gerhard Schroeder’s speech at Sachsenhausen on 22 September 1999, marking the visit of the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak. The very act of inviting Barak to the memorial in the first place signalled Schroeder’s willingness to openly acknowledge German responsibility for the Holocaust, though the fact that it was Sachsenhausen seemed largely irrelevant. Indeed, it was the symbolic value of the site that the speech chose to emphasize:

‘Es fällt mir nicht leicht, an diesem Ort tiefster Demütigung und Qual der Menschen, die hier waren, zu sprechen. Der Name Sachsenhausen steht, zusammen mit vielen anderen Lagernamen, für das schlimmste Verbrechen in der deutschen Geschichte. Sachsenhausen steht wie Auschwitz, Treblinka, Majdanek, Buchenwald und die vielen anderen Lager für die planmäßige Vernichtung von Millionen von Juden und anderen Opfern.’<sup>608</sup>

The location therefore functioned as little more than a backdrop for political gestures of atonement and reconciliation directed towards Israel.

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<sup>606</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1276.

<sup>607</sup> Volkhard Knigge, ‘Abschied von der Erinnerung: Zum notwendigen Wandel der KZ-Gedenkstätten in Deutschland’, *GedenkstättenRundbrief*, 100 (2001), 136-143.

<sup>608</sup> ‘Rede von Bundeskanzler Gerhard Schröder anlässlich des Besuchs von Ministerpräsident Barak in der Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen am 22. September 1999’, *BPA-DOK*, Doknr: 99058.

Schroeder himself referred not so much to any specific event in the concentration camp's history but rather to the 'name' Sachsenhausen, in effect reducing the site to a cultural symbol. Furthermore, his suggestion that this particular memorial stood 'together with many other camp names...for the calculated annihilation [Vernichtung] of millions of Jews and other victims' produced an alarmingly ahistorical and homogenous category of camp in which the same basic chain of events played out. This not only elided crucial historical distinctions between the extermination camps and concentration camps (Schroeder mentioned both in his list), but also created a historical memory of the Holocaust that was quite distinct from the narratives found in the on-site exhibitions, for example. Whereas Günter Morsch had explicitly distanced the Sachsenhausen memorial from a cultural narrative of the Holocaust as a 'metatheory', in Schröder's speech it was exactly that: a synecdoche for the crimes committed by Germans in the name of the Third Reich. Equally, it was less important how or by what means National Socialist crimes were remembered. Decisive was, rather, the normative, gestural commitment to remember in the first place, as Schröder himself implied:

'Es gibt nur einen Weg, mit dem Unvorstellbaren dieser Verbrechen umzugehen: Wir müssen uns und alle anderen wieder und wieder daran erinnern.'<sup>609</sup>

At another point in his speech Schröder averred that it was precisely Germany's commitment to remember the Holocaust and prevent its recurrence that facilitated its re-entry into the European 'Völker-Gemeinschaft'.<sup>610</sup> Membership in turn presupposed a commitment to safeguard human rights, and the chancellor did not miss the opportunity to stress that this was indeed the intended function of Holocaust memory – Germany's 'sichere[s] moralische[s] Fundament'.<sup>611</sup> The choice of Sachsenhausen as a staging post for Schröder's memory politics should not be overlooked. Admittedly, it was virtually interchangeable with other concentration camp or even extermination camp memorials, given that the association between the historical site and the message of the speech remained firmly in the abstract. Yet its geographical proximity to

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<sup>609</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>610</sup> 'Rede...in der Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen am 22. September 1999'.

<sup>611</sup> *Ibid.*

the German capital elevated the chancellor's rhetoric to a programmatic statement of federal policy, both domestically and also towards Israel. Thus, Sachsenhausen did in fact serve – at least for the federal government – as a microcosm of a broader Holocaust complex. As we will see in the remainder of this section, the memorial's disputed status as, variously, a national Holocaust memorial and a site at which to mount challenges to normative official memory narratives was far from resolved as of 1999; contests of interpretation persisted throughout the 2000s.

At a ceremony marking the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the *Speziallager* at Sachsenhausen in 2005, the Red-Green government's stance on the Nazi past came in for criticism this time from the political right. It came in the form of a polemic launched against the Schröder administration by the guest speaker at the ceremony, the author Ulrich Schacht. Clearly Schacht had intended to stir up controversy with the speech, coming as it did little more than three months after the inauguration of the Holocaust memorial, and just a month before the 2005 federal elections, for that matter. In terms of polemical effect, the content more than matched the speech's timing. Sachsenhausen was barely mentioned at all, and the single occasion Schacht did reference the victims of the *Speziallager* amounted to an unashamed instrumentalisation of eyewitness testimony in service of his own agenda (see below). Though very different from the objections to the Holocaust memorial raised by the memorial professionals, and far more problematic, Schacht's comments nevertheless underlined the extent to which Sachsenhausen served as a platform for challenging federal memory politics, which had found their apogee in the recently opened memorial in Berlin.

Schacht's speech was entitled 'Wider die Republik der Opfer-Sortierer', leaving no uncertainty as to his opinion of officially mandated memory in the Berlin Republic.<sup>612</sup> The accusation he levelled throughout was that victims of post-1945 injustice were met with a 'kalte[...] Provokation asymmetrischer Empathie für das am eigenen Leib erfahrene Unrecht und Leid' in Germany.<sup>613</sup> What is more, he argued that this asymmetry was institutionalized, referring

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<sup>612</sup> U. Schacht, 'Wider die Republik der Opfer-Sortierer: Zum 60. Jahrestag der Errichtung des Sowjetischen Speziallagers Nr. 7 Oranienburg-Sachsenhausen' (online) [http://gedenkbibliothek.de/download/Ulrich\\_Schacht\\_Wider\\_die\\_Republik\\_der\\_Opfer-Sortierer\\_Rede\\_vom\\_13\\_08\\_2005.pdf](http://gedenkbibliothek.de/download/Ulrich_Schacht_Wider_die_Republik_der_Opfer-Sortierer_Rede_vom_13_08_2005.pdf), 7pp. Last accessed 01 Jun 2013.

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

sardonically to ‘Gedenkpolitik, die sich zugleich in hoch-symbolisierter Gestalt als konstitutive Staatspolitik gefällt.’ Shortly afterwards he mentioned Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer’s invocation of Auschwitz in justifying military intervention in Kosovo, and alleged that the symbol of the camp had become the ‘Gründungsmythos der Bundesrepublik Deutschland.’<sup>614</sup> By evoking GDR antifascism, which was referred to in the propaganda of the SED as the East German state’s own ‘Gründungsmythos’, Schacht sought to level the same charge of instrumentalising and centrally controlling memory discourse at the Schröder administration. He may not have mentioned the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in his speech, but as the leitmotif of the Holocaust-centred official memory paradigm that he was so disparaging of, it was peripherally present throughout.

As for Sachsenhausen and its double past, these featured as little more than anecdotal evidence for Schacht’s claim that an ‘asymmetrische Empathie’ for victims of pre- and post-1945 injustice had been institutionalised under the red-green government. This was questionable to say the least, given that he was speaking at an occasion intended to commemorate the victims of the special camp. Whilst he did describe conditions in the *Speziallager* by citing Gisela Gneist, a former internee and as of 2005 the chair of the ALS, her testimony was used to further pillory commemorative culture in the Berlin Republic. Thus, rather than allowing Gneist’s description of the awful conditions in the *Speziallager* to stand on its own, Schacht used it to ‘prove’ (‘beweisen’) that the citing of the *Speziallager* museum in the redesigned memorial concept was ‘moralisch abgrundtief abwegig’.<sup>615</sup> Aside from anything else, there was nothing in Gneist’s testimony that referenced the experience of imprisonment in the special camp and in the concentration camp in comparative terms, so the comparison Schacht nevertheless attempted to draw - as well as his assumption that the memorial concept was based on a victim hierarchy – rested on a wilful misreading of her words. Ultimately, then, this constituted a misuse of the witness’ voice in service of latter-day memory politics.

Indeed, Schacht’s language alluded to a broader agenda that was tied to his criticism of the incumbent administration. At the very beginning of the speech, he referred to the *Speziallager* as ‘Gulag-Außenstellen’ and ‘die einst

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<sup>614</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>615</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

westlichsten Lager des stalinschen Massenverfolgungs’,<sup>616</sup> effectively effacing their link to Allied post-war denazification. At another point, however, he described the Gulag camps as the ‘[logische Endkonsequenz des] kommunistischen Weltreinigungs-Entwurfs’ and therefore directly comparable to Auschwitz and the racially motivated ‘Weltreinigung’ attempted by the National Socialist regime.<sup>617</sup> Finally, he drew on Karl Dietrich Bracher to argue that both Socialism and National Socialism evidenced ‘totalitäre[...], antiliberale[...] Züge[...] und [eine] Tendenz, den Menschen zu organisieren und zu reglementieren’.<sup>618</sup> The overall effect was to blur completely the distinction between Stalinism, Communism, and Socialism and collapse all three together with National Socialism in a vague anti-totalitarian message. Given the interchangeable use of the terms, it was obvious that Schacht was interested in repudiating ‘communism’ *per se* and thus in challenging the federal government’s supposed fixation on the National Socialist past.

For Schacht, this fixation was ideological, as he made clear by repeatedly linking the coordinates of official memory to a clutch of died-in-the-wool ‘1968ers’ who had come to occupy hegemonic positions in politics, media, and the academy.<sup>619</sup> Figures such as Fischer, whose activist past Schacht revelled in mentioning, were not just indifferent to recent evidence of the crimes committed by the Stalinist regime, he suggested, but actively concerned with suppressing it. Of course, this almost conspiratorial argument, predicated on the assumption that leftist cliques exerted control over memory culture in the Berlin Republic, resembled the stance of the UOKG, which has been discussed in chapter three. Here however, the logic was taken to the extreme, as the final sentence of Schacht’s speech demonstrated:

‘Es geht also um einen weiteren geistigen Gesundungsprozess dieses Landes, dessen diesbezügliche Pathologie allerdings eher ein Merkmal seiner Funktions-Eliten in Bildung, Politik und Medien ist. Aber vielleicht macht gerade das ja – seiner macht-politischen Aspekte wegen – die Schwierigkeiten des notwendigen Heilungsprozesses aus. Bis dahin

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<sup>616</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>617</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>619</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 2.

kann deshalb die durch uns zu verabreichende Medizin ebenso notwendig nur bitter sein.<sup>620</sup>

According to this metaphor, the ideological hegemony of 1968ers in the political and public life of the Berlin Republic constituted a ‘pathological’ obsession with National Socialist crimes, which could only be ‘cured’ through counter-commemoration of German victimhood at the hands of the Stalinist and SED regimes. Evidently Schacht did not see the unfortunate overtones of a ‘kranken Volkskörper’ in his rhetoric – a metaphor used by sections of the political right to describe German society in the interwar period.<sup>621</sup> His concern, in any case, was rather to establish two opposing fronts in the struggle over memory of the past under the Red-Green government, pitting the attendees at the commemorative ceremony (‘uns’) against the state and its politics of remembrance.

In light of this, there can be little doubt that Schacht intended his speech as a belated intervention in a debate that the inauguration of the Holocaust memorial had, on the face of it, already settled. For as we have seen, the memorial in many ways crowned the Social Democrat-Green coalition’s project of normalizing the Nazi past, insofar as it marked both an enshrinement of Holocaust memory in German political culture and a new, less obsessive relationship to it. After all, it was “ein Ort, an den man gerne geht”, to use Schröder’s own words,<sup>622</sup> as much as a proclamation of remorse for National Socialist crimes. Schacht’s objective had been to express, in overblown terms, a refusal to accept this vision. His was the latest in a series of criticisms directed at federal commemorative policy over a number of years and from various quarters, as demonstrated above. Ultimately, then, the official internalisation of the injunction to remember did not persuade all Germans to follow suit, even if there is much to suggest that Schröder’s second term did in fact see a normalization of the past along the lines the chancellor himself envisaged.

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<sup>620</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>621</sup> See Stefan Berger, *Germany: Inventing the Nation* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2004), p. 134; Moritz Föllmer, ‘Der “kranke Volkskörper”’: Industrielle, hohe Beamte und der Diskurs der nationalen Regeneration in der Weimarer Republik’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 27 (2001), 41-67.

<sup>622</sup> Leggewie/Meyer, “*Ein Ort, an den man gerne geht*”, p. 179.

Sachsenhausen, it should be noted, provided the stage – both metaphorically and, in Schacht’s case, literally – for several of these challenges to the federal position. It understandably seems difficult to square this with the fact that the memorial was itself in receipt of federal funding, and by dint of its proximity to the capital a ‘central’ site of National Socialist memory too. Yet the suggestion that it has moved not from but to the periphery of post-unification memory culture is not altogether unfounded. As Karen Till has argued, after 1990 Sachsenhausen was ironically ‘displaced as a central, highly visible GDR place of memory and became a less visible national place of memory.’<sup>623</sup> Certainly, attention has been deflected from the site’s pre-1945 history by the parallel working through of Stalinist and East German communist crimes since unification – often with questionable motives, as indeed Schacht’s were. Moreover, the memorial experts’ insistence on drawing a distinction between ‘authentic’ and artificial, central memorials in the debates on the *Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas* encouraged a view of the former as parochial sites of remembrance. The following section looks at the extent to which this same tension between normative Holocaust remembrance and the handling of a more specifically East German double past at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen continued under Angela Merkel’s CDU/SPD Grand Coalition government.

To illustrate this, I return first of all to Herman Schäfer’s controversial opening address at the 2006 *Gedächtnis Buchenwald* concert. Judging by responses in the national press, it does certainly seem that the memorial’s double past – not to mention its location, away from the seat of government but in the heart of formerly East German Thuringia – was strategically downplayed to avoid its intrusion into the story. In terms of newspaper articles that appeared immediately after the scandal, print media coverage was undeniably slow to recognise the significance of *place* and *addressees* for the debate that subsequently unfolded. Many of the larger newspapers relied on the Deutsche Presse-Agentur (dpa) newswire for the information that made its way into their reportage, and there was consequently a considerable deal of homogeneity in the content and shape of articles that appeared between August 26 and 28 2006. A quote from the *Kunstfest* organiser Nike Wagner, in which she referred to Schäfer’s failure to mention the victims of Buchenwald and focus on German

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<sup>623</sup> Karen E. Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 207.

victims of flight and expulsion as ‘bedauerlich und unverständlich’, appeared without exception.<sup>624</sup> These terms suggested an unprecedented but also unfortunate misjudgement rather than a calculated attempt at realigning memory discourses to include German victims.

