



Chan, Yin Lam Ethan (2024) *The Freier Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund in Halle-Neustadt*. MPhil(R) thesis.

<https://theses.gla.ac.uk/84527/>

Copyright and moral rights for this work are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

This work cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Enlighten: Theses

<https://theses.gla.ac.uk/>  
[research-enlighten@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:research-enlighten@glasgow.ac.uk)

# The Freier Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund in Halle-Neustadt

Yin Lam Ethan Chan

BA History

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of MPhil in History (Research)

School of Humanities

College of Arts College of Arts

University of Glasgow

## Contents

Introduction.....	1
Historiography.....	15
Halle-Neustadt: The Genesis and Early Life of an East German “New Town”, 1968-1972...24	
Halle-Neustadt matures: The “new city” and the FDGB under Honecker, 1976-1978.....	50
A familiar story?: Decline and decay in the 1980s.....	65
Generalisation.....	76
Conclusion.....	79
Bibliography.....	83

## Introduction

Since the turn of events in 1989 and the subsequent opening up of the Eastern European states to academics, there has been a shift away from the analysis of them purely as monolithic, grey, puppets of Soviet power. Many exciting new developments in the field have occurred since then, be it through cultural histories and the conception of the socialist states as being consumer societies as seen in the volume *Pleasures in Socialism*, to the interpretation of the socialist world as being an integrated participant in the capitalist global economic order, as exemplified by Oscar Sanchez-Sibony's seminal book, *Red Globalization*. Such developments have been adopted in the field of GDR history with gusto, with such a wide range as Josie McLellan's *Love in the Time of Communism* looking at sexuality in the GDR and Donna Harsch's *Revenge of the Domestic* discussing the experiences of women and role of the family, to Eli Rubin's *Amnesiopolis* analysing how the district of Marzahn sat both as a culmination of past architectural histories and a model of the socialist future, and Katharina Pfützner's *Designing for Socialist Need* looking at the history and ideology of industrial design in the GDR.

Yet in focusing on the grassroots and history from the ground up, we risk throwing the baby out with the bathwater if we completely ignore the realm of high politics and official rhetoric. Whilst they may not fully reflect the facts on the ground as they were, they certainly inform us as to the image these states wanted to project, and what they, at least ostensibly, aspired towards. As Mary Fulbrook succinctly explained in her book *The People's State*, “[the] social history of the GDR was fundamentally affected by politics; it cannot be understood without analysis of political structures and processes.”<sup>1</sup>

For these reasons, the city of Halle-Neustadt and the workings of the *Freier Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund* (FDGB; Free German Trade Union) in the city offer an exciting approach that sits within this field of work. Halle-Neustadt was the last conscious attempt in the GDR to build a planned city based on the precepts of modernity, technological innovation, and science. The work of the FDGB in this city is an avenue to explore this.

---

<sup>1</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 10.

This project will investigate the role of the FDGB in Halle-Neustadt as a case study in looking at what role a trade union plays in creating a new city in a socialist state, and from that develop a conclusion on its role more generally throughout the German Democratic Republic. Such an approach challenges the formerly dominant totalitarian approach to GDR history by considering the agency of organisations rather than viewing them as rubber stamps, as well as the agency of individuals within the grassroots of such organisations and their impact on the outcome or interpretation of state policy. From this, the project will build upon an already existing (and rapidly growing) corpus of work that seeks to overturn the narrow-minded totalitarian approach which has proved fundamentally unfit in developing a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the GDR.

But why the GDR? Arguably, it is one of the most misunderstood Eastern Bloc states in the public consciousness, with such a view being clearly expressed by the title of Bruni de la Motte and John Green's book *Stasi State or Socialist Paradise?*. Was the GDR the ideal and unblemished representation of the workers' and peasants' power? No. But was it a Machiavellian hellscape made incarnate? Certainly not. It was a state that existed, no more and no less. Nevertheless, the GDR also had its own particularities that must be recognised. As a front-line state in the Cold War geography with a direct competitor drawing from the same historical nationhood (the Federal Republic of Germany), it presents a unique case study amongst the former socialist states of Eastern Europe. For this reason, the GDR is a very interesting lens through which to view how the socialist world operated, as comparisons with "the other" were and are necessarily obvious, and bring about questions regarding the GDR's *raison d'être*. Perhaps then, Halle-Neustadt best encapsulates the philosophy which this project seeks to express: exceptionality transformed into normality.

Halle-Neustadt was a city designed in the 1960s on the basis of two principles: to be an exemplary modern and humane socialist city, and to service the Leuna I, Leuna II, and Buna chemical plants, with the latter earning the city the moniker of "New Chemical Workers Town" (*neuen Chemiewerkerstadt*).<sup>2</sup> The Leuna works (officially VEB Leuna "Walter Ulbricht") in particular are significant in that they were built upon the ruins of destroyed IG Farben production facilities and quickly grew to be one of the largest and most modern

---

<sup>2</sup> Peer Pasternack, *50 Jahre Streitfall Halle-Neustadt: Idee und Experiment. Lebensort und Provokation* (Halle (Salle): Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 2015), 42.

chemical production plants in the GDR, with equipment being imported from the FRG, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Japan.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, both the Leuna and Buna works were part of what was known as the Chemical Triangle and were sources of national pride as well as being strategically important not only for the GDR but for the Eastern Bloc as a whole.<sup>4</sup>

The importance of Halle-Neustadt began to decline following Ulbricht's fall from power and the rise of his successor Erich Honecker.<sup>5</sup> However, this is not to say that it was completely abandoned and left to decay. Urban planning under Honecker focused on the construction of housing in particular,<sup>6</sup> and Honecker was still concerned with fulfilling quantitative housing targets in the city, stating that "In view of the necessary concentration of investments in industry, in new housing and school construction as well as in the creation of children's facilities, the consequence as regards the further development of city centres is the postponement of construction of new objects."<sup>7</sup>

The FDGB can certainly be described as a part of the East German party-state, and its hierarchical system had direct equivalents in the ruling SED, the state apparatus, and the FDJ (*Freie Deutsche Jugend*; Free German Youth).<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the FDGB was not a mere puppet organisation, and as a result of the need for more consultation between workers and managers brought forth by the advent of the scientific-technical revolution in the 1960s, the FDGB was given greater responsibilities following the SED's VIIth Congress in April 1967.<sup>9</sup> Its impact in the media sphere lasted into the final years of the GDR. During the early to mid 1980s the FDGB's newspaper *Tribüne* made up roughly 5% of circulation in the GDR,<sup>10</sup> and even nearing the end of the GDR it received over three hundred letters a day just in the period from mid-November 1989 to the end of 1990 complaining about taxation on salaries.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Daniela Grosch, *Verschwundene Orte der DDR* (Berlin: Bild und Heimat, 2018), 77.

<sup>4</sup> Eli Rubin, *Synthetic Socialism: Plastics & Dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 72.

<sup>5</sup> Pasternack, *50 Jahre Streitfall Halle-Neustadt*, 150.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 150-151.

<sup>8</sup> Martin McCauley, *Marxism-Leninism in the German Democratic Republic: The Socialist Unity Party (SED)* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1979), 123.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>10</sup> C. Bradley Scharf, *Politics and Change in East Germany: An Evaluation of Socialist Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), 128.

<sup>11</sup> Alf Lüdtke, "The World of Men's Work, East and West," in *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, eds. Katherine Pierce and Paul Betts (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 240.

Furthermore, perhaps most importantly, the compulsory social-security system of the GDR was run by the FDGB and covered some 85% of the population.<sup>12</sup>

Additionally, we can see from various sources that the FDGB was imbedded in workers daily lives. Writing in 1967, the West German journalist Joachim Besser had this to say: “[...] when it comes to the question of how the work has to be done, the workers have a lot to say. From this point on, inner-factory democracy is very effective. The workers and their trade union representatives have great influence on the wage structure, on bonuses and on the social services.” Victor Grossman, an American who defected to the GDR, agreed with Besser’s assessment, although adding that he had heard from other workers that this could differ between union branches and was dependent both on the level of worker involvement and the union leadership.<sup>13</sup>

Another interesting way to consider this is through photography. In a series of private snapshots, the FDGB appeared in the setting of the coffee break. To understand how significant this seemingly mundane scenario appears, it is necessary to consider each component of this situation. Whilst state photographers were expected to follow the guidelines of Socialist Realism, this was not the case in private snapshots, as these would only be consumed by citizens in their own sphere. The fact that a private photographer chose to take a photo of workers solidifying their social bonds in the setting of an FDGB hall suggests that this was considered a part of regular life. Coffee breaks were also an extremely important part of the workday not just for respite but also for their social function, to the point that coffee was demanded as a staple and one author stated that “[t]he coffee break was holy”.<sup>14</sup> From this we can see that the FDGB was considered a normal fact of life in the GDR, and that it had managed to penetrate even the private part of life that was the coffee break. For all of these reasons, at least from a structural, media, and bottom-up point of view, the importance of the FDGB cannot be ignored.

---

<sup>12</sup> Scharf, *Politics and Change in East Germany*, 102.

<sup>13</sup> Victor Grossman, *A Socialist Defector: From Harvard to Karl-Marx-Allee* (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 2019), 223.

<sup>14</sup> Katherine Pence, “Grounds for Discontent? Coffee from the Black Market to the Kaffeeklatsch in the GDR,” in *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe*, eds. Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 210-211.

Here, it is perhaps also useful to lay down some definitions that shall be used in this study, namely what a trade union is and what its functions are, what is alienation, what constitutes a welfare state, and what welfare itself is composed of.

William Cobbett described the creation and function of a trade union as follows: “They [working men] combine to effect a rise in wages. The masters combine against them. One side complains of the other, but neither knows the *cause* of the turmoil, and the turmoil goes on. The different trades combine, and call the combination a general union. So that here is one class of society united to oppose another class.”<sup>15</sup> Obviously, the purpose of the FDGB in the GDR was not to strike out against the leadership of the GDR, as being a socialist state the GDR was at least theoretically a vehicle in and of itself for furthering the class struggle. In his book *Socialism with a German Face*, Jonathan Steele said of the FDGB that “[in] the GDR [trade unions] are based on Lenin’s model and have a radically changed role from their counterparts in a capitalist system. Instead of a basically negative and defensive approach, trade unions become ‘schools of socialism’ as part of the process of building a new society.” He additionally lists three primary tasks as the responsibilities of the FDGB, these being cutting excessive bureaucracy, making sure that social regulations and the labour code are upheld, and finally protecting its workers’ interests.<sup>16</sup> As such, we can already see a clear difference between the role of the FDGB and the role of a trade organisation in a capitalist state, but also some fundamental similarities.

It is also useful to consider how the GDR viewed the role of the FDGB and what it should be. The encyclopaedia *Arbeitsrecht von A bis Z* defined the FDGB as “a comprehensive class organisation of the working class, uniting workers, employees, members of the intelligentsia, independent in world view and party affiliation, on a voluntary basis of the trade union status, [...] representing the economic and social interests of its members and wins and mobilises them for the political goals of the working class”,<sup>17</sup> in many ways actually quite similar to what the liberal definition of a trade union is. However, it also includes as part of the FDGB’s responsibilities “developing and deepening Leninism, e.g., in

---

<sup>15</sup> Asa Briggs, “The Language of ‘Class’,” in *History and Class: Essential Readings in Theory and Interpretation*, ed. R.S. Neale, reprinted edition (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 6-7. Citations refer to the reprinted edition.

<sup>16</sup> Jonathan Steele, *Socialism with a German Face: The state that came in from the cold* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1977), 133.

<sup>17</sup> *Arbeitsrecht von A bis Z* (1983), s.v. “Freier Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (FDGB)”.

the schools of socialist work, the socialist consciousness, and promoting the development of socialist personalities. The FDGB works actively to strengthen the fragile friendship and the fraternal alliance with the Soviet Union and its trade unions. On the basis of proletarian internationalism it establishes close cooperation with the other socialist brother nations and their trade unions; it is an inseparable part of the international trade union movement.”<sup>18</sup> Hence, it is clear that the East German view of the role and definition of a trade union covered a wider range than what was classified by liberals, including a role in social self-government, creation of a new personality, and upholding of a specific order.

To return to the question at hand, does all of this mean that the FDGB cannot be classified as a trade union because of such fundamental differences? John Godard explained in his book *Industrial Relations, the Economy, and Society* his view that trade unions could be divided into healthy and independent (which he suggests are “essential to a democracy in general”), weak or non-existent under an authoritarian government as typified by Malaysia and Singapore, or weak and state-controlled as with the Soviet Union.<sup>19</sup> Ignoring the moralising of some scholars and how they typify trade unions of the former socialist bloc, this study shall consider the FDGB a trade union whilst understanding the fundamental differences it has with other such organisations, particularly in the West. As a sidenote, another interesting peculiarity which set the FDGB apart from many other trade unions in Europe and the United States was the fact that it was divided by economic sector rather than by trade.<sup>20</sup>

If not a part of the struggle against the ruling class, then perhaps it is more fitting to describe the FDGB as part of a homeostatic regulatory system to manage and eliminate alienation amongst the workers. However, this then requires us to define what alienation means in this investigation. The 1968 constitution of the GDR defined it as “a socialist state of the German nation. It is the political organisation of working people in town and country who are together realising socialism under the leadership of the working class and its Marxist-Leninist party.”<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> John Godard, *Industrial Relations, the Economy, and Society*, 2nd ed. (North York, ON: Captus Press Inc., 2000), 200-201.

<sup>20</sup> Scharf, *Politics and Change in East Germany*, 138.

<sup>21</sup> GDR Const. art. 1.

Hence, it would seem most fitting that we shall use a Marxist definition of alienation. But what does a Marxist definition of alienation entail? In *The German Ideology*, Marx said “communal interest does not exist merely in the imagination, as the ‘general interest,’ but first of all in reality, as the mutual interdependence of the individuals among whom the labour is divided [...], the division of labour offers us the first example of how, as long as man remains in natural society, that is, as long as a cleavage exists between the particular and the common interest, as long, therefore, as activity is not voluntarily, but naturally, divided, man’s own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him”, further stating that “the *practical* struggle of these particular interests, which constantly really run counter to the communal and illusory communal interests, makes *practical* intervention and control necessary through the illusory ‘general’ interest in the form of the State.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, alienation in Marxist theory is caused by the division of the worker from the fruits of their labour, and more broadly leading to a disconnection between individual and society. The FDGB could be considered then to be serving as one of the forms of “practical intervention and control” of the State. All this is to say that, whilst the definition of alienation used by this investigation is essentially the same as that as understood in the GDR, it differs in usage by bringing that definition to look at the GDR itself, rather than its competitors as GDR analyses did. Taking together these approaches of what a trade union is and the use of alienation as an analytical tool, if there was any organ that was to act as a pressure valve to control alienation in the GDR, it would be the FDGB.

Despite that, it is also understood that just because a state espouses Marxist tenets does not mean it encompasses all of the different analytical tools of Marxism. We do, having said that, see explicit reference to alienation in publications from the GDR; for instance, in criticising prostitution in New York, an article from the November 1976 issue of *Das Magazin* concluded with the following: “The relatively recent phenomenon of large-scale prostitution in the United States must be viewed in the sociological-economic context. [...] Sociologists estimate that repressive measures are powerless against this evil, which must be tackled at its root: misery, hunger, undignified surroundings, impoverishment of the middle class, blocking of social advancement, uprooting, alienation [*Entfremdung*].”<sup>23</sup> Additionally,

---

<sup>22</sup> Karl Marx, “The German Ideology: Part I,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York, NY; W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), 160-161.

<sup>23</sup> Louis Wiznitzer, “New York: Hauptstadt der Prostitution,” *Das Magazin*, November 1976, 27.

in its entry on antisocial lifestyles (*asoziale Lebensweise*), the encyclopaedia *Jugend zu zweit* (“Youth for two”) claims that “Due to the exploitation and impoverishment of the broad masses, especially due to mass unemployment in the wake of economic crises, capitalist society forms a favourable breeding ground for antisocial behaviour”,<sup>24</sup> alluding to the causes of alienation. In a similar vein, in answering the question “How do socialist personalities and a new way of life develop?”, the book *Fragen und Antworten zum Programm der SED* (“Questions and Answers on the SED’s Programme”) published by the Central Council of the FDJ (*Zentralrat der FDJ*) stated that “Because discrimination was abolished, because the character of work changed, because state power worked and still works in the interest of the people, new relationships between people and with society are developing that change our lives”,<sup>25</sup> again referencing the causes of alienation but in this case noting their eradication in the GDR. As such, we can say that the idea was certainly in the political lexicon.

Additionally, such an approach is not without academic precedence. In her book *Alienating Labour*, as the title would suggest, Eszter Bartha makes use of alienation as an analytical tool in looking at the GDR and Hungary, and proposed that alienation amongst workers was in fact prominent in large state-run enterprises.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, we must equally recognise, as evident in the primary source examples above, that amongst the GDR authorities the view of alienation was that it was for criticising the capitalist states, rather than a tool for introspective analysis. This is underpinned by the fact that, when we consider the concept of developed socialism that began to be pushed forwards by Brezhnev beginning in 1967 which itself indicated that the Soviet Union considered itself to be operating in a socialist context,<sup>27</sup> this implies that the GDR leadership considered their own country to have already achieved socialism, which is to say that any contradictions which would arise would be socialist in nature, rather than those created by the capitalist system.

Indeed, this is evident if we consider alienation as an analytical tool through a survey of the GDR’s approach to criminology. Initially, the officially promoted model of criminology

---

<sup>24</sup> *Jugend zu zweit* (1985), s.v. “Die asoziale Lebensweise”.

<sup>25</sup> Dagmar Hänel, ed., *Fragen und Antworten zum Programm der SED* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag Berlin, 1983), 277.

<sup>26</sup> Eszter Bartha, *Alienating Labour: Workers on the Road from Socialism to Capitalism in East Germany and Hungary* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2013), 15.

<sup>27</sup> Jeremi Suri, “The Promise and Failure of ‘Developed Socialism’: The Soviet ‘Thaw’ and the Crucible of the Prague Spring, 1964-1972,” *Contemporary European History* 15, 2 (2006): 135.

by the state was the “relict theory” that emerged in the 1960s, which posited that criminal activity in the GDR arose from the “psychological heritage of the past [old capitalist society]” which would not immediately disappear even after the socio-economic causes from criminal behaviour were removed during the construction of socialism, and would only disappear through a pedagogical approach educating citizens of the lack of need to commit crime in a socialist state as well as turning them into new socialist personalities. However, post-1968 and with the stabilisation of society through the 1970s and 1980s, crime continued, and a modified version of the relict theory known as the “contradiction approach” (*Widerspruchsansatz*) was adopted which stated that internal circumstances in the GDR could lead to contradictions, which could then result in homeborn criminal activity.<sup>28</sup> In fact, it was noted that crime rates were particularly bad in the new socialist towns and cities such as Eisenhüttenstadt, Schwedt, and Halle.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, we can infer that the governing bodies of the GDR understood that contradiction could and did occur under their socialist system which resulted in symptoms of alienation that they described in Western countries as seen above (e.g. “antisocial behaviour”, or crime), and *ipso facto* implicitly that alienation could exist in a socialist system.

Further to that, Marxist-Leninists did (or do) recognise that surplus labour would continue to exist under socialism, but believe that the difference to this from surplus labour under capitalism is that under socialism, surplus labour is “used to satisfy the growing social requirements of all the people (continuous growth and improvement of production, insurance and reserve funds, and meeting requirements of workers in the non-productive sphere)” and “does not express relations of exploitation”.<sup>30</sup> From that, one can extrapolate that the nullification of the underlying cause of alienation (i.e. the division of the worker from the fruits of their labour) is therefore reliant on a functioning feedback that understands what these “growing social requirements” are, and again conclude that alienation can occur in a socialist state.

This investigation does not propose that alienation was a view which was used explicitly in the GDR to analyse its own society, but only that since it was used to critique its

---

<sup>28</sup> Richard Millington, “‘Crime Has No Chance’: The Discourse of Everyday Criminality in the East German Press, 1961-1989,” *Central European History* 50 (2017): 66-67.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 70.

<sup>30</sup> *A Dictionary of Political Economy* (1985), s.v. “Surplus Labour”.

adversaries, the concept of alienation is a useful tool to hold the GDR up to standards which it itself used. As an extension, it should be also recognised that, the elimination of alienation was not part of Halle-Neustadt's reason for being, with the GDR's focus in Halle-Neustadt being much more basic concerns about improving living conditions. Indeed, before the city was completed, publications described it in terms of improving workers' living standards, with an article in *NBI* lamenting that "The workers who create millions of dollars on complicated apparatus and machines should not have to return to the past century after work" (although evidence of a notion of the city creating a new personality through art can also be seen here, with the quote "[art] should become familiar to the residents and will help them to climb to a new level of education and sensitivity),<sup>31</sup> and such an aim was espoused after residents had moved in, with the guidebook *Architekturführer DDR: Bezirk Halle* published in 1977 explicitly stating that "the construction of the chemical workers' town [...] envisages a complex of measures to improve the living conditions for a large part of the workers employed in the chemical industry."<sup>32</sup>

This study shall use the term "welfare state" in reference to the GDR. Such an approach is not without precedence, and indeed, Rolf Heinrich described the GDR as an "authoritarian welfare state" (*Autoritärer Wohlfahrtsstaat*) in *Der Vormundenschaftliche Staat*, and Konrad H. Jarausch has used the moniker "welfare dictatorship" (*Fürsogediktatur*).<sup>33</sup>

However, some would argue that a state which does not fulfil the criteria of a liberal democracy cannot by definition be a welfare state. Writing in 1844, Klaus Nauwerk said that: "the legal state (*der Rechtsstaat*) does not suffice; it has to develop into the welfare state (*der Wohlfahrtsstaat*) in order to satisfy all societal needs [...] The objective of the welfare state is to ensure that all members of society are empowered with their human rights."<sup>34</sup> Considering that the GDR has been described as an *Unrechtsstaat* it would appear that it would not be considered a welfare state by Nauwerk. Additionally, Alfred Zimmern conceived of the welfare state as the ideal liberal democracy.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> D. H., "Nachbar 'Kunst'," *NBI*, June 1966, 20-21.

<sup>32</sup> Dietrich Böttger, ed., *Architekturführer DDR: Bezirk Halle* (Berlin: VEB Verlag für Bauwesen Berlin, 1977), 53.

<sup>33</sup> Sandrine Kott, *Communism Day-to-Day: State Enterprises in East German Society*, trans. Lisa Godin-Roger (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 55.

<sup>34</sup> Klaus Petersen and Jørn Henrik Petersen, "Confusion and divergence: Origins and meanings of the term 'welfare state' in Germany and Britain, 1840-1940," *Journal of European Social Policy* 23 (1): 39-40.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 46.

On the other hand, consider, for instance, that Bismarck is credited by some as creating the first welfare state,<sup>36</sup> yet one would hardly call the German Empire a liberal democracy. Furthermore, Susan Pedersen claimed that “All advanced industrial societies became welfare states in the twentieth century, even the anticollectivist United States”.<sup>37</sup> Looking more closely to the topic at hand, increasingly, there is a body of literature looking at the states of the socialist bloc as welfare states, as Gregory Dufaud and Mark B. Smith have done with the Soviet Union, and more specifically the GDR, as seen with Alexander Burdumy’s article “Reconsidering the Role of the Welfare State Within the German Democratic Republic’s Political System” and Beatrix Bouvier’s book *Die DDR - ein Sozialstaat?: Sozialpolitik in der Ära Honecker* (“The GDR - a welfare state?: Social Policy in the Honecker Era”). Nevertheless, it must be recognised that such a characterisation of socialist Eastern European states as welfare states is not without controversy, and Smith in particular is of the opinion that the Soviet Union under Stalin was not a welfare state as its citizens did not have meaningful socioeconomic rights, hence to look at its full scope, Smith believes that Soviet welfare was inadequate and faulty at best.<sup>38</sup>

However, the idea that the policy of “unity of economic and social policy” pursued by Honecker from 1975 shortly after he took power as one focusing on social welfare is by no means controversial, and is accepted by various historians including André Steiner and Christian Rau,<sup>39 40</sup> with Steiner even going further to explicitly say that “the Party leadership created for itself, and even more so for the population, the illusion of a realised modern industrial welfare state.”<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, the GDR certainly had a conception of social insurance which it took upon itself as a responsibility to operate. Again looking to *Arbeitsrecht von A bis Z*, social

---

<sup>36</sup> Sidney B. Fay, “Bismarck’s Welfare State,” *Current History* 18, no. 101 (January 1950): 2.