Indeed, only one article - ‘Beleidigung der Überlebenden’ in the *Berliner Morgenpost* – bore a headline indicating the potential harm caused by Schäfer’s comments, and in any case this felt like something of an anomaly, as other papers belonging to the Springer Press did not follow suit. That the speech was held near to Buchenwald and in the presence of several survivors of the camp was likewise of little consequence for early reportage. Primary emphasis fell on Schäfer’s cabinet position and institutional affiliation (he is a member of the advisory council to the foundation *Zentrum gegen Vertreibungen* and was formerly president of the foundation *Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* based in Bonn). Thus the initial interpretation of the scandal at Weimar was clearly that of a senior politician’s lapse in judgement when speaking in an official capacity.

By contrast, there appeared to be some recognition of the potentially serious implications of Schäfer’s speech in the left-liberal press. In both the *taz* and the *Spiegel Online*, reportage based on the dpa feed was accompanied by a comment piece; the only other newspaper to do this was the Bonn edition of the *General-Anzeiger*, though in this case the interest was most likely on account of Schäfer’s previous connections to the city. Moreover, the latter regarded the deputy culture minister’s speech as simple ‘Instinktlosigkeit’ and his actions as a questionable exploitation of the occasion’s inevitable media echo – referred to as ‘Profilbildung am ungeeigneten Thema’.<sup>625</sup> The *taz*, by contrast, admonished Schäfer for the specific offence his speech caused to former Buchenwald prisoners who were in attendance, including the president of the International Buchenwald Committee Bertrand Herz, and in doing so perceived much more than rash judgement in his choice of words.<sup>626</sup> By mentioning Herz and other

<sup>624</sup> ‘Kulturpolitiker muss Rede abbrechen’, *Spiegel Online*, 26 Aug 2006 ; ‘Beleidigung der Überlebenden”, *Berliner Morgenpost*, 28 Aug 2006, p. 17; ‘Thema “auf grausame Weise verfehlt”’, *General-Anzeiger (Bonn)*, 28 Aug 2006, p. 16; U. Lüke, ‘Fehltritt in Weimar’, *Ibid.*, 28 Aug 2006, p. 16; ‘Geschmacklos in Weimar’, *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 28 Aug 2006, p. 6; ‘Kunstfest Weimar startet mit Eklat’, *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 28 Aug 2006, p. 12; ‘Kunstfest Weimar beginnt mit Eklat’, *Die Welt*, 28 Aug 2006, p. 23.

<sup>625</sup> Lüke, ‘Fehltritt in Weimar’

<sup>626</sup> M. Bartsch, ‘Grausames Grußwort sorgt für Eklat’, *taz*, 28 Aug 2006, p. 6.

former prisoners amongst the ‘Zuhörer’, this article provided a clearer idea of whom Schäfer was addressing – a crucial element of the scandal his speech precipitated. In many of the articles above however, more vague reference was made to ‘[das] Publikum’. Furthermore, the accompanying comment article observed that Schäfer’s relativisation of wartime and post-war suffering, whether intended or not, was ‘auch den Initiatoren des “Zentrums gegen Vertreibungen” nicht fremd’, thereby aligning his actions with the those of what many in Germany regarded to be a highly polemical organisation.<sup>627</sup> The *Spiegel Online* article of the same day begins:

‘Die KZ-Opfer kamen in der Festrede des stellvertretenden Bundesbeauftragten für Kultur und Medien, Hermann Schäfer, anlässlich eines Gedenk-Konzerts in Buchenwald nicht zur Sprache. Volkhard Knigge, der Direktor der Gedenkstätte, fragt nun an höchster Stelle nach: Ist Verdrängung konsensfähig?’<sup>628</sup>

Here, the article began with explicit mention of the very group Schäfer had ignored in his speech. Unlike other articles printed on the same day in the regional and conservative press, where Buchenwald appeared as a peripheral presence, the problematic nature of the site as a symbol of several distinct historical narratives of victimhood and suffering became patently clear. In the *Frankfurter Rundschau* two days later, this issue was also recognised, although the tone of the article was altogether different:

‘Schäfer wollte die Gelegenheit nutzen, “ohne Scheu und offen” zu sagen, dass die deutschen Vertriebenen Opfer geworden seien. Vor sechzig Jahren. Als der große Krieg aus war. Daran zu erinnern gehöre auch “zur Pflege unseres Geschichtsbewusstseins”. Schäfer sprach ohne Unterlass darüber. Zu diesem Anlass. In der Stadt Goethes. Und ließ sich auch von Zwischenrufen – “Aufhören!” – überhaupt nicht irritieren. Schäfer redete einfach weiter. Immer weiter.’<sup>629</sup>

<sup>627</sup> C. Semler, ‘Ein Dank dem buhenden Publikum’, *taz*, 28 Aug 2006, p. 11.

<sup>628</sup> ‘Regierung soll ihr Geschichtsbild darlegen’, *Spiegel Online*, 28 Aug 2006 [online] <<http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/0,1518,433994,00.html>>, last accessed 19 Apr 2011.

<sup>629</sup> M. Arning, ‘Eine Frage der Glaubwürdigkeit’, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 30 Aug 2006, p. 3.

In this extract Schäfer's poor judgement was criticised once again, but this time the article was clearly at pains to stress the inappropriateness of the speech. The staccato effect of shorter sentences imparted a clear sense of dismay and disbelief at Schäfer's comments, which were relayed by an almost uncomprehending authorial voice. Indeed, Schäfer was depicted speaking 'on and on' despite calls from the audience to end his speech, lending it a masochistic quality – far more troubling than the comparatively naïve 'Unsensibilität' that earlier reportage attributed to the speaker's choice of words.<sup>630</sup>

Thus we see the vocal criticism of Schäfer that was noticeable already in reportage from the previous day reach a crescendo. The language of this article was altogether more polemical, explicitly casting the speech as an affront on the credibility of German memory culture. It cited Volkhard Knigge's praise for the audience's intervention, in which he implicitly presented Schäfer's speech as a threat by claiming that those who interrupted him 'defended' ('verteidigt[en]') memory culture. It is no small coincidence that these more scandalised responses and searching criticisms all came from left-liberal sections of the national press.

Also, and perhaps more significantly, the *Frankfurter Rundschau* article represented the high watermark of focus on the scandal's implications for memory debates in Germany. Whilst they were noted at this point, there was an increasing tendency in subsequent reportage to address them only as a corollary of other discussions focused on the protagonists in these debates. If articles appearing on August 30 referenced, in addition to Knigge's comments, concerns of a 'Gezeitenwechsel im Gedenken der Bundesrepublik' raised by the vice-president of the Central Council of Jews, then it was less than a week before the tenor of coverage in several newspapers had shifted. For on 4 September, the *Hamburger Abendblatt* offered an irreverent treatment of the episode, joking that Schäfer might well have brought the wrong notes with him to Weimar.<sup>631</sup> An article that appeared in the *Spiegel* on the same day, too, diverted focus away from Buchenwald to consider Schäfer's role within the Department for Culture and Media in the *longue durée*. As such, the scandal which erupted at the *Kunstfest* was only considered in light of what it revealed about this department's

<sup>630</sup> M. Bartsch, 'Kein "sorry" nach Eklat', *taz*, 29 Aug 2006, p. 6.

<sup>631</sup> H. Karasek, 'Verkorkste Reden', *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 4 Sept 2006, p. 1.

memory politics in the long term, and the article ended in any case with a comment on the ‘persönliche[n] Folgen’ of this episode – Schäfer was unlikely to be selected to succeed Norbert Lammert as chairperson of the Holocaust monument commission.<sup>632</sup>

Even if both articles addressed memory culture to a certain extent, this was clearly subordinated to an interest in the individual(s) under discussion. In a *Frankfurter Rundschau* article from the following week, too, a retrospective analysis of the events at Weimar divested them of their significance for commemorative paradigms and instead saw personal consequences, specifically for the organiser of the *Kunstfest*, Nike Wagner, as having the greatest lasting resonance. The controversy caused by Schäfer’s speech was reduced here to a further thorn in the already strained relations between the countries forming the ‘Weimarer Dreieck’ (Germany, France, Poland) and thus as damaging to Wagner’s continued custodianship of the *Kunstfest*, which had typically brought together contributions from all three states.<sup>633</sup>

Was this evidence of a gradual decontextualisation of the original episode in the way it was reported over time? Certainly the discussion of German memory culture continued, but it was quickly uncoupled from the event itself in press reportage, and the specific context of the incident at Weimar – not to mention its entanglement with the historical significance of Buchenwald – seemed to be neglected altogether after little more than a week has passed. Accordingly, the following appeared in an article in *Die Welt* eight days after Schäfer’s controversial speech:

‘Der Eklat von Weimar um den Kulturbürokraten Schäfer, dem zu Buchenwald nur das Leid der deutschen Vertriebenen nach 1945 einfiel, hat mit Recht im Lande große Empörung ausgelöst.

Politische Instinktlosigkeit vermennt sich hier mit einem mentalen Muster, das viel schwerer wiegt. Es handelt sich um jenen Mangel an Empathie, jenes Unvermögen, mit den Leidenden und Bedürftigen zu fühlen, dem die Welt auch den Holocaust insgesamt verdankt, eine nicht nur, aber eben doch leider auch sehr typisch deutsche Furchtbarkeit, die offenbar in

<sup>632</sup> S. Berg and M. Rosenbach, ‘Umtriebe eines Beamten’, *Der Spiegel*, 4 Sept 2006, p. 40.

<sup>633</sup> M. Helbing, ‘Heiße Kartoffeln’, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 12 Sept 2006, p. 16.

gewissen Amtsstuben und wahrscheinlich weit darüber hinaus noch immer außerordentlich gut gedeiht.<sup>634</sup>

What began as a discussion of Schäfer's speech in fact led into a general comment on the inability to respect and empathise with suffering (part and parcel, according to the author, of a broader democratisation of access to culture and an increasing desensitisation to it).<sup>635</sup> Buchenwald was mentioned only once, and the survivors of the camp, the clear victims of Schäfer's comments, received no mention at all. Furthermore, the author problematically advocated relating to all forms of culturally manifested suffering without distinguishing between them. As controversial a proposition as this historically de-contextualised form of empathy might have been, the article nevertheless failed to address a more pressing question posed by the debates set in motion by Schäfer's speech, which was: to what extent was it *permissible* (rather than simply inappropriate) to mention post-1945 victimhood at an occasion specifically honouring the victims of a National Socialist concentration camp? To what extent were historically separate and distinctive forms of suffering collapsible into a catch-all commemorative rubric, and to what end might this have been deemed acceptable?

Where the backdrop to a commemorative act was Buchenwald, emblematic of Germany's double past and evoking two entirely different victim complexes, a discussion of *Empathie* surely invited discussion of *Parteilichkeit* too – and this was entirely absent from the press reportage under discussion here. The initial mention of a possible 'Paradigmenwechsel'<sup>636</sup> or 'Akzentverschiebung'<sup>637</sup> in Germany's memory culture was not developed in later articles, leaving the crucial question of what Schäfer's comments signified for the place of the Holocaust in public memory unanswered. That several articles cited Volkhard Knigge's demand to know the federal government's view on whether 'der Konsens über die Sicht auf das dritte Reich aufgekündigt worden ist' made this all the more

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<sup>634</sup> T. Krause, 'Haltet heilig!', *Die Welt*, 2 Sept 2006.

<sup>635</sup> See *Ibid.*

<sup>636</sup> M. Lau, 'Weimar als Experimentierfeld für Historikerdebatten', *Die Welt*, 29 Aug 2006, p.3.

<sup>637</sup> W. Fuhrmann, 'Gedenken in Klängen', *Berliner Zeitung*, 29 Aug 2006, p. 24.

ironic.<sup>638</sup> Symptomatic of this tendency to eschew the cultural dimensions of the ‘Eklat’ was an article that appears in the *Berliner Zeitung* on 29 August:

‘Die Aufregung sollte indes nicht vergessen machen, dass die Eröffnungsveranstaltung des Weimarer Kunstfests ihren Schwerpunkt ja in einem Konzert hatte, das der Aufgabe des Gedenkens in berührender Weise gerecht wurde. Michael Gielen, Sohn eines jüdischen Emigranten, dirigierte die Neunte Symphonie des Juden Gustav Mahler; ein Werk, das auf unvergleichliche Weise den Gestus des Abschiednehmens und der Traurigkeit verbindet mit dem Trost. Gielen hat die brüchige, zersplitternde und dann doch wieder zu visionärer Entrücktheit zusammenfindende Textur dieser Musik mit der Weimarer Staatskapelle inständig und genau dargestellt. Es war Gielens erste Zusammenarbeit mit diesem Orchester. Die Staatskapelle Weimar ist kein Ensemble, mit dem ein Landesfürst renommiert, und wird auch immer wieder mal von thüringischen Fusionierungsgelüsten in ihrer Existenz bedroht. Die großartige Leistung, die sie erbrachte, hat solche Absichten hoffentlich entmutigt.’<sup>639</sup>

Mentioning the Jewishness of both the conductor Michael Gielen, and Gustav Mahler, whose Ninth Symphony was performed at the *Kunstfest* under Gielen’s direction, ostensibly set up a counterpoint to Schäfer’s comments; given this event’s obvious connection to Holocaust memory, both the musical programme and inclusion of Gielen appeared to be apposite choices. Yet the connection was largely ignored, as are the questions it posed for the continuing primacy of Holocaust-centred memory politics in the respective approaches of the festival organisers and the federal government. Instead, the article shifted to routine reportage of the festival itself.

How does one account for the receding interest in the cultural implications of the news story that was so quick to set in? The *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, for example, did not just ignore the potentially fruitful debate on memory politics

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<sup>638</sup> See in particular ‘Regierung soll ihr Geschichtsbild darlegen’, *Spiegel Online*; also ‘Schäfer entshuldigt sich bei KZ-Opfern’, *Spiegel Online*, 28 Aug 2006 [online]

<<http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/0,1518,434052,00.html>>, last accessed 19 Apr 2011.

<sup>639</sup> Fuhrmann, ‘Gedenken in Klängen’.

that is to be had; it was positively dismissive of it. Basing its argument on the text of Schäfer's speech, it alleged that '[d]ieser von Buchenwald-Direktor Knigge geäußerte und sofort von Politikern aufgegriffene Verdacht [einer Veränderung der Gedenkstättenpolitik des Bundes]...im Redetext ohnehin keine Stütze [fand].'<sup>640</sup> Yet this failed to recognise the importance of *when* and *where* something was said - not to mention who was saying it. As with so many of the newspaper articles analysed here, the context of Schäfer's speech was underplayed, and Buchenwald, as backdrop, was elided almost completely. Ultimately then, Nike Wagner's retrospective assessment of the scandal as a public 'performance' of complex memory debates did not hold up to scrutiny.<sup>641</sup> Several sections of the national press were if anything intent not to participate in such a performance.