<sup>37</sup> Rolf Solli et al, *Searching for New Welfare Models: Citizens’ Opinions on the Past, Present and Future of the Welfare State* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, an imprint of Springer Nature, 2021), 2.

<sup>38</sup> Mark B. Smith, “Social Rights in the Soviet Dictatorship: The Constitutional Right to Welfare from Stalin to Brezhnev,” *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 3, no. 3 (2012): 401.

<sup>39</sup> André Steiner, *The Plans that Failed: An Economic History of the GDR*, trans. Ewald Osers (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 144.

<sup>40</sup> Christian Rau, “Socialism from Below: Kommunalpolitik in the East German Dictatorship between Discourse and Practice,” *German History* 36, no. 1 (2017): 66.

<sup>41</sup> Steiner, *The Plans that Failed*, 144.

insurance is defined as an “institution for the material security of workers in the event of illness, work accidents, maternity, and old age” and “an integral part of socialist social policy and an expression of concern for the people”, which was guaranteed by the constitution, with its leadership to be the responsibility of the FDGB.<sup>42</sup> The same book does not, however, have entries for *Wohlfahrt* (“welfare”) or *Fürsorge* (“care”). The concept of such social policy was also broader than what we might strictly consider the remit of a welfare state, with the directives issued by the 11th Congress of the SED for the Five-Year Plan for the GDR’s national economic development 1986–1990 referencing what would be considered elements relevant to social welfare (“secure employment, remuneration according to performance, equal opportunities for education, and systematic improvements in [...] material, cultural, health and social standards”, and more explicitly, “enhancing social security”) in a section titled “The further development of material, intellectual and cultural standards”, which whilst beginning first to talk about housing stock,<sup>43</sup> then later goes on to discuss how “Culture and the arts must be accorded greater recognition as factors helping people to personally unfold, engage in creative activities and pursue fulfilling pastimes.”<sup>44</sup> In a similar fashion, Honecker’s report to the Central Committee of the SED at the party’s 9th Congress in 1976 had a section titled “Intellectual and cultural life and the requirements of the forthcoming years”<sup>45</sup> which included a subsection titled “The development of socialist culture and art”,<sup>46</sup> followed immediately by another subsection titled “Further improvements in the health service”.<sup>47</sup> Such categorisations in official publications from the highest level of GDR leadership show that, in the GDR, the provision of cultural services was considered to be part of the overarching idea of social policy, of which social insurance was a part. As such, when considering the social policy of the GDR and conceiving of it as a welfare state, culture and arts are a factor that must be considered.

Ultimately, if one uses liberal democracy as one of the criteria to define a welfare state, then the GDR obviously cannot be counted as one. However, whilst recognising the divergences in opinion on the term, this study will analyse the GDR as a welfare state and

---

<sup>42</sup> *Arbeitsrecht von A bis Z* (1983), s.v. “Sozialversicherung (SV)”.

<sup>43</sup> *Directives issued by the 11th Congress of the SED for the Five-Year Plan for the GDR’s national economic development 1986–1990* (Dresden: Verlag Zeit im Bild, 1986), 97.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 118.

<sup>45</sup> Erich Honecker, *Report of the Central Committee to the 9th Congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany* (Dresden: Verlag Zeit im Bild, 1976), 110.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 125.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 132.

recognise it as such, using Asa Briggs's definition of the welfare state as follows: "[...] a state in which organized power is deliberately used (through politics and administration) in an effort to modify the play of market forces in at least three directions— first, by guaranteeing individuals and families a minimum income irrespective of the market value of their work or their property; second, by narrowing the extent of insecurity by enabling individuals and families to meet certain "social contingencies" (for example, sickness, old age and unemployment) which lead other wise to individual and family crises; and third, by ensuring that all citizens without distinction of status or class are offered the best standards available in relation to a certain agreed range of social services."<sup>48</sup> Such an approach has precedence in the existing corpus of writing on the GDR, with Mary Fulbrook arguing that "[a] great deal more of what the SED was trying to do was comparatively 'normal', or at least comparable to the aims and policies of Western polities of the time, than some accounts would appear to recognise. It is indeed remarkable how 'ordinary' many of the wider assumptions and policies – to do with housing, education, health, the status of women, faith in scientific and technological progress – actually appear in comparison with developments in Western capitalist societies in the later twentieth century."<sup>49</sup>

Broadly speaking then, the GDR had an approach to both welfare and trade unions that was distinct from the liberal view. Whilst the GDR would not qualify as a welfare state under liberal definitions, and the FDGB's qualification of a trade union under the same quotients would be contentious, from the GDR's point of view its welfare system and the FDGB's role in it were far more comprehensive and were held to a higher and wider standard of indices.

From these conceptions, we will be looking at how the FDGB played a role in the functioning of the GDR as a welfare state, although Bouvier's term *Sozialstaat* may be more accurate and there could be an argument to describe the social services of the GDR as "social insurance" or "social policy" instead seeing its broader range that included such things as culture, for the sake of this investigation we will group these under social welfare, albeit with the caveat that we are looking at a GDR-specific form of it. With this concrete framework, this investigation shall look to capture the dynamics of how successful the FDGB was in performing this role. Looking more widely, this study shall also synthesise understandings of

---

<sup>48</sup> Asa Briggs, "The Welfare State in Historical Perspective," *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 2, no. 2 (1961): 228.

<sup>49</sup> Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 296-297.

industry, workers, place, and culture that have been separately considered in other works, and although certainly not aiming to create a general overview of GDR history from this viewpoint, it may serve as a stepping stone for such an approach.

In summation, this investigation posits that whilst Halle-Neustadt was designed around the idea of improving workers' lives as the last conscious attempt to build a planned city based on the precepts of modernity, technological innovation, and science, it also functioned as a solution against socio-economic alienation. In this story, the FDGB parallels that function through its provision of social welfare as understood in the broader sense by the GDR, including the enrichment of the cultural sphere. Finally, it seeks to synthesis these different strands of industry, workers, place, and culture in GDR studies into one case study narrative.

## Historiography

This investigation will seek to use the activities of the FDGB in the city of Halle-Neustadt post-Ulbricht as a case study to further explore the role of the FDGB in East Germany. Whilst it is of course important to look at the major turning points in history, equally we should not neglect what may be considered the “normality” of the existence of past societies. As such, this investigation shall seek not to look at the political history of the FDGB, but rather at the history of its impact on citizens’ everyday lives.

Due to issues concerning the dearth in publications relating to the FDGB, which will be further elucidated below, it is not possible to provide an in-depth historiographical analysis of the topic. However, as regards the historiography of East German studies, there are some clear trends that can be seen. To summarise, as might be expected, the historical works published immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall focused primarily on the dictatorial and repressive aspects of the East German state. The use of the totalitarian theory in East German history reached its high point in 1993 when Armin Mitter and Stefan Wolle published *Untergang auf Raten* and when Klaus Dietmar-Henke’s article “On the Use and Evaluation of Stasi Files” was published in the journal *Vierteljahreshefte Zeitgeschichte*, but then began to give way to a more nuanced approach that disregarded the idea of a moralistic hero-vs-victim portrayal of the history of the GDR.<sup>50</sup> Mary Fulbrook’s works are emblematic of this change, with Fulbrook calling for a more balanced appraisal of the GDR and recognising that there was a more complex social structure than merely “state” and “people”.<sup>51</sup> This investigation will seek to continue in this historiographical trend, looking at the everyday rather than the spectacular and seeking to take a more detached view of the history of the GDR.

In his introductory essay “Workers and Socialist States in Postwar Central and Eastern Europe”, Mark Pittaway notes that “[...] the collapse of the GDR and the subsequent reunification of Germany created a situation in which relatively good access to the source base and institutional funding enabled the writing of a generation of critical social histories of the East German dictatorship. Some of this work addressed the social history of industrial

---

<sup>50</sup> Gary Bruce, *The Firm: The Inside Story of the Stasi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 6-7.

<sup>51</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *The People’s State*, 13-15.

workers, focusing on the industrial relations of GDR enterprises, patterns of working-class protest, and, to a lesser extent, the micropolitics of conflict with in the labor [sic] process.”<sup>52</sup>

Additionally, in her book *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, Mary Fulbrook remarked that “[a]n extensive monograph on the FDGB is greatly to be desired: the archival basis for such work is certainly excellent”.<sup>53</sup> Whilst this proposal does not posit an intention to produce such a work, it is clear that there exists an important gap in research into the field of East German history, yet a wealth of archival resources that are readily available. In fact, Harsch’s book on women and labour in the GDR, *Revenge of the Domestic*, discusses the FDGB in several different contexts such as its role in establishing women’s commissions in industrial unions,<sup>54</sup> but it certainly should not be considered a book specifically about the FDGB itself.

Indeed, this lacuna is not just limited to English literature on the FDGB, with such a trend being somewhat prevalent in the German corpus of writing as well, with a few notable exceptions such as Thomas Schaufuß’s *Die politische Rolle des FDGB-Feriedienstes in der DDR*, published in 2011. However, it is important to note that Schaufuß’s book is not to be considered to an academic text, with Molly Wilkinson Johnson referring to it in her review as “neither a compelling memoir, nor a successful work of academic analysis”, and stating that “its central thesis is polemical and political rather than academic”.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, even if we are to try to place Schaufuß’s work within an academic school of thought, his dogmatic inclusion of references to the Stasi (he states near the end of his book “Fact: the Stasi vacationed alongside the FDGB-Feriedienst”), as well as his annoyance regarding what he calls the “selective memory” of some GDR citizens,<sup>56</sup> places it firmly within the totalitarian school of GDR history, not particularly innovative or useful for creating a broader understanding.

---

<sup>52</sup> Mark Pittaway, “Introduction: Workers and Socialist States in Postwar Central and Eastern Europe,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 68 (Fall 2005): 2.

<sup>53</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949-1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 59.

<sup>54</sup> Donna Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 122.

<sup>55</sup> Molly Wilkinson Johnson, review of *Die politische Rolle des FDGB-Feriedienstes in der DDR: Sozialtourismus im SED-Staat*, by Thomas Schaufuß, *The English Historical Review* 130, no. 542 (February 2015): 258.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 256-258.

Something interesting to note is that whilst scholars might recognise that the FDGB had a massive reach in terms of membership, they rarely give it more than a passing mention. In his book *The East German Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR*, Corey Ross states that FDGB membership comprised nearly the entirety of the GDR's workforce, yet describes it simply as "all but invisible to the masses of members and arguably served more to waste the energies of thousands of honorary functionaries than to motivate the workforce".<sup>57</sup> Similarly, Peter Caldwell mentioned the FDGB only once in *Dictatorship, State Planning, and Social Theory in the German Democratic Republic*, and only to describe it as a part of the party-state designed both to subjugate all other unions and act as a "transmission belt" to pass on the party line.<sup>58</sup> Again, it is clear to say that despite the breadth of resources available for an investigation into the organisation, they continue to be untapped veins for which there seems to have been little appetite to look into, possibly due to a continually perpetuated stereotype of the FDGB being a puppet organisation, and to a further extent, therefore of little relevance in and of itself.

This investigation shall as such sit itself in what is essentially an untapped field as noted by Mary Fulbrook, building further on what has been examined in some way by scholars such as Harsch (although the FDGB is more ancillary to their work rather than the main topic of study), and reject the totalitarian school of thought that has evidently survived with writers such as Schaufuß as well as seek to go further than some scholars' view that the FDGB was simply a puppet organisation, looking to uncover what agency the organisation had of its own.

Much like with the FDGB, there is little in the field of the confluence of industry and mass organisations with culture, with the main sources regarding inquiries in this scope being Annette Schuhmann's *Kulturarbeit im sozialistischen Betrieb* published in 2006 and Sandrine Kott's *Communism Day-to-Day* published in 2014. Although focused more generally on the life of East German workers and how they interacted with the state, Kott's book also includes many fascinating insights on the FDGB's role in shaping the East German cultural milieu and its importance in organising workers' lives, arguably making it the most important book

---

<sup>57</sup> Corey Ross, *The East German Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR* (London: Arnold, 2002), 64.

<sup>58</sup> Peter C. Caldwell, *Dictatorship, State Planning, and Social Theory in the German Democratic Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 19-20.

which delves into the roles of the FDGB in East German culture and industrial society. Also pertinent to this study is Andrew Port's *Conflict and Stability in the German Democratic Republic*, which in a similar vein to this investigation on Halle-Neustadt, looks at the city of Saalfeld as a case study, although Port focuses on a time period ending in 1971.<sup>59</sup> Whilst these examples show that there is growing interest in looking at how industry, politics, and culture interacted with each other in the GDR, it is nonetheless evident that this field is still in an embryonic stage, and this investigation shall seek to play a part in the growth of this new path.

Looking more specifically at Halle-Neustadt, most texts on the area focus on housing and the planning of the city itself (examples include Anne Katrin Fack's *Stadtplanung in der DDR am Beispiel Halle-Neustadt* and Lars Grummich's *Der sozialistische Städtebau und sein Erbe*), although a comprehensive general overview exists in the form of Peer Pasternack's *50 Jahre Streitfall Halle-Neustadt*. As such, there is a clear opportunity here to expand knowledge on the city from a social and political viewpoint, as well as connecting with the existing literature by seeing how this interplayed with its architectural and city planning aspects.

As regards the FDGB and its role in establishing a new sense of *heimat*, Palmowski mentions briefly in his book *Inventing a Socialist Nation* that practically all *heimat* associations were organised under the Cultural League rather than the FDGB, which instead covered activities such as choral singing. However, he also noted that the ordinance providing for this centralisation also created quite arbitrary allocations, with choirs and folklore groups being attached to random mass organisations.<sup>60</sup> It would thus be interesting to investigate this little considered aspect of the FDGB through archival sources, which itself links back to the larger lack of analysis of the interactions between industry, politics, and in the GDR.

Overall, it is clear that there is a dearth in knowledge regarding these areas that this proposal seeks to focus on, yet they are areas which for a number of reasons should be

---

<sup>59</sup> Andrew I. Port, *Conflict and Stability in the German Democratic Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1.

<sup>60</sup> Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics of Everyday Life in the GDR 1945–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 30.

considered quite feasible to explore. As stated above, there are large quantities of primary source material available in archives, with the Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt having written records from the Leunawerke plant from 1916 to the mid-1990s in its Merseburg Department. Additionally, the Stadt Halle (Saale) Stadtarchiv has a number of documents relating to the Leunawerke plant and the work of the FDGB in Halle-Neustadt including some regarding the livelihood of its employees such as plans for apprenticeship contracts, official celebrations, and the building of an information centre, amongst others. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic the Bundesarchiv suffered from a months-long backlog in applications for access, meaning that during the span of this investigation it was not possible to look into documents available at that archive.

Concerning the available material itself, Fulbrook noted that beginning in the 1970s general reports from the FDGB began to act as mouthpieces for FDGB functionaries rather than sources laying out the actual opinions of workers, although the files on “special incidents” (*besondere Vorkommnisse*) continued to remain accurate to material reality into the 1980s.<sup>61</sup> As such, these primary source materials should be used with caution or at least with the understanding of these surrounding issues. Additionally, as will be evident later, some of these documents were filled out as a matter of bureaucratic routine and contain little to no information, although this also opens up its own implications regarding FDGB functionaries that will be explored in further detail. More broadly, it must be recognised that these documents are essentially political documents from an organisation which was politically connected to the ruling SED and upheld the same Marxist-Leninist ideology as the party and state, hence there is considerable possibility of bias, be this from a purely philosophical standpoint or due to political considerations. This is a particular problem when the topic at hand is a politically sensitive issue (e.g. the rise of *Solidarność*), the result being that one should not expect any revelatory discussion or debate beyond the officially sanctioned position. It should also be recognised that these documents are fundamentally professional in nature and do not provide personal accounts beyond what may be directly relevant to issues at hand, lacking a certain human touch in the picture created.

In summary, the available primary source materials from the archives provide for a clear insight into the administrative machinery of the FDGB (particularly at the local level) as

---

<sup>61</sup> Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, 255-256.

well as its role in dealing with workers' issues, although they must also be used with a critical eye due to inherent political tendencies and in some cases the manoeuvrings of individuals, and in some areas require some reading in between the lines especially where there is a lack of information. As a result, they can only take us so far, and must be paired with secondary sources to achieve a better grasp of the FDGB at the macro-level as well as to understand the events surrounding the documents to understand why the content they have exists as such. The issue of political bias extends to other contemporary printed material including books and magazines for much the same reason and due to issues of censorship, be it self-imposed or from the apparatuses of the state.

Looking back to the investigation itself, this text is mainly split thematically within periods rather than strictly chronologically as to write in the latter style would not be conducive to an analytical assessment showing the interconnectivity of different themes and would instead create what Musson called "hotchpot collections of random snippets from voluminous records."<sup>62</sup> The periodisation used in this investigation shall consist of the time frames spanning 1968 to 1972, 1976 to 1978, and the 1980s, which is useful both in that it fits the specificity of the history of Halle-Neustadt, and can also be seen to reflect certain other periodisation structures used in the broader history of the socialist world.

As such, it is important to recognise that there are various methods of periodisation that have been applied. Two Western-centric approaches are that of the Long Sixties stretching back to 1954, when the US Civil Rights movement began and France signed the Geneva Accords necessitating her withdrawal from Indochina, reaching out to 1975 and the end of the Vietnam War, and Arthur Marwick's approach choosing to start in 1958 which is conceived of as the beginning of the youth movement. In contrast, the authors of *The Socialist Sixties* have a general consensus that the 1960s in the context of the Eastern Bloc begins in the late-1950s with the Khrushchev Thaw and ends with the unrest in Czechoslovakia in 1968.<sup>63</sup> In a similar vein, R. J. Crampton bracketed the years 1956 to 1968 as a period that he described in the context of it being a segment of the 20th century in

---

<sup>62</sup> A.E. Musson, *Trade Union & Social History*, reprint (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 8.

<sup>63</sup> Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker, "Introduction: The Socialist 1960s in Global Perspective," in *The Socialist Sixties: Crossing Borders in the Second World*, eds. Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 3.

Eastern Europe as “middle age, with the passions of ideology not forgotten but tempered by pragmatism and occasionally by wisdom.”<sup>64</sup>

In his economic history of the GDR, *The Plans that Failed*, André Steiner takes a slightly different approach, using 1961 and the construction of the Berlin Wall as the beginning of the equivalent period (which he calls the “Golden Sixties”), ending in 1971 when Walter Ulbricht was replaced by Erich Honecker as leader of the GDR.<sup>65</sup> Providing yet another method of periodisation, Peter Hübner argues that it is possible to look at a period of “Normalisation” that covers the various Eastern European states, including the GDR, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, with this period roughly stretching from the end of reform attempts in these countries in the late-1960s and into the early 1970s, using the implementation of what he calls the “policies of normalisation” (*Normalisierungspolitik*) as a basis for this framing.<sup>66</sup>

Moving on to the following period, Steiner considers 1971 to 1982 to be one section, when the focus on modernisation was replaced by appeasement of workers through welfare and increased consumer goods.<sup>67</sup> More specifically, Mark Allinson posits the concept of 1977 as being the most normal year in the GDR’s history, and also states that “1977 marks something of a halfway point between the end of the cycle of events that established the GDR’s new status in the international sphere and, arguable, the start of the sequence of internal events that contributed to the state’s eventual dissolution.”<sup>68</sup> Looking back again to Crampton, he groups the entire era from 1968 to 1980 as a period of “old age” in the development of Eastern Europe in the 20th century, suggesting that “the powers of the body political declined whilst in mental or ideological affairs, the follies of youth, above all nationalism, reappeared.” Further from that, he considered the rise of *Solidarność* in 1980 to be the heart attack that would mark the beginning of the end of the 20th century in Eastern Europe.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> R. J. Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century – And After*, 2nd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 1997), xi.

<sup>65</sup> Steiner, *The Plans that Failed*, 105-106.

<sup>66</sup> Mary Fulbrook, “The Concept of ‘Normalisation’ and the GDR in Comparative Perspective,” in *Power and Society in the GDR, 1961-1979: The ‘Normalisation of Rule’?*, eds. Mary Fulbrook (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2009), 10.

<sup>67</sup> Steiner, *The Plans that Failed*, 141-142.

<sup>68</sup> Mark Allinson, “1977: The GDR’s Most Normal Year?,” in *Power and Society in the GDR, 1961-1979: The ‘Normalisation of Rule’?*, eds. Mary Fulbrook (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2009), 253.

<sup>69</sup> Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century – And After*, xi.

This brings us neatly into the periodisation of the 1980s, a period of time often considered to be the decline of Eastern European socialism, as evidenced by Steiner who considers the 1980s to be a decade characterised by the final economic collapse of the GDR due to its inability to innovate, modernise technologically, and react to worldwide issues,<sup>70</sup> although rather than following a strict calendar definition he frames the 1980s in the GDR from 1982 to 1989.<sup>71</sup>

Now that we have understood how others have periodised the history of the GDR and Eastern Europe more broadly, it is time to synthesise this into a periodisation to be used in this investigation. It is clear that there is a general consensus that 1968 marked the natural end of an era, and as such it shall be used as the beginning of the first period. Based on Steiner's idea that one can use the political change of 1971 as a bracket, as well as Hübner's conception of the period of Normalisation as ending in the early 1970s, this investigation shall shift the end of the first section slightly, splitting the difference and ending in 1972, which will also allow us to see what immediate effects the rise of Honecker might have had.

The next section will jump forward somewhat. Keeping with the idea that looking for normality is just as important as exceptionality, the most normal year of the GDR, 1977, shall be used as a pole around which to create a three-year period to look at Halle-Neustadt after it had time to mature and some of the novelty may have worn off. However, this is not to suggest that this investigation is making a broader argument that GDR history as a whole should have a periodisation splitting the 1970s into an early and later part, and it is recognised that some historians think that the decade constitutes a period in and of itself as seen above, only that in the specific context of Halle-Neustadt and trying to find a slice of time that can be considered normal it is useful to do so.

Finally, we shall again follow the general consensus as exemplified by Steiner and Crampton that the 1980s can be considered a single block period generally considered as characterised by decline, although recognising the difference in that Crampton looks at the decade as a calendar affair whilst Steiner truncates it a little. In the overall picture then, the periodisation used here draws on those which has been used by a number of different

---

<sup>70</sup> Steiner, *The Plans that Failed*, 193.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 171.

historians of European socialist states, but with adjustments which cater to the specificities of Halle-Neustadt.

## Halle-Neustadt: The Genesis and Early Life of an East German “New Town”, 1968-1972

One of the main subjects of this dissertation, Halle-Neustadt, was conceived as a “new city” in East Germany in the 1960s, with initial location scouting and urban planning taking place from 1960 to 1963, and further preparatory development specific to Halle-Neustadt lasting from 1964 to 1968.<sup>72</sup> Emerging against a general backdrop of post-war “new cities” within the socialist bloc in general, and the more recent rehabilitation and embrace of cybernetics by the GDR authorities, Halle-Neustadt represented a synthesis of old and new ideas to create what might be considered the final development of the socialist planned city from which only derivation rather than innovation would result.

Construction of Halle-Neustadt began in 1964 as “a socialist town of chemical workers” in the area west of the old city of Halle as a new town for employees of the Buna and Leuna chemical plants, complete with its own municipal charter, rail station, and shopping zone.<sup>73</sup> With its 33,000 apartment units,<sup>74</sup> 70,000 workers were to be housed in accommodation fitted with such modern conveniences as electricity, hot water, insulation, and spacious interiors.<sup>75</sup> Despite jokes made at the expense of the new housing estates calling them *Steinwüsten* (“stone deserts”), *Wohnsilos* (“silos for living in”), *Komfortzellen* (“comfort cells”) and *Wohnghettos* (“housing ghettos”),<sup>76</sup> they were considered hugely desirable, and with professors and taxi drivers as neighbours,<sup>77</sup> it could be argued that they embodied the spirit of socialist egalitarianism. The city was built with public art in mind from its inception, and has been described as “the largest open space gallery in the GDR”, with nearly 150 outdoor art pieces and roughly 30 indoor art pieces designed specifically to accentuate the urban space, of which only 23% could be considered to be directly political and with “crude propaganda” being comparatively rare.<sup>78</sup> An interesting sidenote is that the government forwent standard street naming conventions, inventing its own numerical system

---

<sup>72</sup> Böttger, *Architekturführer DDR: Bezirk Halle*, 53.