Taken together, reportage of politicians and memorial experts' mobilisation in defence of Holocaust-centred memory, and the absence of any prolonged debate in the German press dealing with official memory politics, suggest that this episode was more of an aberration than a seismic shift in the nation's memory landscape. Far from seeking to challenge the 'order of discourse', press reportage normalized the scandal emerging from Hermann Schäfer's speech by treating it as a personal lapse in judgement and divesting it of a sense of place. Buchenwald and its survivors appeared in press coverage sporadically at best, and even then, the distinctive *Opferkonkurrenz* centred on the site and Schäfer's unintended intervention in this ongoing debate was barely elaborated upon. A normative view of the Holocaust as the defining national memory narrative was quickly reasserted, and eclipsed the more probing analysis found initially in the left-liberal press. By 12 October, the issue was arguably settled for good, as an article entitled 'Streit über Buchenwald-Rede beigelegt' suggests. Indeed, there was a perceptible element of closure to the debate here, as the reader learned of Schäfer and Bertrand Herz's common desire for a 'neue[...] erinnerungskulturelle[...] Sensibilisierung in Deutschland.'<sup>642</sup> Just as in the Thuringian press (see

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<sup>640</sup> 'Gute deutsche Sätze', *FAZ*, 30 Aug 2006, p. 33.

<sup>641</sup> F. Adrians and S. Schwager, 'Nicht in Sack und Asche: Ein Gespräch mit Nike Wagner', *Thüringer Allgemeine*, 15 Sept 2006.

<sup>642</sup> 'Streit über Buchenwald-Rede beigelegt', *Die Welt*, 12 Oct 2006.

chapter four), a conspicuously ‘neat’ resolution was reached without necessarily envisioning continued debate.

Even if press discourse failed to recognise the constructedness of a national memory culture and the work that went into sustaining it, there is little doubt that it did however define memory culture in national terms and see it as inseparable from the nation-state. This view was by no means universally held, and indeed met with considerable opposition from other memory activists, not least the concentration camp victims’ associations. The Lagergemeinschaft Buchenwald-Dora, in particular, took Schäfer to task in its newsletter, *Die Glocke vom Ettersberg*, chastising his failure to mention the victims of Buchenwald. Whilst the LAG recognised the political capacity in which Schäfer was speaking, and understood his involvement to lend the opening of the *Kulturfest* ‘einen politisch angemessenen Rahmen’, it clearly expected more than a hollow re-statement of the *Bund*’s position on the Nazi past.<sup>643</sup> This was, of course, an occasion that by its very name – *Gedächtnis Buchenwald* – implicitly commemorated victims of the camp on the Ettersberg, but for the LAG its commemorative function was obvious enough in the choice of location. Consequently, Schäfer had misjudged not only the ‘Anlass’ but also the ‘Ort’ by failing to dedicate even a sentence to the victims of Buchenwald.<sup>644</sup> As far as the LAG was concerned, then, on this occasion Weimar stood metonymically for Buchenwald; the hallowed ground of the memorial extended into the town proper. Later in the article, moreover, Weimar’s mayor Stephan Wolf is noted to have objected to Schäfer’s speech, claiming that ‘[d]er Inhalt der Rede... Weimars Umgang mit seiner Vergangenheit [nicht entspreche].’<sup>645</sup> In the LAG’s eyes Weimar was both a commemorative and political space, and Schäfer’s miscalculation was therefore all the more severe for having transgressed both commemorative and political norms.

The article’s almost sacred interpretation of the locality as an extension of the memorial site was carefully distinguished from national and international memory spaces. Schäfer himself, deputising for the Cultural Minister Bernd Neumann, represented the national (that is, federal) position, which was

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<sup>643</sup> Ulrich Schneider, ‘Politischer Skandal zur Eröffnung der “pèlerinage”’, *Die Glocke vom Ettersberg*, 183, 3 (2006), p. 1.

<sup>644</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>645</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

unsurprisingly regarded with suspicion. Citing the president of the IKBD, Bertrand Herz, the LAG spoke of a “nationalistische[...] Rede”, indicating a latent fear that Schäfer’s – and by extension the federal government’s – agenda had been to resuscitate a conservative vision of German normality. Evidently the LAG did not share the Schröder and Merkel administrations’ view that a normal Germany was one that faced up to past crimes. Instead, the national norm looked to the victims’ organisation more like a renewed attempt to draw a line under the Nazi past. It was not without reason that it implicated Schäfer in triggering a ‘Grundsatzdebatte über das Geschichtsverständnis der Bundesrepublik’.<sup>646</sup> Unlike in the national press, here the notion of a ‘national’ memory discourse was in and of itself a cause for concern. On the evidence of the article, the LAG’s fretfulness vis-à-vis German national memory owed to an underlying assumption that German nationalism in whatever form was problematic – hence its refusal to accept the CDU/CSU’s assurances that Schäfer’s speech had no political implications. Far from seeing German self-assertiveness and a commitment to remembering German crimes as two sides of the same coin, as Schröder and Merkel did, the LAG derived an imperative to remember from the European legacy of resistance to fascism. Thus, when it spoke of an ‘antifaschistische Öffentlichkeit’, it was not Germanness but rather the international resistance movements with their roots in opposition to Nazism that defined the term’s parameters.<sup>647</sup>

It almost goes without saying that the national culture of remembrance advanced by the normalization paradigm since 1998 does not hold up to closer scrutiny. Though it is clear that the press reportage discussed above internalises and reproduces this normative view of national memory, there is equally ample evidence of attempts to challenge or subvert it. Furthermore, looking specifically at the question of the double past and the situation on the ground at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen allows for a more fine-grained picture of cultural representation that moves beyond the simplistic view of Holocaust singularity versus Holocaust comparability. As has been shown, there are also differences within these two positions. Whilst associations representing survivors of the concentration camps may, for instance, share the federal government’s vision of Holocaust centrality, they distance themselves from federal attempts to fuse

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<sup>646</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>647</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

remembrance to a revitalised concept of national identity. For their part, memorial professionals were uneasy about a central Holocaust memorial not because of a concern at nationalising negative commemoration but because of the memorial's uneasy and ill-defined relationship to other, 'authentic' sites advancing their own claims to commemorate the victims of National Socialism.

Decisive in accounting for these discrepancies is the quality of the sites themselves, as putatively 'authentic' but speaking to multiple histories of injustice and historically performing 'central' functions of different kinds. Consequently the memorials served somewhat paradoxically to prop up the dominant '68er memory discourse for politicians such as Schröder, and to de-centre it, both spatially and narratologically, for others such as Ulrich Schacht. Indeed, Sachsenhausen's proximity to Berlin made it particularly amenable to articulating and drawing attention to a disconnect between the national dimensions of Holocaust memory and the parochialism of the double past. It was simultaneously collapsed together with the capital and banished to its fringes, both mimetic of 'memory culture' in the Berlin Republic and external to it at the same time. In Buchenwald's case, it was only the erosion of a sense of place in normative iterations of memory discourse, such as press discourse, that allowed it to stand in metonymically for a culture of remembrance focused on the National Socialist past.

Finally, there is a clear sense emerging from the discussion so far of an underlying dynamic behind the discourses at and around both memorials. What we are dealing with are self-evidently 'memory contests', to use Anne Fuchs and Mary Cosgrove's instructive term, insofar as they resemble 'retrospective imaginings that simultaneously articulate, question and investigate the normative self-image of groups of people' – the group being in this case the German nation-state.<sup>648</sup> Yet the concept of 'memory contests', with its emphasis on the ongoing negotiation and re-negotiation of prevailing memory paradigms, cannot adequately convey the fact that protagonists in these debates operate within particular institutional contexts, themselves governed by pre-existing norms and conventions, which are crucial to understanding the communicative situation in which such contests play out.

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<sup>648</sup> Anne Fuchs and Mary Cosgrove, 'Introduction', *German Life & Letters*, Special ed. on German Memory Contests, 59, 2 (2006), 163-168 (p. 164).

## ***Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen on the frontier of European memory politics***

The ‘Europeanization’ of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen since the 1990s has occurred on two distinct planes. The first is the plane of Holocaust memory, which as an increasingly global phenomenon has re-contextualised German memorials to the victims of National Socialism – and not least the concentration camp memorials – within a trans-national landscape of remembrance. The second plane, the legacy of communism (in its Stalinist, Soviet, and East German variants), has also since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 been opened up to pan-European discussion. Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, quite uniquely, feature prominently in both memory frameworks, though as we will see this very rarely results in a productive form of dialogue. Far more often the sites find themselves at the frontier of European memory wars fought over the legacy of National Socialism and communism for the continent. This section looks at these struggles for hegemony in European memory discourse as a further dimension of memory debates at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen.

The backdrop to the discussion that follows is the sustained efforts on the part of several pan-European political bodies to institutionalise memory of communism in Europe. These efforts are characterised by recent calls for a day of remembrance dedicated to the victims of totalitarian regimes on August 23, to coincide with the anniversary of the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact signed in 1939 (the so-called Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, named after its signatories). Amongst other things, the proposal’s explicitly anti-totalitarian message has been heavily criticised by those who see it as an attempt to marginalise the place of the Holocaust in European memory. The following section maps out the attempts to implement an anti-totalitarian commemorative paradigm in Europe, above all through the August 23 day of remembrance, and pays particular attention to the responses of stakeholders at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. It asks to what end they intervene in European memory debates, and how these interventions both shape and are shaped by national and international cultural contexts. Thus it

takes as its starting point the proposition that the memorials' place in these European-wide memory contests is integral to a critique of an institutionalised narrative on the double past. The process of Europeanisation has unfolded in complex interplay with a parallel national discourse, and is further crosscut by the autopoietic configuration of discourses within and across these spaces.

First it is necessary to map out the main protagonists in debates on European identity and memory. Of the various supranational political institutions in Europe, those most active in efforts at working through and representing the National Socialist and communist pasts have been the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), the EU Parliament, and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The PACE was the first to issue concrete recommendations, passing Resolution 1096 'on measures to dismantle the heritage of former communist totalitarian systems'<sup>649</sup> in 1996. It dealt above all with the process of post-communist democratic transition, and therefore promoted decentralisation, de-militarization, privatisation, de-bureaucratisation, and the opening of secret police archives, paying comparatively little attention to the question of historical memory. Ten years later, the PACE issued Resolution 1481 'Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes',<sup>650</sup> indicating the organisation's strongly anti-communist stance. Ultimately, as the resolution did not achieve the two-thirds majority required in order to pass on to the ministerial committee or for the measures it outlined to be implemented, it possessed little more than a 'deklatorischen Charakter'.<sup>651</sup> In a sense, then, it typified the memory wars being fought out in post-unification Europe: it was of a largely symbolic nature, concerned with valuations of political systems and focused on the acknowledgement rather than on the concrete redress of historical suffering.

The EU, meanwhile, energetically pursued what Stefan Troebst refers to as a 'To do-Liste zur "EU-einheitlichen Überwindung diktatorischer

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<sup>649</sup> 'RESOLUTION 1096 (1996) on measures to dismantle the heritage of former communist totalitarian systems', 27 Jun 1996 (online) <http://www.assembly.coe.int/main.asp?link=http://www.assembly.coe.int/Documents/AdoptedText/ta96/ERES1096.htm> [last accessed 13 May 2013]

<sup>650</sup> <http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta06/Eres1481.htm>. Last accessed 10 Oct 2013.

<sup>651</sup> Hammerstein and Hofmann, 'Europäische Interventionen: Resolutionen und Initiativen zum Umgang mit diktatorischer Vergangenheit' in Hammerstein et al. (eds.), *Aufarbeitung der Diktatur*, pp. 189-203 (pp. 199-200).

Vergangenheiten'<sup>652</sup> in the late 2000s, passing a resolution in 2008 recommending the commemoration of the Ukrainian famine of 1932/33, the *Holodomor*, and issuing a statement on the 1995 Srebrenica massacre in 2009. On the basis of these recommendations, even extending, in the case of the *Holodomor* proposals, beyond member states, it was made abundantly clear that the EU wished to stake out a claim for itself as a prominent memory activist in Europe. Already in 2005 it had sought to place the Holocaust at the centre of European historical memory and identity through a resolution on Commemoration of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism, and Racism.<sup>653</sup> It was passed on 27 January 2005 – the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz – and established an International Holocaust Remembrance Day, following similar initiatives introduced earlier in Germany (1996) and the UK (2001). Yet a later motion on the Future of Europe 60 Years after the Second World War appeared to then undermine the centrality of the Holocaust, making amongst other things repeated allusions to a narrative of unbroken dictatorship and continuing victimisation in the Soviet Bloc. As Katrin Hammerstein and Birgit Hoffmann have suggested, the effect of the EU parliamentarians' rhetoric was to create a homogenizing European 'Befreiungsnarrativ' predicated on *both* 1945 and 1989 that emphasized shared victimhood and conveniently sidestepped the thorny issue of complicity in National Socialist atrocities.<sup>654</sup>

By 2008, this anti-totalitarian form of history politics had gained considerable traction. Indeed, the Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism, issued on 3 June 2008 by a number of prominent Eastern European politicians and historians, amongst them Václav Havel and Joachim Gauck, contained the first call for a day of remembrance in honour of the victims of European totalitarian regimes.<sup>655</sup> Brussels evidently took heed of the demands formulated in the Prague Declaration, as the European Parliament itself issued a call for the 23 August day of remembrance in September of the same year. An official resolution followed on 2 April 2009. In mid-2009 the Organisation for

<sup>652</sup> Troebst, 'Der 23. August als euroatlantischer Gedenktag?', p. 447.

<sup>653</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 437f.

<sup>654</sup> Hammerstein and Hofmann, 'Europäische Interventionen' in *Aufarbeitung der Diktatur*, ed. by Hammerstein et al., p. 194.

<sup>655</sup> See <http://www.praguedeclaration.eu>. Last accessed 02 May 2013; also J. Wetzel, 'Eine Trivialisierung des Holocaust? Der 23. August als europäischer Gedenktag an die Opfer von Stalinismus und Nationalsozialismus', in *Ein Kampf um Deutungshoheit*, ed. Benz, pp. 250-263 (pp. 252-253).

Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) also advocated the August 23 memorial day. Pan-European memory discourses were now widely embracing anti-totalitarian readings of the continent's 'short twentieth century'.