<sup>73</sup> Frank Peter Jäger, “Rooms Bathed in Light for the New Human,” in *East German Modern*, ed. Hans Engels, trans. John Sykes (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2019), 12.

<sup>74</sup> Mike Dennis, *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1990* (Essex: Longman, 2000), 154.

<sup>75</sup> Katja Hoyer, *Beyond the Wall: East Germany, 1949-1990* (London: Allen Lane, 2023), 195.

<sup>76</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 54.

<sup>77</sup> Hoyer, *Beyond the Wall*, 195.

<sup>78</sup> Peer Pasternack, “Die größte Freiraumgalerie der DDR: Kunststadt Halle-Neustadt” in *Baubezogene Kunst DDR: Kunst im öffentlichen Raum 1950 bis 1990*, Martin Maleschka (Berlin: Dom Publishers, 2022), 28-30.

for housing blocks that even inhabitants found confusing.<sup>79</sup> Such is its significance that this cartographical system has been included as an object of note in novels today which are set in the city during the times of the GDR.<sup>80</sup>

Ten years after construction began, in 1974, the city housed 70,000 workers in 21,000 apartments, with plans to add another 30,000 people to the population by 1980.<sup>81</sup> However, it also became evident that the later in the city's life that an apartment complex was completed, the fewer amenities it had access to, with speed and cheap construction being prioritised instead.<sup>82</sup> Whilst the city was meant to have been completed within just nine years, one of three flagship functional central areas, the *Versorgungszentrum* shopping and commodity centre, was only opened in 1984 after the planning concept was finally completed in 1975, whilst the broader concept including a cultural and sports centre and a political-cultural centre was never realised in totality.<sup>83</sup> Interestingly, construction of public art continued even after the end of the GDR, with 16 new pieces being installed since 1990.<sup>84</sup> Thus, one could say parts of the city's initial socialist mindset in construction continues to live on.

Due to the interdisciplinary and transnational nature of many aspects of the city, before discussing further the particularities of Halle-Neustadt, it is important to understand the more general cultural and political milieu that it was conceived in, both domestically and internationally. Additionally, for these reasons there are many vectors from which we can analyse Halle-Neustadt, including architecture and city planning, art production, cybernetics, literature and official publications, *heimat*, and all the prism of transnational connections. Ultimately, this derives from the fact that this study seeks to synthesise the narratives surrounding industry, workers, place, and culture in GDR studies.

### Architecture and city planning

By no means did the conception and construction of Halle-Neustadt occur in a vacuum. It was part of an international phenomenon of planned cities that sprang up across the world

---

<sup>79</sup> Hoyer, *Beyond the Wall*, 196.

<sup>80</sup> David Young, *Stasi Wolf* (London: Zaffre Publishing, 2017), 25-26.

<sup>81</sup> Frank Eckardt, "Germany: Neighbourhood Centres – A Complex Issue," *Built Environment* 32, no. 1 (2006): 59.

<sup>82</sup> Gwyneth Cliver, "'Ostalgie' Revisited: The Musealization of Halle-Neustadt," *German Studies Review* 37, no. 3 (October 2014): 619.

<sup>83</sup> Eckardt, "German: Neighbourhood Centres," 59-60.

<sup>84</sup> Pasternack, "Die größte Freiraumgalerie der DDR," 28.

from the immediate post-war era into the 1960s. The usage of prefabricated and serially-produced housing to create housing settlements became a trend across the world in the 1950s, ranging from examples such as the British “New Towns” and French *villes nouvelles*. Additionally, planned cities based on Modernism and the ideals of Le Corbusier also emerged worldwide, including Brasilia and Dar es Salaam.<sup>85</sup> Within the Soviet Union, the concept of new towns and planned cities had existed since the 1920s, being further expanded in the 1930s, with examples such as Karaganda, Zaporozh’e, Magnitogorsk, and Komsomol’sk-na-Amure. However, from 1926 to 1966, only a third of the Soviet new towns were built from scratch, with the rest being expansions or satellite towns of existing settlements (similar to Halle-Neustadt).<sup>86</sup> The planned city of Tol’iatti also shared its transformative mission with Brasilia, with both cities intended to create a new person with a new identity.<sup>87</sup> In fact, the general plan for Tol’iatti became required reading for architectural students in the Soviet Union and the GDR.<sup>88</sup>

Influencing the two major blocs of the Cold War was the concept of the Functional City codified by the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM) in the Athens Charter in 1928. Although criticism of functionalism by Soviet architects had begun in the last years of the 1960s on the basis of its dehumanising approach, the youthful NER (*Novyi Element Rasseleniia*; “New Element of Settlement”) group was influenced particularly by Le Corbusier’s approach to the Functional City that saw it as an organic form following the laws of nature and biology, as well as combining this with the ideas of Soviet avant-garde architects of the 1920s.<sup>89</sup> In fact, Siegelbaum draws a direct line between Soviet and Western architects in these influences, linking together VKhUTEMAS and other Soviet constructivist institutions, Bauhaus, the Corbuserian-influenced CIAM Athens Charter, and Soviet new town development in the 1960s.<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> Eli Rubin, *Amnesiopolis: Modernity, Space, and Memory in East Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 24.

<sup>86</sup> Lewis H. Siegelbaum, “Modernity Unbound: The New Soviet City of the Sixties,” in *The Socialist Sixties: Crossing Borders in the Second World*, eds. Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 67-68.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>89</sup> Anna Alekseyeva, *Everyday Soviet Utopias: Planning, Design and the Aesthetics of Developed Socialism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 76-77.

<sup>90</sup> Siegelbaum, “Modernity Unbound,” 73.

Looking back towards the GDR, we can see international influences, specifically those of Le Corbusier, in the satellite town of Marzahn, particularly in the town's emphasis on apartment blocks with green spaces in between that helped separate pedestrians and cars.<sup>91</sup> Additionally, Marzahn's centralisation of shops into shopping centres followed Le Corbusier's call for the "death of the street", which looked to shift away from the street as an area for the confluence of shopping, work, transport, and living. The shopping centres also mirrored the Western development of shopping malls which rationalised and made more convenient the experience of shopping, helping reduce the double-burden felt by women.<sup>92</sup>

From this, we can clearly see that the conceptualisation of Halle-Neustadt occurred in a time when the socialist and capitalist worlds entered a period of convergent developments that drew on and mirrored each other, further seeing the crystallisation of previous developments from the 1920s and 1930s which also displayed the same kind of dialectic conversation between schools of architectural thought.

Planned cities also developed around the same time as Halle-Neustadt in neighbouring Czechoslovakia and Poland. Nowa Huta in Poland was designed with significant Soviet input, including the provision of blueprints, equipment, personnel, and cadre training. In fact, Soviet control over the project was so deep that Polish opposition regarding what they considered the overly massive scale of the steelworks was supposedly belayed by none other than Joseph Stalin himself.<sup>93</sup> Many of Nowa Huta's planning solutions were derived from pre-existing Soviet ideas, such as the radial design of the streets from its core and the large precincts that were not directly linked to the main streets. Yet even here, there was an international influence at play here; Nowa Huta's division into neighbourhood units was taken from a principle developed in New York in the 1900s.<sup>94</sup> Additionally, the city had an implicit social engineering aspect in its very construction process, with young people being brought in to help build the city with the desire to teach them how to work in Nowa Huta in future, a theme that we will see similarly replicated in Halle-Neustadt later.<sup>95</sup> Again, much as

---

<sup>91</sup> Eli Rubin, "Beyond Domination: Socialism, Everyday Life in East German Housing Settlements, and New Directions in GDR Historiography," *Imaginations* 8 (2017): 40.

<sup>92</sup> Rubin, *Amnesiopolis*, 102.

<sup>93</sup> Katherine Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia: Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society, 1949-56* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 26.

<sup>94</sup> Kinga Pozniak, *Nowa Huta: Generations of Change in a Model Socialist Town* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014), 27-28.

<sup>95</sup> Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia*, 54.

we will see with Halle-Neustadt, trade unions in Nowa Huta had an important role to play in culture, building and maintaining cultural centres, hiring directors for theatres, and exhorting people to join in events.<sup>96</sup> Ultimately though, Nowa Huta belongs to the first generation of socialist planned cities based on older Soviet experiments like Magnitogorsk, in a family including Dymitrovgrad in Bulgaria, Dunaujvaros in Hungary, and the GDR's own Eisenhuttenstadt.<sup>97</sup>

In comparison to such a first-generation socialist planned city, Etarea in Czechoslovakia first emerged in the mid-1960s when Gorazd Čelechovský brought together an interdisciplinary team to develop a city that would rethink the ideas of industrialisation and standardisation to complement rather than attack human psychology as well as intensify economies of scale, ultimately with the aim of creating the ideal communist city.<sup>98</sup> The environment in which Etarea was conceived could be described as unique to the Czechoslovakia of the 1960s. With a new generation reinterpreting Marxism as humanist and reviving Hegelian-idealist ideas, and the new journal *Civilization* encapsulating the ideas of “socialism with a human face”, the concept of *životní prostředí* (“milieu of life” or “living environment”) arose that comprised a variety of different ideas including a balanced life, optimally distributed systems, social equity, and political harmony. Additionally, a trend of environmental awareness began to appear in Czechoslovakia, and was mirrored in the Soviet Union by the NER and in Yugoslavia by the architect Vjenceslav Richter with his ziggurat cities.<sup>99</sup> In true utopian fashion, Etarea's name was derived from the Latin *aurea aetas* (“Golden Age”), and a local newspaper in Prague described it on a cover page story on the 4 January 1967 as a “happy city”.<sup>100</sup>

However, in her article “Automation or Meaning?”, Maroš Krivý noted that “It is not clear whether Etarea designers were familiar with the contemporary Ideal Communist City project, designed by the Soviet collective NER, and presented at the 1967 Milano Triennale. They would have certainly subscribed, however, to NER's synthesis of Marxism and

---

<sup>96</sup> Boleslaw Janus, “The Politics of Culture in Poland's Worker Paradise: Nowa Huta in the 1950s,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 56, no. 4 (2008): 544.

<sup>97</sup> Aleksandra Sumorok, “The Socialist City – A Homeless City?: A Contribution to the Research on Model Implementations,” *Art Inquiry*, no. 13 (2011): 204, 212.

<sup>98</sup> Maroš Krivý, “Automation or Meaning? Socialism, Humanism and Cybernetics in Etarea,” *Architectural Histories* 7, no. 1 (2019): 6.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-4.

<sup>100</sup> Maroš Krivý, “Cybernetics as a Balancing Act? Architecture and the Socialist Future in 1960s Czechoslovakia,” published August 2, 2021, [https://netzkunst.berlin/pdfs/ZfN\\_CC\\_Journal\\_Krivy.pdf](https://netzkunst.berlin/pdfs/ZfN_CC_Journal_Krivy.pdf).

cybernetics, and its programme ‘to compute the interaction of all the internal and external factors that maintain the social process in its normal condition’.”<sup>101</sup> As such, it is not possible for us to definitively make claims on whether Etarea was a project that existed as an island untouched by the architectural theoretical developments in the rest of the socialist world. Nevertheless, from the data available and presented here, it would seem feasible to cautiously say that the experience of creating the idea of Etarea was a primarily Czech one, which although having certain conceptual similarities with developments elsewhere, was relatively independent of foreign influence.

Clearly then, not all planned cities are the same, and Halle-Neustadt was not a part of the first generation of planned cities like Nowa Huta, but something new that focused on technology, modernity, and the future.