How did stakeholders at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen react to these developments on the European stage? For its part, the LAG Buchenwald-Dora mobilised against what it perceived to be historical revisionism ('Geschichtsfälschung') by criticising the OSCE's stance in its newsletter.<sup>656</sup> The latter was accused of advancing a 'reaktionär[es] Geschichtsbild' that was for one thing reminiscent of Cold War-era anti-totalitarianism, and for another aimed at supplanting the 'Vermächtnis der politischen Gemeinsamkeiten der Anti-Hitler-Koalition für ein demokratisches und friedliches Europa.'<sup>657</sup> For the antifascist milieu, the OSCE resolution, as an intervention in European memory debates and civic politics, has raised the stakes to a continental struggle for hegemony over the past. In response, the LAG propagated its own model of trans-national memory as the basis for a European identity. This was a decidedly Western and Holocaust-centred model, given that the LAG foregrounded opposition to Nazism – this was after all the 'Anti-Hitler-Koalition' – and explicitly extended solidarity to Israel. If a commitment to publicly remembering the Holocaust did indeed constitute, as the late British historian Tony Judt pointedly observed, an entry ticket into the EU,<sup>658</sup> then the memory community envisaged by the LAG would presumably have resembled an EU in its pre-2004 guise prior to eastwards expansion.

This appeared all the more true in light of the LAG's justification for upholding human rights and civil liberties. Rather than derive this from anti-totalitarian imperatives, the LAG took the Buchenwald Oath as a historical precedent, thereby challenging the OSCE's (not to mention the PACE's and the EU Parliament's) narrative of European memory on two important counts.<sup>659</sup> Firstly, the LAG used the history of resistance to Nazism and not the Russo-German pact of 1939 as its temporal point of reference. Secondly, it used a spatial point of reference that was westwards of the former Soviet satellite states that had driven on the 23 August initiative: Buchenwald. By enacting such a

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<sup>656</sup> 'Veteranen des antifaschistischen Kampfes wehren sich gegen Geschichtsfälschung', *Die Glocke vom Ettersberg*, 195, 3 (2009), p. 6.

<sup>657</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>658</sup> Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: Vintage Books, 2010), p. 803.

<sup>659</sup> 'Veteranen des antifaschistischen Kampfes', p. 6.

shift, the LAG was able to align its vision of European memory with an ideological – that is, Western communist – vision of internationalism predicated on the narrative of resistance at Buchenwald.

What about the response of the memorial professionals to the European anti-totalitarian narrative? In short, they opposed equation of the National Socialist and communist pasts, though this hardly comes as a surprise given the evidence presented in previous chapters. Perhaps the more pertinent question for our purposes then is whether, in propagating a differentiated model of sites and their double past in Europe, the memorial professionals implicated Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen in a trans-national as opposed to German cultural space. Günter Morsch for one concedes that the memorials are ‘sites for the collective memory and national identity of the European peoples’.<sup>660</sup> What I intend to highlight in the remainder of this section of the chapter, however, is that the memorial professionals frame their discourse on the sites around scientific principles as well as moral appeals to collective memory. On this reading, Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen belong less to one or another European narrative of the “age of extremes” than to a scientific code. Indeed, on the evidence of two recent exhibitions curated by the staff at Buchenwald and the Sachsenhausen memorial’s engagement with the 23 August initiative, Europeanization has not altered the principles underlying professional discourse on the site’s multiple pasts. On the other hand, the position of the memorial professionals attests to the difficulties of separating objective documentation of history from the social and cultural – not to mention moral – contexts within which this takes place. I turn first to Sachsenhausen before looking at Buchenwald.

I begin with Günter Morsch’s response to the proposed day of remembrance. This came in the form of an article published in the journal *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*, in which Morsch cautioned against exacerbating existing disagreements over the interpretation of the past by supporting an ahistorical European commemorative master-narrative. He objected in particular to the effect of arbitrarily attributing dictatorial crimes to a common totalitarian plan for Europe, as implied by singling out the signing of

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<sup>660</sup> Günter Morsch, ‘Concentration Camp Memorials in Eastern Germany since 1989’, in *JRemembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide*, ed. by John K. Roth and Elizabeth Maxwell, vol. 3 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), pp. 367-382 (p. 377).

the Hitler-Stalin Pact on 23 August 1939 and thereby obscuring the link between pre-war anti-Semitism, the policy of *Lebensraum*, and conflict and genocide in Europe.<sup>661</sup> In response, he pointed to the European Parliament's 1993 resolution on the concentration camp memorials and the *Vermächtnis* as evidence of the international consensus surrounding the principle of historical differentiation.

Notably however, he took the view that the memorial professionals operated outside of this consensus, acting as a neutral party interested only in defending institutional autonomy. This was apparent not least in his claim that 'Wissenschaft [es] schwer [hat], sich gegen Instrumentalisierungen und Vereinnahmungen zu behaupten'.<sup>662</sup> The fact was, however, that the memorials to the double past were unavoidably political actors in the debate over European memory, whether they professed to be or not. After all, Morsch himself had openly criticised the 23 August day of remembrance in the name of the Brandenburg Memorials Foundation, and it was hard to see how this defence of autonomy did not also constitute a political statement. Rather than frame his intervention as such though, he laid out a set of principles ('Grundsätze') in his article that he felt ought to serve as guidelines for international memorial sites.<sup>663</sup> Yet one needed only to look at these to see that his broader ideal of memorial site practice was informed by the lessons learned in the course of Sachsenhausen's post-unification redesign. Morsch recognised that the work of memorials existed within particular times, spaces and epistemologies, yet presented the concept developed at Sachsenhausen – itself a product of a specific set of historical circumstances relating to German unification – as a normative model. Moreover, his proposed guidelines were soon adopted almost word-for-word into the International Memorial Museums Charter (see below), creating a precedent for site-based documentation and commemoration in a wide range of contexts. Where the politics of this lay was in the (un-reflected) link between ensuring institutional autonomy and the more specific goal of resisting the anti-totalitarian paradigm within Europe.

Morsch's consternation at the proposed day of remembrance was shared by the Working Group of the Memorials for the Victims of National Socialism in

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<sup>661</sup> Günter Morsch, 'Geschichte als Waffe: Erinnerungskultur in Europa und die Aufgabe der Gedenkstätten', *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*, 55, 5 (2010), 109-121 (p. 116)

<sup>662</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>663</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 120-21.

Berlin and Brandenburg. The Working Group decided to voice its concern by addressing an open letter to the governing mayor of Berlin, Klaus Wowereit and the Minister President of Brandenburg, Matthias Platzeck. Historically speaking, the objections raised in the open letter were perfectly valid, and the ‘anti-totalitarian’ position did indeed rely upon a number of questionable and/or reductive interpretations of both National Socialism and the various 20<sup>th</sup> century communist regimes it addressed, as discussed above. All the same, the Working Group’s intervention highlighted the extent to which the memorials’ neutral role as ‘Sachwalter der ermordeten und überlebenden Opfer’<sup>664</sup> advocated by Günter Morsch in 1993 was tested by developments in Europe.

It should therefore come as no surprise that the Brandenburg Memorials Foundation – and Morsch himself, who was the speaker for the Working Group at the time – lent their support to the open letter, as the conundrum posed by the 23 August initiative was felt most acutely at memorials to the double past such as Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. Opposing the August 23 day of remembrance could be seen as an expression of partisanship, not least because certain groups representing the victims of the *Speziallager* welcomed the establishment of an anti-totalitarian commemorative paradigm in Europe.<sup>665</sup> Despite this, the open letter did seem intent on politicising the objection it raised to the anti-totalitarian narrative by drawing attention to the political consensus surrounding Holocaust commemoration. It was published on 19 January 2012, shortly before the German Memorial Day for the Victims of National Socialism and international Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January. As was pointed out, this juncture therefore presented ‘eine gute Gelegenheit, um dem “Vermächtnis” der letzten Überlebenden von Holocaust und NS-Terror Gehör zu verschaffen und uns ihrem Appell anzuschließen...’<sup>666</sup> Even if the focus was on civic actors – the survivors of the Holocaust – and their commitment to remembering National Socialist terror, it was the political initiative in the form of the 27 January memorial day that would provide the vehicle for propagating their legacy. The

<sup>664</sup> Morsch, ‘Einführungsrede vor Mitarbeitern’, 2 Jan 1993, Archiv Sachsenhausen, p. 9. See also chapter two.

<sup>665</sup> The UOKG, for instance, is a member of the European Platform for Memory and Conscience. See <http://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2011/08/18/platform-members>. Last accessed 10 May 2013.

<sup>666</sup> Arbeitskreis der Gedenkstätten für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus in Berlin und Brandenburg, ‘Offener Brief an den Ministerpräsidenten des Landes Brandenburg und den Regierenden Bürgermeister von Berlin betr. Einführung eines Europäischen Gedenktages für die “Opfer aller totalitärer und autoritärer Regime” am 23. August’, 5pp (p. 3).

Working Group was invoking one institutionalised memory discourse in order to combat another.

Indeed, setting up an opposition between 27 January and 23 August lent the *Vermächtnis* political dimensions, as it now functioned as a counter-argument intended to discredit the case for collectively memorializing all victims of ‘totalitarianism’. There could certainly be no argument with the section of the *Vermächtnis* the open letter quoted, which merely opposed a hierarchisation of victims or equation of separate instances of historical suffering.<sup>667</sup> Yet this was a letter addressed to the political representatives of Berlin and Brandenburg, making an outright demand of them:

‘Wir bitten die beiden Landesregierungen..., diesen Initiativen zur Einführung dieses Gedenkstages [sic] sowohl in den beiden Bundesländern als auch auf nationaler und europäischer Ebene nicht zu folgen, sondern sie abzulehnen und ihnen zu widersprechen.’<sup>668</sup>

In principal, the open letter was consistent with what Morsch had outlined several years earlier in relation to the double past, namely that political actors were responsible for establishing the ‘Rahmenbedingungen’ for a democratic culture of remembrance.<sup>669</sup> Resisting the attempts to establish a memorial day to victims of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, it could legitimately be argued, was a defence of democratic and plural remembrance rather than a political impingement upon it.

On the other hand, the Working Group sought to enlist prominent regional politicians in mounting this defence, and aimed to use the 27 January Memorial Day as its own strategic platform. There was, it should be said, nothing in the open letter to suggest that criticising an ahistorical ‘relativisation’ (‘Relativierung’) of the Holocaust came at the expense of recognising victimhood under communist regimes. The open letter was very clear that the victims of communism should be commemorated, and welcomed a separate memorial day. What it proposed was rather that it should be the victims

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<sup>667</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>668</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>669</sup> ‘Thesen zur Darstellung der Geschichte und zum Gedenken an die Opfer des Konzentrationslagers sowie des sowjetischen Speziallagers an Orten zweifacher Vergangenheit’, Ausschussprotokoll 4/425, Anlage 2. Bibliothek des Landtages Brandenburg.

themselves who decided upon the proposed August 23 commemorations and not political will.<sup>670</sup> Yet when it came to advocating the singularity of the Holocaust in European memory, the political implications were more opaque to the Working Group, which arguably took the self-evident historical grounds for singularity to mean, logically, its commemoration as a singular event throughout Europe. As this chapter has shown however, differentiation between National Socialism and communism in commemorative discourse has become a very different prospect with considerably different political cache in the expanded, post-2004 EU. Even domestically in Germany, differentiation as opposed to equation remains some distance away from becoming an automatic reflex, as the lingering after-effects of the *Historikerstreit* have shown. On a continental scale the matter is complicated further still by the more than 40-year experience of communist rule that many EU member states from Eastern Europe have in common.

This of course presented the memorial professionals with an ethical dilemma. Indisputably they must continue to treat persecution and terror under National Socialism as a moral absolute and historical fact, for to fail to do so would come perilously close to a form of historical relativism that would play right into the hands of Holocaust deniers. Yet by adopting this approach, it conversely becomes harder to highlight the cultural constructedness of Holocaust *memory*. Given that this is, in turn, integral to understanding how and why memorials such as Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen could be re-designed in the 1990s, and now find themselves in the position they do today, it is a (changing) context that cannot be ignored. Not that the Europeanization of the memorials ought to trigger an abandonment of the historically and scientifically sound principles agreed upon during this re-design process. Rather, the primarily German context of the *Neugestaltung* in the 1990s should be distinguished from the European dimensions of the memory politics Morsch and the Working Group were addressing in 2012.<sup>671</sup>

The open letter, however, betrayed little recognition of this distinction. It overlooked the fact that the case for differentiation – and by extension for

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<sup>670</sup> ‘Offener Brief’, p. 3.

<sup>671</sup> The regional governments of Berlin and Brandenburg were enjoined to resist measures at introducing the 23 August memorial day ‘sowohl in den beiden Bundesländern als auch auf nationaler und europäischer Ebene’. ‘Offener Brief’, p. 2.

opposition to the 23 August initiative – was shored up by an at least partial institutionalisation of Holocaust remembrance. Whereas federal discourse and press reportage overstated the extent of this institutionalisation, as we have seen in this chapter and chapter four, the Working Group was for its part too quick to dismiss it. 2012 was not 1991, after all, and the Berlin and Brandenburg memorial sites could call upon a repertoire of established commemorative traditions, symbols, and institutions to justify their defence of the Holocaust's singularity, as they did when they tactically referenced International Holocaust Memorial Day. Neither this initiative, nor principles such as the 'Faulenbach Formel' had by contrast been available to the Historians' Commission when it began its work re-conceptualising the GDR memorial at Sachsenhausen. As it was, the *Neugestaltung* served the autopoietic operation of a discursive system orientated around scientific distinctions when it came to commemorating Europe's 'short' twentieth century. It was a resource for dealing with the dual legacies of National Socialism and communism that was carried over onto the European stage in 2012.

As for Buchenwald, the memorial site has operated somewhat differently on the European stage, preferring for the most part to remain quiet on the proposed anti-totalitarian memorial day. Members of the Buchenwald staff have for the past few years been involved in curating two large-scale travelling exhibitions. The first of these to open, in September 2010, was an overview exhibition on forced labour in the Third Reich entitled *Zwangsarbeiter: Die Deutschen, die Zwangsarbeiter, und der Krieg*. The second, *Gulag: Spuren und Zeugnisse 1929-1956* was the result of collaboration between the Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora Memorials Foundation and the Russian civil rights initiative Memorial, and constituted the first comprehensive exhibition on the topic in Germany. The dual exhibitions can be interpreted in two ways. Given the decidedly European spirit of cooperation out of which they grew, and the fact that both have toured in and outside of Germany, I would argue that they can be seen on the one hand as a dyadic intervention in the European memory discourse. Besides, in the foreword to the Gulag exhibition catalogue the editors explicitly position it as a response to the late Jorgé Semprún's enjoinder to work towards a

collective European memory of National Socialism and Soviet communism.<sup>672</sup> Taking this view, it follows that the process has entailed displacing memory work from the physical memorial itself and in turn altered the role of the *Gedenkstätte* from a *site* of remembrance to an *actor* in European memory debates.

On the other hand, the exhibitions constituted bodies of historical research and fulfilled a documentary function. Indeed, Semprún's incitement to create a unified European memory did not automatically imply a political agenda, and certainly not one that overtly took aim at the 23 August initiative in the way the open letter did. In fact, the decision to curate two separate exhibitions covering the periods before and after 1945 respectively indicated adherence to the principle of differentiation that the Historians' Commission had first recommended as a guideline for Buchenwald's redesign in the early 1990s. Likewise, the *Zwangsarbeit* exhibition was the first of the two exhibitions to open, which could be read as a prioritisation of the National Socialist past – another principle established by the Historians' Commission. Together the exhibitions might well have provided some of the factual raw material necessary for the creation of a European memory, but they attested to a self-referential mode of operation insofar as they reproduced existing institutional norms and standards.

What the forced labour and Gulag exhibitions do also illustrate is that such discursive 'systems' do not operate in a cultural and political vacuum. This is borne out by a closer inspection of the commemorative and financial circumstances that gave rise to each of the exhibitions. Funding for the forced labour exhibition came from the Foundation for Remembrance, Responsibility and Future (Stiftung Erinnerung, Verantwortung, und Zukunft; hereafter Stiftung EVZ), which had been established at the turn of the millennium to administer compensation payments to forced labourers in the Third Reich. This process had been formally completed by the time work on the exhibition began, such that it received money from the foundation's 'future funds' – effectively remaining funds that had been ring-fenced and dedicated to the project of ensuring ongoing remembrance. The exhibition highlighted the advanced stage at which

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<sup>672</sup> 'Vorwort der Initiatoren' in *Gulag: Spuren und Zeugnisse 1929-1956: Begleitband zur Ausstellung*, ed. by Volkhard Knigge and Irina Scherbakowa (eds.), (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012), pp. 4-7 (p. 7).

Germany's post-Holocaust transition found itself, having effectively satisfied material terms such as restitution and institutionalised symbolic redress in the form of remembrance too.

By contrast, the Gulag exhibition was explicitly intended to address something of a lacuna in German historical consciousness.<sup>673</sup> Tellingly, by the project leader Volkhard Knigge's own admission funding had been in this instance much harder to come by.<sup>674</sup> This was symptomatic of the place Soviet terror occupied on the fringes of German cultural memory and the ground the post-communist transitional process still had to make up. Thus, even taking into account the European themes and touring itineraries of the exhibitions, they in many ways owed to the specific imbalance of German memory culture. The foundation upheld its commitment to the scholarly principle of differentiation – it produced exhibitions dealing with *both* National Socialism and Soviet communism, and completed the forced labour exhibition *before* turning its attention to the Gulag. It would be shortsighted, however, to separate a codified historical practice out from the cultural contexts in which it takes place.

For Gerhard Finn, a representative of the *Speziallager* victims in the international advisory council of the Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora Memorials Foundation and honorary chair of the UOKG, the *Gulag* exhibition was not so much historical research as propaganda. In a review of the exhibition catalogue written for the Memorial Library in Honour of the Victims of Communism in Berlin, Finn offered a damning indictment of the foundation, which he believed to be pursuing a political agenda. As he concluded in the final line of the review: 'Die Gulag-Dokumentation zeigt bei aller Qualität erneut, wie geschickt man politische Meinung verbreiten kann.'<sup>675</sup> As far as he was concerned, the publication effectively propped up an 'antifascist' interpretation of Soviet crimes – which is to say an interpretation that wilfully downplayed them. The currency of this particular narrative, meanwhile, was attributed to a 'Meinungsführerschaft' led by 'Neue Antifaschisten' who were able to 'establish

<sup>673</sup> Knigge/Scherbakowa, *Gulag*, p. 5.

<sup>674</sup> See H. Wetzel, 'Gulag-Ausstellung mit viel Prominenz in Weimar eröffnet', *TA*, 20 Aug 2012 (online) <http://www.thueringer-allgemeine.de/web/zgt/suche/detail/-/specific/Gulag-Ausstellung-mit-viel-Prominenz-in-Weimar-eroeffnet-909937724>. Last accessed 3 May 2013.

<sup>675</sup> Gerhard Finn, 'Review of Volkhard Knigge and Irina Scherbakowa (eds.), *Gulag: Spuren und Zeugnisse 1929-1956. Begleitband zur Ausstellung* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012)', 4pp. (online) <[http://gedenkbibliothek.de/download/Gerhard\\_Finn\\_zu\\_-\\_Volkhard\\_Knigge\\_Irina\\_Scherbakowa\\_Hg.\\_Gulag\\_-\\_Spuren\\_und\\_Zeugnisse\\_1929-1956.\\_Begleitband\\_zur\\_Ausstellung.pdf](http://gedenkbibliothek.de/download/Gerhard_Finn_zu_-_Volkhard_Knigge_Irina_Scherbakowa_Hg._Gulag_-_Spuren_und_Zeugnisse_1929-1956._Begleitband_zur_Ausstellung.pdf)> [last accessed 30 Apr 2013], p. 4.

themselves' ('sich einnisten') following German unification.<sup>676</sup> This resembled, most obviously, Ulrich Schacht's attack on the memory politics of the '68er generation. Beyond that, however, Finn's allegation that a conspiratorial consensus had been constructed around the primacy of the National Socialist past in German memory culture was a hallmark of the UOKG's broader rhetoric, as Martin Jander has recently shown.<sup>677</sup> Finn, much like Schacht and the UOKG, claimed that the national memory establishment's exclusive fixation on the period 1933-45 was calculated to screen the victims of communism from view.

It was hypocritical to say the least for Finn to suggest a political motive behind the exhibition catalogue when his own intention in reviewing it was clearly to lobby for the *Speziallager* victims. Indeed, his overwhelming focus on the "'deutsche Seite" des Gulag-Bereiches', which he felt to be ignored in the catalogue, and his attack on the 'linke[...] Stiftungsleute[...]' at German memorials to the double past (especially Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen) was just as much an instrumentalisation of the history of the Gulag.<sup>678</sup> Not only did it overlook the transnational, decade-long history of the Gulag camps, which was virtually bracketed off from the (far longer) excursion into the history and commemoration of the *Speziallager* and confined to a single introductory paragraph. It also assumed the latter should be afforded far more space in the catalogue, when the fact that they were only under the administration of the Gulag between 1948-1950 would hardly seem to justify such prominence in a publication expressly dealing with the period 1929-1956. In any case, two German prisoners in the special camps *did* feature in the catalogue: one a member of the camp personnel at KZ Mittelbau-Dora and the other an inmate belonging to the burial work detail at Buchenwald, who was deported to the Soviet Union in 1950.<sup>679</sup> To the extent that the catalogue did handle the *Speziallager*, then, it was fair to say that it touched upon both their role in de-nazification and the lack of any due process afforded to prisoners.

Thus Finn's claim that '[p]olitische Voreingenommenheiten...den Anstand vor den Opfern [überdecken]' was a rather unfair assessment of the

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<sup>676</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>677</sup> Martin Jander, 'Kultur der Aufrechnung: Erneute deutsche Opfermythologie und radikaler Antikommunismus: Die Union der Opferverbände Kommunistischer Gewaltherrschaft (UOKG)', in *Ein Kampf um Deutungshoheit*, ed. by Benz, pp. 125-161 (esp p. 161).

<sup>678</sup> Finn, Review of Knigge/Scherbakowa (eds.), *Gulag: Spuren und Zeugnisse*, p. 3.

<sup>679</sup> *Gulag: Spuren und Zeugnisse 1929-1956*, ed. by Knigge/Scherbakowa, pp. 100-101

catalogue, all the more so as he himself lost sight of *non*-German victims by insisting on such extensive coverage of the *Speziallager*.<sup>680</sup> But he did raise a valid point by questioning the extent to which the principle of differentiation, too, was more than a matter of professional standards. Bernd Faulenbach notes that post-unification *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in Germany has tended to follow the principle of ‘Arbeitsteiligkeit’, according to which respective sectional interest groups deal with specific aspects of the national past.<sup>681</sup> Put another way, it is typically the case that certain groups concern themselves with the National Socialist dictatorship, others with communist regimes, and a final group with both phases of the double past. Faulenbach concedes, however, that these divisions within the memory establishment are at least partially explained by ‘besondere Erkenntnisinteressen..., die von verschiedenen, zuweilen wohl auch politischen Motiven geleitet wurden.’<sup>682</sup> Though the Buchenwald memorial, counting amongst the third group in this schema, has in the recommendations of the Thuringian Historians’ Commission a set of institutional guidelines for working through *both* phases of the site’s history, it can hardly have hoped to extricate itself entirely from the politics of memorialisation.

Finn went one step further than this, accusing the memorial foundation of omitting politically inopportune details from the catalogue. As evidence he adduced the fact that the foundation had curated an entire exhibition dealing with the history of Topf und Söhne during the Third Reich, but neglected to mention in the Gulag exhibition catalogue that the firm had also delivered incineration ovens to the Soviet Union. He pointed to the example of the Donskoj cloister in Moscow, where several thousand German prisoners who had been sentenced by Soviet Military Tribunals were executed and cremated before being buried in mass graves.<sup>683</sup> ‘Arbeitsteiligkeit’ was therefore, as far as Finn was concerned, implicitly political; what he took to be the division of the foundation’s remit into projects dealing with either National Socialist or Soviet persecution led to the singular association of Topf und Söhne with the Holocaust and the elision of the firm’s connection to Stalinist crimes.

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<sup>680</sup> Finn, Review of Knigge/Scherbakowa (eds.), *Gulag: Spuren und Zeugnisse*, p. 3.

<sup>681</sup> Faulenbach, ‘Eine neue Konstellation?’, in *Aufarbeitung der Diktatur*, ed. by Hammerstein et al, p. 43.

<sup>682</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>683</sup> Finn, Review of Knigge/Scherbakowa (eds.), *Gulag: Spuren und Zeugnisse*, p. 2.

Of course, there were equally valid and historically justifiable reasons for not mentioning the connection in the Gulag catalogue. For one thing, the mass graves at Donskoj contained German victims, whilst the Gulag, as already discussed, was a far more expansive camp system in which prisoners of many different nationalities were held. To concentrate on German prisoners in this way would not only have been misrepresentative, but may well have also nourished charges of historical revisionism by appearing to exaggerate German suffering under Soviet communism. Finn, for his part, certainly invited this accusation in his review, where he drew no distinction between the unlawful imprisonment and murder of Germans after the war and the genocidal policy pursued by the Third Reich (in which Topf und Söhne was knowingly complicit). More to the point, the parallel he drew misleadingly implied that National Socialism and Stalinist communism were practically mirror images of one another whose crimes were not only equally deplorable but more or less identical in nature too.

Unjustifiable as Finn's objection was, the question remained whether the strict separation of National Socialism and communism that had guided the Buchenwald redesign could be unproblematically applied to the memorial's work in an increasingly Europeanized memory space. Certainly on the face of it the expansion of memory's geographical parameters risked creating a shallower form of historical memory on account of the vastly divergent experiences of 20<sup>th</sup> century dictatorship between (and even in some cases within) Europe's East and West. Levy, Sznajder, Rothberg, and others suggest rather that the opposite is the case, and their concepts of 'cosmopolitan' and 'multidirectional' memory are inherently more optimistic about the possibility for re-inscribing received narratives of the Holocaust as they interact with diverse local contexts – often in productive and unforeseen ways. I do not deny this potential, but rather wish to consider how it collides with an ethical imperative to manage the kind of historical consciousness that the transmission of memory throughout Europe produces – an imperative that the Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen memorials, as museums and sites of humanitarian education, must by definition fulfil.

Tacitly both exhibitions embody the principle of 'Arbeitsteiligkeit', insofar as they perpetuate a strict separation of National Socialism and Soviet communism in public memory discourse. Does such a compartmentalisation of memory work limit the possibility for confronting Europe's 'short' twentieth

century in its entirety, even if it does make innate sense for exhibitions in a decentralised memory landscape to stake out a clearer ‘profile’ for themselves? On the one hand it is unreasonable to expect any single site or institution to offer a ‘quick-fix’ solution to the problem of European memory by providing an integrated account of the entire period, especially when they happen to be sites that are linked inextricably to the Holocaust. Moreover, the intrinsic advantage of a decentralised arrangement whereby individual sites convey snapshots of certain aspects of the ‘ages of extremes’ is that it places the responsibility for memory work squarely in the hands of civic society; individuals must seek out and visit a range of sites themselves rather than allow a memorial to do this work for them.<sup>684</sup> But on the other hand, might ‘Arbeitsteiligkeit’ simply entrench existing tendencies and ensure that groups that previously engaged with *either* the National Socialist *or* the communist past, whether professionally, as survivors, visitors, or activists, continue to do the same in future? Then again, given the dual educational and commemorative remit of the memorials, is it not in fact incumbent upon them to discourage relativisation and/or trivialisation of particular pasts. Whatever the answer, the Buchenwald memorial will need to be attentive to these challenges if it is to find a balance between opening up fruitful dialogue between competing European memory narratives, as Rothberg and others believe is achievable, and safeguarding against dangerous, ahistorical relativisation.

Furthermore, the dual exhibitions at Buchenwald mark an intervention in European memory discourse characterised by standards of empirical and scientific rigour, multiperspectivity, and differentiation between separate forms of injustice. As self-evident as these standards may appear to us today, they are not without a history. And indeed theirs is in this case a specifically German history, tied to the 1990s redesign and in part also a response to the discredited principles that had underpinned the GDR memorial. Just as at Sachsenhausen, the *Neugestaltung* at Buchenwald functioned as a kind of template for the memorial professionals to project onto subsequent memory activism at a European level. Far from representing merely an ‘Entproblematisierungsgeschichte’ aimed at resolving the questions surrounding

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<sup>684</sup> James Young points to the risk of society divesting itself of the responsibility to remember by externalising memory in memorials and monuments. See Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 5.

memorialization of the double past thrown up by unification, the outcomes of the initial period of memory work at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen must be understood in more dynamic terms.<sup>685</sup> As the part played by the memorial specialists in European memory debates indicates, these institutional norms have developed into a kind of code in their own right. This in turn explains the consistency with which the memorial foundations have addressed the National Socialist and communist pasts, despite the transition the sites themselves have undergone from post-unification German to European sites of memory.