In reverse to the situation in Nowa Huta, East German architects also contributed to the development of socialist architectural theories. In line with the idea that cities should serve as a backdrop for political rituals, Lothar Bolz noted that the concept of the “garden city” prevalent in the Anglo-American world turned “the working man into a rabbit breeder or cauliflower planter, but under no circumstances a participant in political demonstrations.”<sup>102</sup> It is interesting to note here that in direct contrast to this attack on the “garden city” concept, at the 1958 International Union of Architects Congress held in Moscow, Soviet microdistricts were described by some Soviet architects exactly as “Garden Cities”, specifically aiming to link the concept with that of Ebenezer Howard of Britain.<sup>103</sup> Hence, in this example we can see that within the dual-carriageway that was the transfer of ideas within the socialist world, there were also national variations in architectural theory that directly contradicted with one another, and as such it is demonstrably unfair to suggest that socialist states simply copied from the Soviet Union in a one-size-fits-all approach. Overall, then, from these various examples, it is clear to see that there was a wide variation of international concepts that influenced planned city projects in the socialist world, and that between the socialist states themselves there was also a cross-pollination of such ideas.

---

<sup>101</sup> Krivý, “Automation or Meaning?,” 10.

<sup>102</sup> Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia*, 33.

<sup>103</sup> Alekseyeva, *Everyday Soviet Utopias*, 87.

Let us now turn towards the conception of Halle-Neustadt and the legacy of the past. Halle (Saale) had a history of public cultural venue projects, and during the Weimar era, Gropius designed a *Volkshaus* (people's house) for the city known as the *Stadtkrone* (city crown) which was submitted to the 1927 architectural competition held by the Halle magistrate.<sup>104</sup> Gropius' design was unique in its structure and its use of new materials and technologies. Furnished with multipurpose halls, a restaurant, a café, a museum, a library, a reading room, and a sports hall,<sup>105</sup> the concept superficially appears very similar to the Palaces of Culture that would become commonplace throughout the socialist world. At the risk of sounding overly causal, it is perhaps not an accident that the *Volkshaus* concept seems so similar to a Palace of Culture. Gropius' ideas firmly fit into the ideological milieu of the GDR; during the second CIAM congress held in 1929, he promoted the concept of the Minimal Dwelling that would be paired with the Functional City and was intended to reduce the domestic burden of women by making use of the range of services provided by the Functional City, as well as promote collectivism amongst inhabitants.<sup>106</sup>

In terms of more general architectural trends, the GDR had a complicated relationship with the legacy of the Bauhaus movement. At the 5th Plenum of the SED Central Committee in March 1951, Liebknecht claimed in support of Socialist Realism that "If we were to build in the style of Schinkel, we would accommodate our population's idea of beauty better than if we were to build in the Bauhaus style." In fact, Ulbricht himself criticised the Bauhaus style at an interior architecture conference in 1952, stating that "[t]he furniture that has been manufactured in the Bauhaus style does not correspond to the aesthetic preferences of the modern people of this new Germany."<sup>107</sup>

Yet even then, this rejection of the Bauhaus movement was challenged. In direct response to Liebknecht, the writer Ludwig Renn wrote in *Neues Deutschland* that architecture of the Bauhaus movement had a stronger claim to German identity than Liebknecht's proposals.<sup>108</sup> By the turn of the second half of the 1950s, Walter Heisig was using the examples of Sweden and Poland to justify his claims that designers should draw

---

<sup>104</sup> Christine Fuhrmann, "Eine Stadtkrone für Halle Saale," in *Eine Stadtkrone für Halle Saale: Walter Gropius im Wettbewerb*, eds. Christine Fuhrmann and Leonard Helten (Halle (Saale): Stiftung Moritzburg, 2011), 19.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 43, 46-47.

<sup>106</sup> Alekseyeva, *Everyday Soviet Utopias*, 113.

<sup>107</sup> Katharina Pfützner, *Designing for Socialist Need: Industrial Design Practice in the German Democratic Republic* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 177.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 178.

upon their own national traditions, and in the March 1957 edition of *Bildende Kunst*, the first cautious steps were made to rehabilitate the Bauhaus movement in an article by Hermann Exner.<sup>109</sup>

Halle itself had a role to play in the rehabilitation and expansion of the Bauhaus movement in the GDR, with Günter Reißmann and Martin Kelm developing minimalist and pioneering designs at the Institute for Design and Development in the city that would be adopted throughout the GDR.<sup>110</sup> Additionally, its chemical works churned out the synthetic materials that were used to produce the Intecta line of furniture that had been inspired by Bauhaus designs, and which were promoted in magazines such as *Kultur im Heim* and the Leipzig trade fair.<sup>111</sup> In fact, regarding Halle-Neustadt itself, Joachim Bach went so far as to claim that “Halle-Neustadt was part of a modern urban tradition: Bauhaus, Le Corbusier and the Athens Charter, the concept of the functional city [...]”.<sup>112</sup> Karlheinz Schlesier, one of Halle-Neustadt’s architects, also suggested in 2006 that Halle-Neustadt represented the Charter of Athens “in GDR colours”.<sup>113</sup> Furthermore, as mentioned previously, Soviet architects had also been influenced by Bauhaus, and one could say that through Tol’iatti and the influence its plans had on architects in the GDR, Bauhaus (re-)entered the GDR’s own new towns in a roundabout way.

Additionally, the negative influence of the past could not be escaped. Looking back towards Marzahn, the concept of a planned city for workers in that area can be traced back to the Nazi era when Albert Speer called for the construction of a village with 450,000 apartments to the northeast of Berlin in his 1938 General Plan for Berlin.<sup>114</sup> More broadly, the GDR also adopted certain policies which mimicked the pro-natalism of the Nazis, such as interest-free credits worth 5,000 marks that were made available to newly-weds and priority housing for those with children.<sup>115</sup> This is absolutely not to say that the GDR looked at the

---

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 184.

<sup>110</sup> Eli Rubin, *Synthetic Socialism: Plastics & Dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 64.

<sup>111</sup> Justinian Jampol, ed., *The East German Handbook: Arts and Artifacts from the GDR* (Cologne: TASCHEN GmbH, 2017), 111.

<sup>112</sup> Joachim Bach, “Neues Bauen für die neue Gesellschaft: Die konzeptionellen Referenzen bei Planung und Bau Halle-Neustadts,” in *50 Jahre Streitfall Halle-Neustadt: Idee und Experiment. Lebensort und Provokation*, ed. Peer Pasternack (Halle (Saale): Mitteldeutscher Verlag GmbH, 2014), 25.

<sup>113</sup> J.R. Jenkins, *Picturing Socialism: Public Art and Design in East Germany* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020), 108.

<sup>114</sup> Rubin, *Amnesiopolis*, 18.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 28.

Third Reich as a template or something to look up to. The founding myth of the GDR saw it as being liberated from Nazism and being an anti-fascist state, and indeed the leadership of the GDR often made claims that it was the FRG which was a successor to the Nazi regime.<sup>116</sup> These examples only serve to lay out that when facing certain issues in materially similar conditions, the resultant solutions could be quite similar.

Another point to consider when looking at how Halle-Neustadt was conceived is the transferral of Eastern European housing techniques to the Third World. In this regard, the GDR was certainly not the only state in the socialist community involved in this cross-pollination of architectural knowledge. For instance, Bulgaria was involved in the construction of the Abu Dhabi Municipality Building, the Administrative Center Hamma in Algiers, the Olympic Sports Complex in Tunis, and various structures such as schools, administrative and residential buildings, and sports facilities in countries ranging from Libya, Nigeria, Lebanon, Ethiopia, Iraq, Vietnam, Morocco, and the GDR itself.<sup>117</sup> Poland developed the Miastoprojekt master plan for Baghdad,<sup>118</sup> as well as large numbers of museums in Nigeria including the Nigerian Museum in Lagos but also temporary museums.<sup>119</sup>

Looking back to the GDR, assistance was provided during the second half of the 1950s for the reconstruction of the North Korean city of Hamhung, with it being noted by an interpreter for the German Work Team Hamhung (*Deutsche Arbeitsgruppe Hamhung*) that plans for the central square of Hamhung were influenced by Berlin's Stalinallee and that East German urban development principles were applied fastidiously,<sup>120</sup> particularly drawing on principles used in Eisenhüttenstadt (then Stalinstadt) and Hoyerswerda.<sup>121</sup> Mirroring developments in architectural design occurring in the GDR contemporarily, Hamhung's central building was non-decorative.<sup>122</sup> Interestingly, similar to the situation between Halle-Neustadt and Leuna, the town neighbouring Hamhung, Hùngnam, is considered to be the

---

<sup>116</sup> Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 29-30.

<sup>117</sup> Łukasz Stanek, *Architecture in Global Socialism: Eastern Europe, West Africa, and the Middle East in the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020), 264-265.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>120</sup> Hideo Tomita, "The Construction of a Socialist City by East German Engineers in the Late 1950s: Post-war Reconstruction of Hamhung," (paper presented at International Planning History Society Conference, Yokohama, July 2018), 1.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

primary city as regards the North Korean chemical industry.<sup>123</sup> One could therefore come to the understanding that Hamhung stood as a development from the initial phase of East German new socialist towns, but ultimately being mostly derivative of them, sitting it in between those original new cities and Halle-Neustadt.

Additionally, in Vietnam, the GDR was tasked with the reconstruction of the city of Vinh, birthplace of Ho Chi Minh, as a mark of the special relationship the two countries shared, with local newspapers further pointing out the appropriateness of such a choice what with the GDR being the homeland of Karl Marx. Indeed, in Vietnam the choice of which country would be in charge of reconstructing a particular city was part of a geopolitical chess game within the framework of socialist fraternity; for instance, the USSR was given responsibility for Hanoi, essentially allowing it to grow its power base in the Vietnamese capital, whilst China was tasked with redeveloping Thái Nguyên far to the north, with the situation looked at as a whole seeming emblematic of the Sino-Soviet split.<sup>124</sup> The GDR's role in Vinh was unique amongst the other projects led by fraternal socialist states in that it went way beyond its original remit of town planning and design to become one of complete reconstruction. Additionally, Vinh was exceptional in that anticipated plans that had been drawn up were actually implemented.<sup>125</sup>

Whilst East German planners tried to make use of local planning principles to accommodate the Vietnamese,<sup>126</sup> ultimately Vinh would encapsulate what Schwenkel calls “a European approach to spatial mapping”,<sup>127</sup> resembling the functional city concept of Le Corbusier and CIAM,<sup>128</sup> much like, as has been noted above, Halle-Neustadt. Indeed, Schwenkel directly referenced Halle-Neustadt as a model of the kind of city that had been “glocalised” into the form that Vinh took,<sup>129</sup> also noting that the prefabrication methods promoted by East Germans in Vinh was considered novel but also “a foreign design that did not fit at all with Vietnamese ways of living.”<sup>130</sup> In fact, the *Arbeitsgruppe* (work unit)

---

<sup>123</sup> Rüdiger Frank, “Lessons from the Past: The First Wave of Developmental Assistance to North Korea and the German Reconstruction of Hamhung,” *Pacific Focus* XXIII, no. 1 (April 2008): 55.

<sup>124</sup> Christina Schwenkel, *Building Socialism: The Afterlife of East German Architecture in Vietnam* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), 110-111.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 112-113.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

dispatched by the GDR to work on Vinh included experts who had been involved in the construction of Halle-Neustadt, as well as Dessau, Dresden, and the North Korean city of Hamhung.<sup>131</sup> Ultimately then, the fact that the principles used in Halle-Neustadt were essentially copied over directly into Vinh, despite notions of fitting them into a localised form, fundamentally separates the reconstruction project of Vinh from that of Hamhung in that the Halle-Neustadt model seems to have been considered to only require derivation, not further development.

Vinh was by no means the only project overseas which made use of East German architectural expertise. Other notable projects included a slaughterhouse in Iraq in a tender that saw the East German proposal beating a West German offer from Fritz Thier, and also saw the adoption of East German organisational schemes first used in Schwedt, another “company town” based around petrochemicals,<sup>132</sup> as well as the highly successful planetariums built by Carl Zeiss Jena in Stalingrad, Beijing, Katowice, Kolkata, Prague, Colombo, Cairo, Jakarta, Bogota, Riga, Kuwait City, and Tripoli.<sup>133</sup> The replication of these design principles used in the GDR suggests then that the model of Halle-Neustadt was at that point considered to be the ultimate culmination of the socialist planned city by GDR city planners, especially judging from the fact that concepts from the city were directly lifted and planted in other city planning projects undertaken by the GDR.

Turning towards Halle-Neustadt itself, honest discussion from regular citizens surrounded the development of the city. In its September 1971 issue, *Deutsche Architektur* published an article titled “Gedanken zur Planung und zum Bau der Chemiarbeiterstadt Halle-Neustadt” (Thoughts on the planning and construction of the chemical workers' town of Halle-Neustadt) which asked how living conditions in the city had developed and whether the basics for future-proofing could support future developments. As part of this, it published the results of a study conducted between 1969 and 1970 by the Martin Luther University, which found that whilst most citizens held a positive attitude to the space afforded to them in residential complexes, particularly the P 2 model, they found serious issues with ventilation systems, 60% believed that their apartments were too dry (causing health problems from dust), women felt that there was not enough storage space, and some 90% of those living on

---

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 114.

<sup>132</sup> Stanek, *Architecture in Global Socialism*, 214-215.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 220.

the Magistrale main street were disturbed by loud traffic. The magazine also actually proposed further development of apartment designs to remedy these problems. Furthermore, it placed emphasis on the importance of community spaces for recreation, from major areas like courtyards down to the seating areas outside of residential blocks, stating that “[the] contacts made in this way can be more easily developed into community relationships that serve to develop a socialist way of life.”<sup>134</sup>

Yet even at this early stage of the city’s life, it was noted that funding was not sufficient nor having the desired outcome, with the article stating that “[the] high, expended funds are not yet in the required ratio to the achieved benefit in terms of socialist environmental design”, and further noting that “[the] development of Halle-Neustadt makes it clear that a city cannot be planned for a final state. [...] This is not to say that we only have to build for the future. We build primarily to satisfy the needs of the present. But that doesn’t prevent us from thinking about the future and helping to prepare decisions that point in this direction”.<sup>135</sup> At the risk of sounding overly reductionist, it could be argued that Halle-Neustadt can be viewed as a microcosm of investment not matching outputs, in parallel with another symbol of the GDR’s strive towards modernity, the development of microelectronics. To summarise this story in brief, in the final third of the 1970s this programme consumed some 2 billion marks,<sup>136</sup> and from 1986 to 1989 the microelectronic programme ate up a whopping 14 billion marks in manufacturing, 14 billion marks in research and development, and 4 billion Valutamarks (an internal value calculation unit pegged at the same value as a West German mark) in imports from the West.<sup>137</sup> And as for the result? A 1 Mbit chip presented in 1988 that could store 35 lines of typed script, at a time when Toshiba had released a 4 Mbit chip.<sup>138</sup>

Nevertheless, the improvement in the quality of life of those living in Halle-Neustadt should not be understated. During the 1950s, workers at the Leuna plant lived in poor conditions, with examples including four adults and even four adults and a child being crammed into a room, and a case where two adults and three children were living in a single

---

<sup>134</sup> Bernd Czysch, “Gedanken zur Planung und zum Bau der Chemiarbeiterstadt Halle-Neustadt,” *Deutsche Architektur*, September 1971, 532-534.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 535-536.

<sup>136</sup> Steiner, *The Plans that Failed*, 154.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 180, 97.

<sup>138</sup> Sören Marotz, Elke Sieber, and Stefan Wolle, *DDR Museum Guide: A Companion to the Permanent Exhibition*, ed. Quirin Graf Adelmann and Gordon Freiherr von Godin (Berlin: DDR Museum Verlag GmbH, 2017), 89.

room with an additional kitchen. And even so, these were not the worst living conditions in the GDR at the time; workers of the uranium mines at Wismut had it even worse, being sent to live in the homes of local families who were often quite hostile.<sup>139</sup>

Considering this through the prism of a feedback loop making sure that the outcome of the city was commensurate to the requirements of Halle-Neustadt's workers, it can be seen that the transmission of information back from the most basic level did occur, but also that inputs were not providing the desired outputs.

### Art production

Beyond its positionality as the embodiment of the latest and most refined thinking by East German architects in the general field of design, Halle-Neustadt would also come to embody the ultimate evolution of the SED's own principles in regard to art and culture more generally, and as will become evident, an evolution of the approach to art and culture that contributed to a holistic envisioning of the GDR as a new nation in its own right that whilst drawing from German history conceived of itself as a socialist nation based on modernity, technology, and looking to the future.

Just as the legacy of the past loomed over the GDR, the state actively tried to break with the past in various fields, and art is one way in which this can be analysed. With the proclamation of the Bitterfeld Way in 1959, the SED had formalised its stance on art and artists, with the view that art should be pedagogical in nature, "future-oriented", and explore work and everyday life in a positive manner, with artists being in the service of the state.<sup>140</sup> Additionally, in the early years of the GDR, the SED had sought to collectivise artistic production in much the same way as agriculture and industry, stating that "[t]hese new tasks cannot be met by artists working singly, but call for the collective of artists to learn together, assist, advise, critically assess, as a new driving force in society in the field of cultural work", but by the Bitterfeld conference this approach was abandoned for large-scale projects due to a perceived lack of socialist energy in works produced in such a manner, leading to painters

---

<sup>139</sup> Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic*, 176-177.

<sup>140</sup> Valerie Hortolani, "Self-Portraits and Alter Egos: Styling the Artist in the GDR," trans. Kate Vanovitch, in *Behind the Mask: Artists in the GDR*, eds. Ortrud Westheider and Michael Philipp (Munich: Prestel Publishing, 2017), 31.

again working as individuals rather than in groups.<sup>141</sup> However, by the late 1960s a more open approach championed particularly by teachers at the college in Leipzig such as Bernhard Heisig, Wolfgang Mattheuer, and Werner Tübke had gained a foothold in the GDR, with the use of metaphorical devices and simultaneous depictions of multiple subjects being key in adding depth of meaning to art.<sup>142</sup>

The works of art in Halle-Neustadt can be seen as a microcosm of the synthesis of these various trends in art in the GDR. Whilst there are monuments that harken back to the past, and there are obvious long-standing themes which appear, these are combined with public art that strove to break new ground in artistic style and venerated science and technology. Indeed, Augustine stated that “Cultural technophilia was ultimately extremely important because it played a central role in anchoring the socialist project in national identity.”<sup>143</sup> In that vein of thought, it could be inferred that these art pieces in Halle-Neustadt can be understood as part of the construction of a new, GDR-specific, sense of *heimat*. As a new model socialist city intentionally designed from the ground up, one could say that Halle-Neustadt embodied what the GDR saw as its future, and further from that how the GDR ideally saw itself as a nation. This was a nation in which whilst man might build the city, the city would also mould the personality through its very built form.

A decision made in January 1949 by the SMAD placed all cultural organisations attached to state enterprises under the FDGB, hence giving FDGB cultural representatives the responsibility of organising cultural life in large VEBs and making the FDGB’s cultural magazine the guiding publication for cultural directors.<sup>144</sup>

One of the major fields in which we can see this is the state’s promotion of plastics. The 1958 Chemistry Programme was conceived not only as an industrial one, with Horst Redeker of the Berlin-Weißensee Institute for Applied Art claiming that the Chemistry Programme was “equally a great cultural program [sic], a significant piece of socialist

---

<sup>141</sup> Petra Lange-Berndt, “Art Production in the Plural: Collectives and Collectivity in the GDR,” trans. Kate Vanovitch, in *Behind the Mask: Artists in the GDR*, eds. Ortrud Westheider and Michael Philipp (Munich: Prestel Publishing, 2017), 46.

<sup>142</sup> Hortolani, “Self-Portraits and Alter Egos,” 34.

<sup>143</sup> Dolores L. Augustine, *Red Prometheus: Engineering and Dictatorship in East Germany, 1945-1990* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 252.

<sup>144</sup> Kott, *Communism Day-to-Day*, 73-74.

cultural revolution”, with the view that it would bring plastics and culture into one realm, with designers guiding this through their good taste.<sup>145</sup>

To bring this back to a field more relevant to the development of Halle-Neustadt, the book *Unsere Welt von Morgen* (“Out World Tomorrow”), presented to youths at the *Jugendweihe* ceremony intended to replace confirmation,<sup>146</sup> proclaimed that as early as 1965 wood and steel would become obsolete in construction, with thermoplastic cities instead being poured out.<sup>147</sup> Whilst obviously this did not come to pass, it is clear that there was a push towards innovative new ideas of building construction. Interestingly though, an experimental building known as the *Plasteblock* (plastics block) was actually built on Zscherbener Strasse from 1967 to 1968, which used plastics in place of more traditional materials for its exterior, roof, doors, windows, flooring, interior cladding, and sanitary facilities, although ultimately it was too expensive to replicate this on a mass scale.<sup>148</sup>

Additionally, listed amongst the planned visual art pieces to be displayed in Halle-Neustadt in the commemorative book *Halle-Neustadt: vom Werden unserer Stadt* are a plastic sculpture representing the friendship between peoples to be displayed outdoors and designed by Heinz Beberniß of Halle, as well as a plastic play sculpture to be placed in a children’s playground south of the Gastronom and designed by the Kollektiv Wittman-Leibe, also of Halle.<sup>149</sup>

Nevertheless, even here there are traces of the past. Redeker would use the same critiques that the Bauhaus movement made of early plastics to both criticise the West and argue that plastics should not be used in imitation of natural materials, but instead a fundamentally new aesthetic based on plastics as their own material should be created in the GDR.<sup>150</sup> Despite this, it can be said that in the run-up to Halle-Neustadt’s establishment, the GDR was going through a period of looking to create its own modern aesthetic movement to break free of what it viewed as the failures of past design movements.

---

<sup>145</sup> Rubin, *Synthetic Socialism*, 71.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 104-105.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 108-109.

<sup>148</sup> Jenkins, *Picturing Socialism*, 119-120.

<sup>149</sup> Manfred Müller, Frieder Schlör, and Rolf Bachmann, eds., *Halle-Neustadt: vom Werden unserer Stadt Jahrgang 68* (Halle/Saale: Druckhaus Freiheit, Halle, 1968), 33.

<sup>150</sup> Rubin, *Synthetic Socialism*, 73.

Looking more closely at art in Halle-Neustadt, there are a number of public art features which further display how integrated art was into the city's plan as well as the image of society it sought to create, and talking of public art in Halle-Neustadt as a whole, Jenkins described the city as "the first big test for architectural art at the time when reformist artists were struggling to expand socialist realism".<sup>151</sup> Eric Enge's *Er rührte an den Schlaf der welt (Lenins Worte warden wahr)* ("He touched the sleep of the world – Lenin's words came true") wall mural was completed in 1971 following long negotiations concerning subject and style, having been commissioned the year previously in commemoration of Lenin's 100th birthday. Depicted in the mural are young people studying, raised fists, ears of corn, flags fluttering in the wind, and electrical poles, symbolic of Lenin's reforms to eliminate illiteracy, redistribute land, and electrify the Soviet Union. At the bottom of the composition is a handshake covering an open book, almost like a heraldic motto scroll. Of course, Lenin's face is present and easily distinguishable, but does not overwhelm, making up only one-sixth of the mural.<sup>152</sup>

The wall murals *Die von Menschen beherrschten Kräfte von Natur und Technik* and *Einheit der Arbeiterklasse und Gründung der DDR* (The Human-dominated Forces of Nature and Technology; Unity of the Working Class and Foundation of the GDR), located outside the Education Centre and both part of a greater four-piece series designed and presented by Josep Renau Berenguer in 1969 and completed in 1974,<sup>153</sup> are provocative pieces of modern art. Although there are clear socialist motifs and figures (e.g., a red star, the face of Karl Marx, a builder), these have been rendered in a manner clearly experimenting with form and even potentially entering the realm of abstraction. Indeed, when discussing the theme of science in art in Halle-Neustadt, which Jenkins described as "interpreted in multiple ways and media", he specifically called Ohme's *Chemiebrunnen* piece "abstract".<sup>154</sup>

Additionally, the wall painting *Physiologische Chemie in Forschung und Lehre* displayed at the *Institut für Physiologische Chemie* at Martin Luther University in Halle-Neustadt, whilst being more traditional and realist in artistic style, encapsulates an obsession with science, with its depictions of chemical and atomic models and scientists hard at work in

---

<sup>151</sup> Jenkins, *Picturing Socialism*, 109.