### ***The 'double past' and the 'de-territorialization' of memory***

As intimated in the introduction to this chapter, the transnational movement and circulation of memory is not bound by the frontiers of Europe. In a mediatised, hyper-connected world, memory spans global spaces too. In what follows I will therefore examine Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen's place within a universal human rights regime, asking how this inflects patterns of commemorating the double past at each site. The memorials have figured in this regime more pointedly since moving to the centre of German political culture in the late 1990s, and so it is crucial to the overarching questions of institutionalisation and normativity I seek to address. I will look closely at the intersection between a rights discourse, memory of the double past, and the role of the memorials across a range of discourses. I begin with political discourse and a close analysis of a series of recent commemorative speeches, before reflecting on the position of the concentration camp survivors' lobby, and that of the memorial professionals (programmatic in this regard is a recently issued International Memorial Museums Charter). Certainly there is a danger of naturalizing the impact of the camps and their histories by couching them in what is by now a very familiar (and rather hollow) rhetoric of human rights, and this is evident to an extent in the speeches. What I demonstrate however is that these ostensibly normative

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<sup>685</sup> On this point, and in particular on the notion of post-1990 developments as an 'Entproblematierungsgeschichte', I am grateful to Norbert Frei for helpful observations that he was kind enough to share with me whilst I was in Jena during July 2012.

rituals also code human rights to produce divergent readings of the double past, some of which accommodate (and even conflate) both histories of injustice, and others which tie the memorials exclusively to one or other of the dictatorships. Under the current CDU/CSU-FDP coalition government, both memorials have continued to serve the rituals of an institutionalised Holocaust memory. Yet as debates on the legacy of the GDR have intensified in recent years, no doubt helped by the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 2009, so too has the double past at Buchenwald and particularly Sachsenhausen come into sharper relief. The evidence relating to regional constellations of memory in Brandenburg and Thuringia presented in chapter three indicated that the looming 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary mainly underscored (and in some cases accelerated) changes in commemorative discourse that were already underway rather than triggering them. As I will go on to suggest, the same is true of federal memory narratives; a shift can be registered around 2009, but the origins of this shift as well as the means by which it is enacted are altogether different. Indeed, honing in on the developments at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen reveals that commemoration of the double past emerges out of a complex interaction between bounded-ness in particular spaces, histories and discursive media on the one hand, and an underlying commemorative grammar provided by the human rights regime on the other. It is not driven by the direction of federal policy alone.

In the following analysis of commemorative speeches held between 2009-2011, I suggest paying particular attention to the intersection between a universal human rights discourse and the specific sites (and histories) that provide the backdrop for these commemorative occasions in order to better understand how memory of the double past is produced. For it is in these speeches that Holocaust memory and the human rights regime that it articulates is overlain by the indexical relationship of the memorials to suffering under both National Socialist and communism. Only by recognising this can we appreciate how it is possible for representatives of the federal government to continue a policy of unequivocally admitting German responsibility for the Holocaust on the one hand, whilst simultaneously (but cautiously) integrating German victims of communism into the history of suffering that is being commemorated.

How the tension between these two ostensibly incompatible trends resolves itself in the speeches is thus not only a question of political intentions.

Rather, it is also shaped by the limitations and possibilities presented by the memorial sites as mediatory spaces. A universal rights-based memory narrative focused primarily on the Holocaust may derive its authority and legitimacy from being performed by senior German politicians at ‘authentic’ sites of National Socialist persecution. Yet equally, the narrative may be re-contextualised and its exclusivist focus on the Holocaust offset or unsettled by the intrusion of additional layers of historical memory. In other words then, the memorials on the one hand stage ceremonies in which Holocaust remembrance is symbolically reaffirmed by state representatives as a kind of repeating ‘code’ (insofar as the ceremonies stand in a now established annual tradition). On the other hand, however, the multiple historical forms of persecution and victimhood documented at the sites invite a somewhat expanded conceptualization of rights and their violations. The commemorative ‘code’ has the potential to be subtly re-inscribed as it is repeated.

Addressing an audience gathered to commemorate the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of liberation at Sachsenhausen, the SPD vice-president of the Bundestag, Wolfgang Thierse, rehearsed the by now well-accepted principle of differentiation by exclusively commemorating victims of brown-collar crimes. In his speech he paid a good deal of attention to the experience of ‘Befreiung’, but unlike in other commemorative speeches analyzed below, he avoided the temptation to link ‘liberation’ from the yoke of National Socialism to the later liberation of 1989, and instead related the term specifically to the liberation of the camp in April 1945.<sup>686</sup> Whilst this may indicate a form of *Geschichtspolitik* at play, insofar as Thierse, a representative of the political left, appeared to come down more strongly than senior CDU politicians on the side of a Holocaust-centred national memory culture, his example also illustrates the limitations of matching approaches to the double past exclusively to points on the political spectrum. After all, Thierse couched his speech in the same rights-based terminology that featured in the political rhetoric of certain CDU politicians, as we will see. Indeed, his closing remarks amounted to an almost reflexive advocacy of exactly the civic values that underpinned commemorative speeches given by prominent members of the Merkel administration, including the chancellor herself:

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<sup>686</sup> ‘Grüßwort auf der Zentralen Gedenkveranstaltung anlässlich des 65. Jahrestages der Befreiung der Häftlinge des Konzentrationslagers Sachsenhausen am 18. April 2010’. See <http://www.thierse.de/reden-und-texte/reden/grusswort-gedenkstaette-kz-sachsenhausen/>.

‘Nur Menschen, die sich erinnern, wie es gewesen ist, und daraus entschieden Konsequenzen ziehen, werden ein Bewusstsein von der Fragilität unserer Zivilisation entwickeln. Wenn in einer Gesellschaft Frieden und Freiheit herrschen, dann ist das kein Zufall, sondern es ist von Menschen gemacht. Daran mitzuarbeiten, dass sich nie wiederholt, was geschehen ist, bleibt immerwährender Auftrag an uns – und an folgende Generationen.’<sup>687</sup>

Here remembrance was seen in primarily functionalist terms, serving the ends of ‘peace and liberty’. In this sense Thierse’s speech merely echoed what many others both within the SPD and outside of it were outlining in speeches to coincide with similar commemorative anniversaries, even if it was easy enough to distinguish in its nuances. When speaking at Auschwitz on Holocaust Remembrance Day in 2011, for instance, the ex-CDU politician and then President of the Bundestag Christian Wulff also situated Holocaust memory firmly at the centre of the Federal Republic’s agenda. In his speech he singled out a visit to Yad Vashem in Israel and also pointed to the responsibility of Germans towards Polish victims of National Socialist ‘Rassenwahn’, an admission that was lent all the more symbolic weight by the fact it was made within Poland and at a globally recognised site of National Socialist persecution. Thus Wulff situated the Federal Republic within a global topography of memory, symbolised here by Auschwitz and Yad Vashem, which metonymically referenced National Socialist crimes.<sup>688</sup> Restating Germany’s historical responsibility for the Holocaust ought to encourage, as Wulff saw it, a contemporary ‘Kultur des Hinsehens und Eingreifens, wenn immer es notwendig ist’.<sup>689</sup>

Even if he spoke in much more generalised terms than Thierse, who focused on ‘all jener Menschen, die zwischen 1936 und 1945 im KZ

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<sup>687</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>688</sup> ‘Ansprache von Bundespräsident Christian Wulff auf der offiziellen Gedenkveranstaltung zum 66. Jahrestag der Befreiung des Konzentrationslagers Auschwitz am 27. Januar 2011 in Auschwitz-Birkenau’, BPA-DOK, Doknr.: 13-1, 3. pp.

<sup>689</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Sachsenhausen interniert waren’,<sup>690</sup> the parallels between the two speeches were hard to overlook. For Thierse too, mirroring Wulff’s enjoinder to ‘pay attention and take action’, admonished the audience to be mindful of ‘Gefährdungen der Demokratie, die Mechanismen von Stigmatisierung und Ausgrenzung, die Ursachen, Erscheinungs-formen und Wirkungen von Intoleranz und Rassenwahn’. Only through these lessons from the past was effective ‘[H]andeln’ in the present possible.<sup>691</sup> These virtually identical messages were, it should be mentioned, delivered on two somewhat different occasions. Wulff was speaking on an *international* day of Holocaust remembrance, whilst Thierse’s speech marked the anniversary of liberation at Sachsenhausen. This was certainly no coincidence. The relative consistency with which speakers across the political spectrum, speaking at concentration camp memorials both inside and outside of Germany, invoked the spectre of the Holocaust in service of a civic code of morality simply proved how effectively it could be fused to universal notions of democracy and rights.

On the other hand, since remembrance was in any case articulated in presentist terms, the nature of past crimes in any categorical or descriptive sense mattered less than the fact that they stood in direct opposition to contemporary liberal democratic values. By extension, the rhetorical impact of commemorating both phases of the double past could be seen to outweigh the inherent ethical challenges this presented. Arguably this reasoning figured in the address given by chancellor Merkel at Buchenwald in 2009, marking US president Barack Obama’s tour of the site as part of an official state visit. Accompanying Obama to the memorial was indicative, firstly, of its capacity to symbolically evoke a universal Holocaust memory, particularly as the president’s visit was intended as a restatement of US policy towards Israel.<sup>692</sup> Buchenwald once more functioned as a stage upon which a politics of gesture could be performed, this time relating to US-Israeli bonds, though Merkel herself also spoke of a trans-national ‘Partnerschaft’ in which remembering the Holocaust constituted the moral

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<sup>690</sup> ‘Grußwort auf der Zentralen Gedenkveranstaltung anlässlich des 65. Jahrestages der Befreiung...’.

<sup>691</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>692</sup> J. Zeleny and N. Kulish, ‘At a Holocaust Site, Obama Calls Denial ‘Hateful’’, *New York Times*, 6 Jun 2009, p. 8.

bedrock of a common identity.<sup>693</sup> Yet for Merkel, the ‘Partnerschaft’ evidently amounted not just to a repudiation of National Socialism but also the period of German division. As she emphasised: ‘[i]n dieser Partnerschaft lag schließlich auch der Schlüssel dafür, 1989 die schmerzliche Teilung unseres Landes und unseres Kontinents zu überwinden’. Indeed, it was only then that, in her words, the Federal Republic ‘als Mitglied der internationalen Staatengemeinschaft wieder Fuß fassen [konnte, RB]’.<sup>694</sup> Finally, she made a point of stressing that commemoration of Buchenwald’s victims ‘das Gedenken der Opfer des so genannten "Speziallagers 2" mit ein[schließt]’.<sup>695</sup> The effect of this argument was to carefully but perceptibly introduce elements of an anti-totalitarian narrative into what was otherwise a standard rehearsal of Holocaust-centred commemorative rhetoric.

Speaking at Buchenwald on the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the concentration camp’s liberation in 2010, the CDU President of the Bundestag, Norbert Lammert, utilised the same framing device as Merkel. He too used the occasion to also remember the ‘große[...] Revolution in Europa Ende der 80er, Anfang der 90er Jahre und der Befreiung der Völker auch in Mittel- und Osteuropa im Rahmen dieser großen historischen Veränderung’.<sup>696</sup> This reiterated, for one thing, the argument that peace did not return to Europe until the collapse of Soviet communism, and depicted ‘Befreiung’ as a transition that Central and Eastern Europe did not experience until 1989. Likewise, Lammert followed Merkel in stressing that the ‘Wiederherstellung der Einheit Deutschlands’ only came after a period of National Socialist *and* communist rule.<sup>697</sup> The liberal democratic values that Lammert championed therefore stood in opposition to the entire 56-year period between 1933-1989, opening up the possibility for suffering both sides of 1945 to act as equivalent negative lessons from the past.

Together, Merkel’s decision to mention the special camp and Lammert’s anti-totalitarian rhetoric could be seen as a *corollary* of globalised Holocaust memory, rather than necessarily a challenge to it. As Bill Niven has suggested, the latter trend has seemingly ‘opened up a space in which the rediscovery of

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<sup>693</sup> ‘Ansprache von Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel’. See <http://www.buchenwald.de/index.php?p=177>. Last accessed 21 Feb 2012.

<sup>694</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>695</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>696</sup> ‘Rede anlässlich des 65. Jahrestages der Befreiung des KZ Buchenwald am 11. April 2010’. See <http://www.norbert-lammert.de/texte2.php?id=75>.

<sup>697</sup> *Ibid.*

German suffering can thrive' – a space itself 'opened up further by the general trend within many nations and groups towards identification with their specific national or group victims.'<sup>698</sup> I would venture that this explanation holds for the increased attention paid by the federal government to post-1945 injustice at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen too. However, it is necessary to look behind a simplistic explanation of the subtle shift in federal commemorative rhetoric as a mere expression of CDU equationalism. The shift was only possible in the first place through a convergence of political attentiveness to the 20th anniversary of 1989, globalized Holocaust memory (with all the attendant spaces this opened up for commemorating 'other' victim groups), and a universalising, rights-based commemorative grammar.

Equally, the memorials were not simply canvases onto which changing commemorative paradigms could be projected. Rather, they played an active role in enacting and shaping such changes. Speaking at Buchenwald if anything actually facilitated Merkel's inclusion of German victims in her commemorative rhetoric. She could legitimately reference post-war injustice given the site's indexical link to Soviet crimes *and* ideological instrumentalisation of the past in the GDR, whilst her reiteration of Germany's commitment to remember the Holocaust was in turn lent credibility (not to mention symbolic weight) by its staging at a site associated primarily with the National Socialist dictatorship. Furthermore, the speech was delivered at the central memorial for all victims of the concentration camp on the *Appellplatz*, meaning that the site, as a material relic and 'witness' of the double past, referenced post-war events only secondarily, and through the primary frame of reference victims of the Third Reich. It was precisely the site topography and its multiple authenticities that underwrote Merkel's reference to the *Speziallager* by acting as a guarantee against relativization of Germany's historical responsibility for the Holocaust.

Of course, not all stakeholders in the memorial draw on human rights discourses to support an integrated model of commemoration. For the LAG, for instance, Buchenwald remains very much a site of European *antifascist* memory politics. The extent to which the victims' organisation not only propagates this position but feels compelled to resolutely defend it can be read out of its

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<sup>698</sup> Bill Niven, 'The globalisation of memory and the rediscovery of German suffering', in *SGerman literature in the age of globalization*, ed. by Stuart Taberner (Birmingham: Birmingham University Press, 2004), pp. 229-246 (pp. 237-238).

response to narratives of liberation in the media, particularly around the time of anniversary ceremonies when interest in the camp peaks.<sup>699</sup> In particular the round anniversary of 2010 prompted a spirited response to an article in a Hessian newspaper that attributed liberation to the US army and not the internal camp resistance.<sup>700</sup> As it constitutes a programmatic statement of the LAG's position, it is worth looking at in greater detail.

Implicit in the timing of the LAG's article and the corrective function it serves is, firstly, an assumption that antifascist memory activism has been discredited since the fall of the Iron Curtain. What is interesting is that, despite the European memory politics being fought out at the same time the article appeared, the anti-communism it alludes to is identified with the discussions surrounding the place of GDR antifascism in post-unification Germany. In other words, the LAG located attempts at an 'Abwicklung des Anti-faschismus' in the early 1990s and not, as might have been expected, in the late 2000s.<sup>701</sup> Given that the author, Ulrich Schneider, was named director of the Buchenwald memorial in March 1991 and forced out after only a week in the post as a consequence of the Thuringian 'Jagd auf "Rote Socken"' (see intro and chapter four), this is perhaps not surprising. Secondly, one detects a good deal of sympathy for the GDR interpretation of the camp's history in the broadside at attempts made in the past two decades to denounce 'for ideological reasons' eyewitness accounts published prior to 1990.<sup>702</sup> Unavoidably, then, the LAG's antifascist memory discourse is intertwined at least in part with the specifically German question of the role this tradition plays in the memory landscape of the Berlin Republic.<sup>703</sup>

Indeed, the tension between national and international memory frameworks runs throughout the entire article. In its explanation of both the roots and legacy of the internal camp resistance, it is at pains to stress the international cooperation between prisoners of various nationalities. Thus, the *Lagerkomitee*, it is noted, consisted of ten national prisoner groups, and embodied the

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<sup>699</sup> For one recent example, see 'Die Presse zum Befreiungstag', *Die Glocke vom Ettersberg*, 202, 2 (2011), p. 5.

<sup>700</sup> Ulrich Schneider, 'Die Bedeutung des Widerstands für die Selbstbefreiung Buchenwalds', *Die Glocke vom Ettersberg*, 200, 4 (2010), pp. 13-14.

<sup>701</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>703</sup> On this question, see Rainer Eckert, 'Ende eines Mythos oder Mitbringsel in das vereinte Deutschland? Der DDR-Antifaschismus nach der Herbstrevolution 1989', in *Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten für die Verfolgten des NS-Regimes*, ed. by Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur des Landes Brandenburg, pp. 86-94.

‘antifaschistischen Internationalismus’ in which the LAG and other organisations have their roots.<sup>704</sup> But upon closer inspection, it is in fact ‘die deutschen politischen Häftlinge, unter ihnen zum überwiegenden Teil Kommunisten’ who are identified as the organised and politically active cadre within the camp.<sup>705</sup> The internationalism of the internecine resistance, too, owes to the initiative of the German communist prisoners, who sought to convey to their fellow, non-German prisoners upon arrival at the camp ‘dass es auch ein “anderes Deutschland” hinter Stacheldraht gab’.<sup>706</sup> Consequently, joining the resistance reads as if it were a process of conversion to the (German) antifascist cause for prisoners of other nationalities. Ultimately of course, the corollary of this exclusive focus on organised, politically motivated resistance is to marginalise individual, moral or spiritual (and therefore usually non-communist) acts of resistance, which as described above feature prominently in the on-site museum (see chapter two).

The LAG’s interpretation of the Buchenwald Oath has a similar effect. As the article explains, the Oath derives its ‘Legitimität als politische Orientierung’ from the duality of the camp – it was a site of terrible suffering but, in spite of this, a site of remarkable acts of solidarity and resistance too.<sup>707</sup> Drawing together negative and positive historical lessons in this way provides the Oath with its political authority in the present. To be sure, the message the LAG distils from the Oath resembles the way in which it is interpreted in the Buchenwald-Weimar UNESCO application, addressed below; in both discourses a positive valuation of human rights is presaged on recognition of man’s inherent capacity for inhumanity. That said, the traditions of resistance, solidarity, and internationalism are more narrowly conceived of and politically connoted by the LAG in the first place, as shown above. In the end, the victims’ organisation emphasises the international dimensions of Buchenwald’s history only where doing so enables it to claim latter-day memory activism and the promotion of human rights as an exclusively antifascist achievement.

Finally, I address how the memorial professionals have responded to the recent human rights conjecture, using as an example the International Memorial

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<sup>704</sup> ‘Die Bedeutung des Widerstands’, p. 14.

<sup>705</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>706</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>707</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Museums Charter, issued in October 2011 by the International Committee of Memorial Museums for the Remembrance of Victims of Public Crimes (IC-MEMO). Conveniently for our purposes, analyzing the Charter draws together the various strands of the theoretical approach taken here. Firstly, it justifies the application of principles drawn from Luhmann's theory of social systems to the situation at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. IC-MEMO was a multinational organisation representing memorial museums dedicated to mass atrocities of various kinds, and also a member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), so possessed considerable authority. The Charter, moreover, espoused many of the basic principles outlined by the Thuringian and Brandenburgian Historians' Commission, as well as the later *Schlußbericht* of the second Enquete Commission into the East German state. Thus, it could be seen as the enshrinement in international institutional practice of the professional 'code' governing the approach to memorial sites. Secondly, the timing of the Charter – it was ratified just a few months after the EU council had invited member states to partake in the August 23 day of remembrance – suggested that it was also a response to the emerging anti-totalitarian commemorative politics in Europe. Thirdly, it possessed normative qualities insofar as it carried forward scientific and institutional principles developed in the specific context of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen's re-conceptualisation into a universally valid code of practice.

Similarities between the Charter and the outcome of the *Neugestaltungen* were impossible to overlook. Indeed, the very first point in the Charter stated: '[a] joint culture of remembrance cannot and must not be dictated by decree.'<sup>708</sup> Likewise, along very much the same lines, the Charter later stipulated that:

'Fundamental decisions in the memorial museums concerning content, education and design should be made mostly on the basis of an open, non-hierarchical pluralistic discussion with survivors, scholars, educators, lobbyists, and committed social groups.'<sup>709</sup>

The role assigned to states and governments, by contrast, was simply to uphold this institutional autonomy and safeguard the memorial museums'

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<sup>708</sup> IC-MEMO, 'International Memorial Museums Charter', Oct 2011 (online) [http://falstadsenteret.no/ic\\_memo/charter.pdf](http://falstadsenteret.no/ic_memo/charter.pdf). Last accessed 30 Apr 2013.

<sup>709</sup> *Ibid.*, § 5.

collections. In fact, the Charter if anything presupposed an oppositional relationship between political and civic or institutional groups, justifying the need for professional standards and a high level of quality work in the museums on the basis that they would be required ‘to assert themselves against political interests and lobbyists.’<sup>710</sup> This was undeniably defensive language, and what it aimed at defending – autonomy, anchorage in civil society, and a democratic decision-making process – was a model that to a large extent originated in the memorial foundations in Thuringia and Brandenburg.

It was no secret that this form of organisation was favoured by German memorial professionals, among them Günter Morsch and Volkhard Knigge. As pointed out in earlier chapters, this group consistently praised the ‘Subsidiaritätsprinzip’ written into the statutes of the Brandenburg and Thuringian memorial foundations. There is certainly no doubt that it functioned as an effective means of protecting against both external political interference and monopolisation by individual stakeholders. Likewise, the participation of international prisoners’ councils and a separate academic advisory council were a virtual guarantee of ‘non-hierarchical pluralistic discussion with survivors, scholars, educators, lobbyists, and committed social groups’ as stipulated by the Charter. The latter was in many ways an enshrinement of German ‘best practice’ at memorial museums on an international level. As such, it reflected the internationalization of a German norm for coming to terms with the past just as much as a standardisation of the principles of commemoration in memorial museums from above.<sup>711</sup>

The experience of confronting the Holocaust and its legacy appeared to have been influential in shaping the commemorative and pedagogical principles contained in the Charter too. Admittedly, the goal of fostering ‘empathy with the victims as individual humans and groups which were specifically targeted for persecution’<sup>712</sup> was by no means unique to Holocaust memorials. The ‘individualisation’ of victims of mass atrocities has become a stock exhibition motif of geographically and thematically diverse memorial museums, including for instance the Occupation Museum in Latvia and the House of Terror in

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<sup>710</sup> *Ibid.*, § 4.

<sup>711</sup> See Katrin Hammerstein and Julie Trappe, ‘Aufarbeitung der Diktatur – Diktat der Aufarbeitung? Einleitung’, in *Aufarbeitung der Diktatur*, ed. by Hammerstein et al, pp. 9-18 (p. 10).

<sup>712</sup> IC-MEMO, ‘International Memorial Museums Charter’, § 6.

Hungary, where the commemoration of victimisation under communism is given priority.<sup>713</sup> Memorialization of the Holocaust provided a template for remembering other crimes against humanity however, and it functioned as a template in the Charter too, which evidently drew its inspiration from the presidents of the concentration camp survivors' associations. Just as the latter had, in their *Vermächtnis*, denounced using history 'um zwischen Menschen, Gruppen, und Voelkern Zwietracht zu saeen', so too did the Charter recommend avoiding 'commemoration in the form of revenge, hate and resentments between different groups of victims.'<sup>714</sup> Seemingly the negative lessons learned through the conflict-laden process of publicly remembering the Holocaust had found their way into the principles outlined by the IC-MEMO.

German influence manifested itself in the paragraphs of the Charter dealing with the pedagogical work of memorial museums too. Indeed, the central tenets of the *Beutelsbacher Konsens* all appeared in unaltered form, beginning with *Multiperspektivität* in the reference to 'principles of discourse and multiple perspectives'.<sup>715</sup> Both the *Kontroversitätsprinzip* and *Überwältigungsverbot* were contained in a subsequent paragraph recommending that 'visitors are not overwhelmed or indoctrinated, that the subjective view of individuals is respected, and that controversial subjects are treated as controversial.'<sup>716</sup> Moreover, the pedagogical aims of memorial museums as they were defined in the Charter were explicitly orientated around 'universal principles'<sup>717</sup> and therefore linked to civic education in the sense conveyed by the German term *politische Bildung* as opposed to playing a more holistic educational role. Accordingly, IC-MEMO rejected working towards 'an agreement about the [historical] content'<sup>718</sup> in the memorials, in effect marking them out as sites of resistance to the consensus-based memory politics being undertaken in Strasbourg and Brussels, as well as Potsdam, for that matter (see chapter four).

By institutionalising the commemorative and pedagogical guidelines that historians, educators and memorial specialists had established within Germany,

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<sup>713</sup> R. Fritz and K. Wezel, 'Konkurrenz der Erinnerungen? Museale Darstellungen diktatorischer Erfahrungen in Lettland und Ungarn', in *Aufarbeitung der Diktatur*, ed. by Hammerstein et al, pp. 233-247 (p. 246).

<sup>714</sup> IC-MEMO, 'International Memorial Museums Charter', § 6.

<sup>715</sup> *Ibid.*, § 7.

<sup>716</sup> *Ibid.*, § 9.

<sup>717</sup> *Ibid.*, § 9.

<sup>718</sup> *Ibid.*, § 9.

IC-MEMO protected sites such as Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen from appropriation by an anti-totalitarian European memory narrative. Not only that, but it sought to reclaim them for a de-centralised, plural culture of remembrance. That said, its intervention brought with it the risk of supplanting one regime of memory with another. After all, the Charter too expressed the need for a ‘shared set of positive values’<sup>719</sup> as a basis for memory work, which it drew from the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Certainly a focus on rights and their abuse provides, on the face of it, an empathetic, egalitarian and subjective framework through which to communicate (and commemorate) mass atrocities and their victims, entailing as it does an individualised focus on victims and allowing for historical differentiation. On the other hand, however, could even this professedly differentiated approach risk imposing normative standards on memorialisation if elevated to an international standard, particularly when this memory work concerns multiple, entangled pasts, as at the sites under discussion here?

## ***Conclusion***

This chapter has reflected critically on the increasing sway that national and trans-national frames would appear to hold over cultural representation of difficult pasts. The inauguration of the ‘Holocaust Memorial’ in Berlin and attempts in the latter half of the 2000s to establish a unified anti-totalitarian memory in Europe demonstrate that this phenomenon belongs at least notionally to the post-1998 period. A closer examination of how the memorials to the double past have figured in national and trans-national cultural spheres since the founding of the Berlin Republic reveals a more complex reality however. Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen are linked to multiple national, European and global publics, not to mention the narrower local communities that earlier chapters have identified. It is an over-simplification to speak of the ‘nation’ or of trans-national space as a single, normative construct shaping patterns of cultural

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<sup>719</sup> *Ibid.*, § 2.

representation.

As in previous chapters, the theoretical concept of systemic differentiation and evolution has helped to explain the discursive continuities we see even as the memorials find themselves at the frontier of European and global identity politics. Thinking in terms of ‘codes’, we can begin to map out particular discourses on the memorials that are implicitly national, European or even global in scope without unduly privileging the mediatory force these spaces have. The Federal Memorials Strategy, for instance, established a precedent of linking remembrance to forms of governance in the form of the ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’. Whilst it is possible to view this, at least in an inner-German context, as a normative position on the double past, transposed to the European or global stage it does not function as a norm but as a code. Indeed, we have seen that German political actors at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen utilize the lens of national political culture and identity without exception. Whilst there have been differences in inflection of the ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’ since 1998, it has continued to frame politicians’ narrativisation of the memorials, even though they now definitively belong to a global rights regime. Recent commemorative speeches held on site by senior politicians have appropriated the language of human rights to reinforce this link between remembrance and German civic governance. In other words, the context has not altered the discourse – the discourse has recoded the context according to its own internal process of ‘Selektion’.<sup>720</sup>

We can further extend the systems-theory approach to capture the dynamic of other discourses on the memorials too. Looking at the concentration camp survivors’ association (the LAG), it also frames Buchenwald in an international discourse, but its internationalist stance is hardly a by-product of an emergent discourse on the National Socialist and communist pasts in Europe. The LAG has in fact consistently campaigned for a multilateral antifascist memory politics since the immediate post-war period – indeed, the origins of this can be traced back to the 1945 Buchenwald Oath, as I demonstrate. Likewise, the memorials’ staff and advisory councils make recourse to the conventions established by the Historians’ Commissions (and reaffirmed by the Enquete Commission’s *Schlußbericht* in 1998) when addressing questions of European

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<sup>720</sup> Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme*, p. 40.

historical consciousness. This demarcated their position from the governmental ‘code’ and illustrated the extent to which the precedents set in the 1990s continue to inform and shape their approach to the double past.

Of course, the notion that such codes govern the contours of cultural discourse has several implications for attempts to historicize the decades since unification. Primarily, it refutes the argument that the turn of the millennium has seen the dissolution of set structures in the handling of the past. Symbols such as the Holocaust may well underpin global patterns of remembrance, but these have not eclipsed or replaced pre-existing national and sub-national conventions. Rather, these conventions, which were discursively established in the course of the 1990s, now constitute a resource which structures communication about the double past between different groups. To draw once more on systems theory, the conventions function as a ‘redundanz’ (‘Redundanz’) that facilitates systemic communication by filtering out certain modes of processing information from the external environment and establishing others as a kind of precedent.<sup>721</sup> On this reading, the 2000s resemble a continuation of set patterns over and into a new global age of memory.

A final point to consider is what a model of discursive codes tells us about the future of representing the double past at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. Are these codes likely to obtain over the next decade, and if not, what could trigger such changes? It seems for one thing likely that the ‘anti-totalitarian’ paradigm will continue to garner support amongst EU member states. Moreover, it has already begun to pose challenges for the scientific code guiding the work of the Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen memorials. As the situational and relational model employed here indicates, the discrete codes that shape approaches to the double past exist within specific contexts – in this case not just the end of the Cold War, but the post-GDR transition and reconceptualisation of the former NMG. Thus, whilst not wishing to relativize the search for objective truth that informs the memorials’ approach to their multiple histories, it is worth considering the extent to which the principle of separate commemoration of the Nazi and GDR pasts can be unproblematically exported to the rest of Europe. Some, such as the Regional Commissioner for the Records of the former State Security Service of the GDR in Saxony, Michael

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<sup>721</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237f.

Beleites, have suggested that the memorials themselves have an obligation to at least point to ways of overcoming a ‘zweigleisige’ memory culture.<sup>722</sup> It remains to be seen how discourses on Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen will negotiate this changed political constellation in coming years.

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<sup>722</sup> Michael Beleites, ‘Isolierte Aufarbeitung? Zur zweigleisigen Erinnerungskultur in Deutschland und ihren Folgen’ in *Aufarbeitung der Diktatur*, pp. 48-58 (p. 56).

## Conclusion

Surveying cultural representations of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen since 1998 has shown that there is no single, uniform ‘anti-totalitarian’ master narrative shaping the place the recent German past occupies in the Berlin Republic. Instead, this thesis has argued for a more differentiated view of the two sites that attends to the varying ways in which they are represented across four separate cultural spaces. Certainly if one were to focus exclusively on federal rhetoric, one could justifiably conclude that a totalitarianist reading of the memorials has gained currency after 2005 in particular. This is indeed the conclusion that Andrew Beattie comes to in his study of the Bundestag inquiries into East Germany.<sup>723</sup> Unlike the Enquete Commissions however, which were by their very nature representative of ‘state-mandated memory’,<sup>724</sup> the memorials to the double past serve a wide range of constituencies besides the state and so provide a more holistic picture of how Germany’s ‘short twentieth century’ is represented. As a result, this thesis has been able to identify different gradations of totalitarianist and Holocaust-centred discourse across and even within the cultural spaces it has examined. Interpretations of Sachsenhausen in Brandenburg, for instance, do seem to have embraced a totalitarianist paradigm, whereas in other public spaces such as the memorial museums, Weimar, Oranienburg, and Thuringia, trends point towards a continuation of Holocaust-centred discourse. Moreover, the thesis refutes a normative view of federal discourse as interchangeable with ‘national’ discourse by identifying the multiple narratives connected to the memorials that coexist and compete at national and trans-national level.

It has proposed a situational and relational approach to the texts and discourses under discussion in order to shed light on the dynamic driving them. This has entailed looking both synchronically and diachronically across a number of ‘discourse strands’ between 1998 and the present day. Before I

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<sup>723</sup> Beattie, *Playing Politics with History*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>724</sup> Andrew H. Beattie, ‘The Politics of Remembering the GDR: Official and State-Mandated Memory since 1990’ in *Remembering the German Democratic Republic: Divided Memory in a United Germany*, ed. by David Clarke and Ute Wölfel (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 23-34.

explain in more detail what the situational and relational model has shown, I wish to relate my findings to the comparatively well-researched period between 1990-1998, suggesting that there is now good cause, 23 years after German unification, to differentiate between two discrete periods in the country's handling of its double past. What a detailed examination of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen has demonstrated is that, firstly, the 1990s saw the discursive establishment of a scientific, political and advocative apparatus for the handling of the double past. This was a period of consolidation in which the Historians' Commissions developed blueprints for documenting the double past on site at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, the federal government enshrined the memorials at the heart of German political culture with the *Gedenkstättenkonzeption*, and patterns of commemoration and memorialization were established. As such, the new millennium has brought with it a host of precedents, including but not limited to the Federal Memorials Strategy, for stakeholders at the memorials to draw upon. It is for this reason that a 'systemic' approach to discourse seems apposite; the 'anti-totalitarian consensus' is, simply put, not the only point of reference for processes of working through the double past in the Berlin Republic.

Secondly, the findings presented here show that the memorials continue to be embedded in local and regional contexts too, even amidst a proclaimed turn to 'transcultural' and 'global' memory. The result is a comprehensive rejection of over-simplistic local-global binaries in understanding how the anti-totalitarian consensus is variously reproduced, reinforced, inflected and challenged across multiple public spheres.<sup>725</sup> In place of these, this thesis has proposed a situational and relational approach to cultural discourse on the double past, which I wish to briefly sum up. I will first consider the relational model I have applied to the memorials and what this has revealed about their implication in the 'anti-totalitarian consensus'. Then I return to the situational factors that I have identified, namely the role of specific contexts, groups and sites, and ask what they have told us about the contours of discourse.

By treating the normalization discourse and 'anti-totalitarian consensus' as a *dispositif* that orders discourse, practice and materiality, the thesis has taken

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<sup>725</sup> See Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad, 'Introduction' in *idem.* (eds.), *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices and Trajectories* (Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 1-16 (p. 9).

seriously the ‘normative force’ they exert over the memorials. Thus even if, in the final analysis, the sites serve multiple constituencies and multiple discourses on the double past, they remain popular staging posts for federal commemorative politics. We need only consider the succession of senior politicians to have spoken there on major round anniversaries since 1998 to see that this is undeniably true. Gerhard Schröder chose to give an address on the loaded anniversary of 1999 from Sachsenhausen, tracing a line not only from the outbreak of war 60 years previously but also to the Basic Law, ratified in 1949. Later, in 2005 he spoke at Buchenwald on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camp; in the same year, the then Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer spoke at Sachsenhausen on occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of liberation there. Angela Merkel, for her part, accompanied Barack Obama to Buchenwald in 2009. Whilst the coordinates of the ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’ shifted somewhat within this ten-year period, the fact was that the memorials were (and still are) deemed a fitting space at which to symbolically reaffirm Germany’s commitment to it.

Equally, the shifts that the central discourse underwent seemed to in some instances presage similar shifts in practice at the memorials. We have seen, for instance, that the VOS intensified its anti-totalitarian rhetoric and insisted particularly vehemently on analogies between National Socialism and communism at around the time the federal CDU faction had proposed revising the *Gedenkstättenkonzeption*. In the same year, Ulrich Schacht used a commemorative ceremony for the victims of the *Speziallager* at Sachsenhausen to issue a scathing polemic against the normalization paradigm under the Red-Green government. Thus, the federal *dispositif* once again imposed itself on developments at the memorials, even if it was in this case a negative frame of reference. The fact remained, however, that Schacht’s speech would not have been conceivable without the existence of this normative position.

There are of course limits to the usefulness of the Foucauldian model and its insistence on discourse’s imbrication with power and normativity. As the chapters looking at local and regional contexts in particular have shown, there is not necessarily only one *dispositif* at work in the structuring of discourse around the memorials. In Weimar and Oranienburg, a particularly acute ‘dialectic of normality’ must be negotiated on account of the physical presence of the

concentration camps in the town; the typically Holocaust-centred discourses in these spaces therefore follow from *localized* reflexes of dealing with the camps rather than from cultural policy directives emanating in Berlin. Equally, at regional level the challenge posed by unification and post-GDR transition – on which more below – has created distinct *dispositifs* of its own.

Beyond this, there is evidence that the proliferation of particular narratives on the double past may also owe to the work of prominent actors or groups in that space. Indeed, a particular advantage of canvassing multiple contexts besides the nation state when looking at representations of the double past is that it is possible to establish not just who controls forms of representation but when and where they do this. Certain groups have had a hand in virtually all of the spaces examined here – chiefly the memorial site staff and advisors and the victims' associations. Others, such as the municipalities and the regional parliament, unsurprisingly limit their activities to the local and regional spheres respectively. In Thuringia, members of the Buchenwald staff assisted in producing pedagogical materials that were distributed throughout the state, which may go some way to explaining why the approach adopted to the double past on site appears to have been taken up in regional curricula too. It is necessary to attend to the flow of ideas and knowledge between groups within local, regional and national publics as well as the role of *dispositifs* in explaining how discourse on the double past is shaped.

Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen have been implicated in remarkably similar debates since 1998, just as they were in the years immediately after unification – a fact that can no doubt be attributed to their identical tripartite histories and very similar redesigns. This is not to suggest that the matter of which of the two sites a particular discourse strand or text deals with is irrelevant to the resulting representation of the double past. In fact, we see that the different pace of the redesigns most certainly has shaped the outcome of cultural discourse in the respective regions. As we have seen, Buchenwald's redesign was complete by 1999, and the issue of personnel at the memorial and their connection with the East German state had been broached early on in the 1990s, meaning that it could be (and indeed was) seen as a symbol of a successful post-1990 transition in Thuringia. Whereas the *Initiativgruppe* could catalogue the achievements in working through Buchenwald's post-war past at a commemorative ceremony in

2010, the ALS in Brandenburg were making no such boasts. Here, by contrast, allegations of a ‘Brandenburger Weg’ in handling the East German past (see chapter four) went hand in hand with the argument that the *Speziallager* at Sachsenhausen was deserving of greater attention.

Finally, the thesis draws on Niklas Luhmann’s theory of social systems, and in particular his concept of autopoiesis, in order to de-centre (but not dispense with) the notion of ‘collective memory’ from analysis of the memorials in post-1998 cultural discourse. Whilst Foucauldian theory allows us to grasp the semiotic dimension of networked discourses and non-linguistic practices – that is, how they communicate meaning and structure power relations – Luhmann’s model can shed light on how discourses operate in ways that resemble self-referential systems. Combining the two approaches, we can demonstrate how both external factors and recursive processes internal to a given discourse produce either continuity or change over time. This also nuances the common distinction between Holocaust-centred and equationist positions made in the literature on representing the double past, thereby permitting a degree of differentiation within these two camps.

In closing, I wish to consider questions related to those addressed here that would merit scholarly attention. One fruitful direction that future research could take is a reception studies approach exploring how individuals perceive the double past in the context of a memorial site visit. This would of course complement the current thesis, which has explored the cultural employment of the double past, and also fill a gap in research looking at responses to memorial sites that has existed for quite some time. Very few visitor research studies looking specifically at concentration camp memorials have been published, and those that have rely on relatively small samplings and in any case do not take concentration camp memorials with a double past into consideration.<sup>726</sup> In addition, honing in on individuated patterns of confronting the double past, if set against studies such as this exploring the production of cultural memory, would

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<sup>726</sup> Bert Pampel, “*Mit eigenen Augen sehen, wozu der Mensch fähig ist*”: Zur Wirkung von Gedenkstätten auf ihre Besucher (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2007); Christian Gudehus, *Dem Gedächtnis zuhören: Erzählungen über NS-Verbrechen und ihre Repräsentation in deutschen NS-Gedenkstätten* (Essen: Klartext, 2006).

considerably deepen our understanding of what Wulf Kansteiner calls the hermeneutical triangle of memory's production, mediation, and reception.<sup>727</sup>

A second avenue of enquiry relates to the content and media of exhibitions at memorial museums. The permanent exhibition on the concentration camp at Buchenwald is in fact currently being redesigned, and is due to open in 2015. As the chair of the Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora Memorials Foundation's academic advisory council Norbert Frei observes, the impending disappearance of the eyewitness generation and increasing temporal distance from the Third Reich poses arguably the greatest challenge for new permanent exhibitions at the camp memorials.<sup>728</sup> Many visitors to Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, particularly school pupils who take a trip to the memorials as part of the secondary school curriculum, will have no lived experience of German division, let alone National Socialist Germany. As focus inevitably shifts towards the sites' implication in models of humanitarian and civic education that cannot rely on the involvement of survivors, the question we will need to be attentive to in coming years is how the memorials use new memory media and technologies. At sites of a double past, this raises the further question of the limits and possibilities such media present for narrating the National Socialist and communist pasts in an appropriate relationship to one another.

Finally, the role of trans-national actors in shaping cultural memory of the double past, particularly in Europe, remains to be comprehensively researched. Though this thesis has argued that they have not yet supplanted national and sub-national protagonists in setting the parameters of remembrance, the August 23 initiative (discussed in chapter five) suggests that the role of institutions such as the EU is likely to expand in future. In light of the 'Super-Gedenkjahr'<sup>729</sup> anticipated in 2014, which marks the centenary of the outbreak of World War One, the 75-year anniversary of the outbreak of World War Two, and the 25-year anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, it would be no surprise if attempts to forge a common European memory were given significant impetus. As I intimated in chapter five however, there is an implicit politics of memory

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<sup>727</sup> Wulf Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory: History, Television, and Politics after Auschwitz* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), pp. 26-27.

<sup>728</sup> Interview with the author, 19 Apr 2012.

<sup>729</sup> K. Wiegreffe, 'Weltkriege und Mauerfall: Gauck muss das Super-Gedenkjahr retten', *SpiegelOnline*, 9 Nov 2013 <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/gauck-bundespraesident-rettet-super-gedenkjahr-a-932405.html>. Last accessed 10 Nov 2013.

involved in exporting national precedents for commemorating the double past onto the European stage, even if – as was the case with the memorial professionals at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen – this intervention professed to have little to do with moral appeals to memory. The dual role the sites play as custodians of an objective historical record and memory activists in national and trans-national cultural politics is a complex one, and deserving of further exploration too.

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