<sup>152</sup> Martin Maleschka, *Baubezogene Kunst DDR: Kunst im öffentlichen Raum 1950 bis 1990*, (Berlin: Dom Publishers, 2022), 317.

<sup>153</sup> Maleschka, *Baubezogene Kunst DDR*, 320.

<sup>154</sup> Jenkins, *Picturing Socialism*, 131.

a laboratory.<sup>155</sup> Indeed, in her book *Red Prometheus*, Dolores L. Augustine claimed that “East Germany dreamt of again becoming a Great Power through technology. SED high-tech policies sought this. This vision was successfully popularized through publications such as *Weltall Erde Mensch*, newspapers, symbolic architecture, comic books, science fiction, participation in the Soviet space program, and television programs. The image of the East German found in the media was of a German tamed through socialism, turned into an unheroic but technically very competent figure.”<sup>156</sup>

On the other hand, not all public art was particularly forward thinking. In the education centre for instance, a replica of the historical armoured train used by Leuna workers in 1921 was set up for display in 1971 (in March 1921, workers occupied the Leuna plant, which then suffered substantial damage following artillery strikes and the retaking of the plant by the *Schutzpolizei*, an event referred to by the guidebook *Architekturführer DDR: Bezirk Halle* as the “heroic class struggle in the year 1921”).<sup>157</sup> <sup>158</sup> Conversely, it can also be understood that this was an exceptional example, as it has been noted that the Leuna armoured train was of such symbolic importance that it was commemorated with the production of models, a much rarer occurrence compared with the standard depictions on postcards and stamps.<sup>159</sup>

One might also consider the public art in Halle-Neustadt through the tool of alienation. With Leuna and Buna works being chemical manufacturers, one can consider the placing of plastic sculptures in public spaces as well as experiments in directly bringing plastics into workers lives such as the aforementioned *Plasteblock* building as allowing workers to experience the final products of their labour, implicitly removing a cause of alienation.

## Cybernetics

Turning back to the idea of breaching into modernity, Halle-Neustadt’s innovativeness can also be considered from the point of technology. Mirroring the concepts present in the field of cybernetics, Halle-Neustadt was designed to be a self-regulating system that would progress the socialist housing concept and the socialist way of life that would ultimately lead

---

<sup>155</sup> Maleschka, *Baubezogene Kunst DDR*, 336-339.

<sup>156</sup> Augustine, *Red Prometheus*, 251.

<sup>157</sup> Böttger, *Architekturführer DDR: Bezirk Halle*, 57.

<sup>158</sup> Peter Michael Rainer, *Mit 250 bar zum Ammoniak: Gaskompressoren im Leuna-Werk 1916-1997* (Wettin-Löbejün: Verlag Janos Stekovics, 2022), 61.

<sup>159</sup> Paul Malmassari, *Armoured Trains: An Illustrated Encyclopaedia 1825-2016*, rev. ed. (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2016), 497.

to the creation a new socialist person, with an overarching control on top of this system to intervene in political and ideological affairs,<sup>160</sup> or, as SED leader in Halle-Neustadt Horst Sindermann put it, “a city in which to live there means happiness for everyone, in which the past would disappear”.<sup>161</sup>

Cybernetics had previously been considered a threat by the GDR, perceived as a plot by Western or American scientists to merge capitalism and socialism. However, it began to gain traction within the GDR after Georg Klaus translated the first books on cybernetics from Russian to German, and younger members of the GDR leadership such as Günter Mittag and Erich Apel believed that cybernetics could be used as a tool for planning and production that merged science and practice and which could be applied to any field. As a result, cybernetics was rehabilitated in 1970 under the name “Marxist-Leninist Organisational Theory”.<sup>162</sup>

This idea of a city as a self-regulating social system was present elsewhere in the socialist world. Written in the late 1950s, *The Ideal Communist City* references how “[the] Marxist conception of social relations together with the recent achievements of certain sciences – cybernetics, information theory, human engineering, and the aesthetics of technology – not only enable us to gain a picture of demography and population movements (the latter with the help of statistics) but able to shape and control social processes.<sup>163</sup> It goes further into what this means for a built city, in a paragraph that is worth quoting at length:

“Applied to an urban environment [...] anyone living in a true communist society should enjoy equally with all others living anywhere in it conditions conducive to self-development and similar creative activity. Analysis of communist premises and our schematic model indicate both the basic social institutions and the phases of individual growth in communist society. This method also allows us to plan the lines of influence of society as a whole on the basis of each person’s or each group’s creative activities.

---

<sup>160</sup> Peer Pasternack, *Zwischen Halle-Novgorod und Halle-New Town: Der Ideenhaushalt Halle-Neustadts* (Haale (Salle): Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg Forschungsberichte des Instituts für Soziologie, 2012), 53.

<sup>161</sup> Jenkins, *Picturing Socialism*, 108-109.

<sup>162</sup> Oliver Sukrow, “Networks: On the Utopian Qualities of Technology, Cybernetics, and Participation in the GDR of the late 1960s,” *GHI Bulletin Supplement* 14 (2019): 95.

<sup>163</sup> Alexei Gutnov et al., *The Ideal Communist City*, facsimile, trans. Renee Neu Watkins, ed. Ute Meta Bauer, Karin G. Oen, and Pelin Tan (Boston, MA: i press incorporated, 1971; Singapore: NTU Centre for Contemporary Arts Singapore, 2022), 16-17.

Identification of the person or group with the social process defines what we mean by the functional structure (social matrix) of the urban environment.”<sup>164</sup>

As such, we can solidly centre the idea of Halle-Neustadt as a cybernetic self-regulating city, the built environment of which was integrated with the creation of a socialist social system and new personality, in a wider international context and parallel with developments elsewhere in the socialist world.

Interestingly, a comparison can also be made with the FRG here. As part of efforts to restructure the Chancellery beginning in 1967, the implementation of computers as part of the administrative system was viewed not only from an economic but also a political point of view, and it was believed that computers would serve as an “aid for the better fulfilment of state tasks”. Not only that, but computers influence social science theories in the BRD, with it being proposed that “[the] decision making person is understood as an information-processing component in an information processing-system, an organisation, similar to a switching unit in a computer”.<sup>165</sup> From a certain perspective, one might even go so far as to say that this new way of “understanding” the role of a human being was not altogether too different in concept from the desire to create a new socialist personality. However, fears that this would expand the powers of the Chancellery and subsume the role of politics under a technocracy abounded.<sup>166</sup>

The obsession with technology was also part of the GDR leadership’s programme in creating a new national identity, specifically in wedding socialism with that identity as technology was viewed as the way towards building a better tomorrow not just by dedicated socialists but also by those who did not regard themselves as part of the “communist identity”.<sup>167</sup> These experiences remind of a similar situation in Czechoslovakia, where the Czechoslovak Building Works and Stavoprojekt adopted many of the organisational systems of the Bat’a Shoe Company (particularly the simulation of market mechanisms within a single entity) as well as the concept of standardised modules used by Bat’a in Zlín. Bat’a had itself

---

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>165</sup> Merle Ziegler, “Bauen ohne Vergangenheit: Staatsarchitektur und Kybernetik in Bonn,” in *Zwischen Sputnik un Ölkrise: Kybernetik in Architektur, Planung und Design*, ed. Oliver Sukrow (Berlin: Dom Publishers, 2018), 59-60.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, 61.

<sup>167</sup> Augustine, *Red Prometheus*, 252.

been influenced here by the American towns of Endicott and Johnson City, also focused on manufacturing shoes.<sup>168</sup> In this we can see again planners drawing on past local examples whilst also recalling foreign templates. Hence, the developmental experience of Halle-Neustadt is by no means unique within the socialist world.

Something else of note is that the idea of Halle-Neustadt as a self-regulating system implicitly returns back to the idea of regulating alienation, since as has been noted previously the prevention of alienation under a socialist system by returning surplus labour to use in the interests of the workers requires knowledge of what those interests are and what is required. Linking with this study's approach to the FDGB, it opens up the idea of the FDGB being an axon of such a feedback system.

### Literature, official publications, and ritual

Another point of interest is how Halle-Neustadt was talked about in the media. Prominent writers such as Erik Neutsch, Jan Koplowitz, and Werner Bräunig wrote of the new cities in a way similar to the official line, portraying them as emblematic of socialist ideals, aspirational, and something to be proud of. For instance, in *Städte machen Leute*, written by Koplowitz and others, one can find the following section: "Even here, the Republic's most modern city will have its center [sic]; perhaps you are standing right at the moment on a twenty-two storey piece of open land. No clump of grass in the area that will experience the next decade. Here, stand where you will, you'll be standing on lined land, dozens of drawings in pencil or ink."<sup>169</sup>

Additionally, Bräunig wrote of Halle-Neustadt as having "no better and worse districts, no privileged and disadvantaged", and even complaining of Berlin's architectural diversity exacerbating such differences that did not exist in the new city.<sup>170</sup> In fact, Berlin's older districts were considered symbolic of capitalism in that they were designed to squeeze as many people as possible into a small space, and officials used the term *das kapitalistische Erde* ("the capitalist legacy") to refer to old slum neighbourhoods.<sup>171</sup> Such an idea was less

---

<sup>168</sup> Kimberly Elman Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1960* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 91-93.

<sup>169</sup> Curtis Swope, *Building Socialism: Architecture and Urbanism in East German Literature* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 220-221.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid, 221-222.

<sup>171</sup> Rubin, "Beyond Domination," 39.

explicitly suggested in magazines of the time, with an article from the October 1968 edition of *Urania* magazine written by Dr. G. Ziegler stating that “In the course of the reconstruction of the cities of Merseburg, Halle and Dessau, socialist city centres are created and at the same time the awkward remnants of the capitalist order are overcome”.<sup>172</sup> There is thus a resultant implication that there were members of the intelligentsia who agreed with the state’s conception of Halle-Neustadt as a new socialist city.

Furthermore, one could even say that Halle-Neustadt was not just a new socialist city, but was being presented as part of a greater overarching attempt to create a new definition of *heimat* in the GDR. Looking again to the article by Ziegler, he wrote the following section that is worth quoting in full: “Leuna ‘owes’ its existence to the close cooperation between the armaments industry and the Prussian-German general staff. During the Second World War, the Leuna and Buna works were armaments companies belonging to the IG Farben concern, in which the latter – not least through the exploitation of prisoners of war – made high extra profits. On the other hand, however, the history of a large part of the chemical industry is directly connected with the struggles of the working class against oppression, exploitation and war (recall the March struggles of 1921). The chemical workers picked up on this tradition when, after 1945, they began to build up and, after the leadership of the Party of the working class, finally took not only these factories but all power into their own hands. Today they master the scientific and technical revolution with great success.”<sup>173</sup>

The specific distinction of a “Prussian-German general staff” implies that this was not part of the historical continuity that the GDR drew from, even if the German Empire was inevitable part of the history of a German state. Additionally, the quotation marks around “owes”, combined with the reference to the “struggles of the working class” and March 1921 incident shows that there was a view that whilst Halle’s chemical industry was built for the military-industrial complex, it was ultimately built with the hands of the workers, and in the post war era its return to the worker’s hands under the leadership of the SED was a rightful one. Finally, of course there is the reference to a bright future, brought about with the power of technology. From all this, there is a clear idea of a specific view of the history of what

---

<sup>172</sup> G. Ziegler, “DDR Bezirk Halle – Zentrum der Chemie,” *Urania*, October 1988, 75.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*, 70-71.

would become the GDR and the nature of this state, and in particular Halle's (and as an extension, Halle-Neustadt's) role in that history of a nation.

Similar sentiments can be found even earlier, in the September 1967 issue of *Armee Rundschaü* (magazine of the National People's Army; NVA), in an article appropriately titled "DDR: Unser Vaterland" (GDR: Our Fatherland), in which Halle-Neustadt is referred to as "our garrison town" and "the youngest city in the Republic",<sup>174</sup> again, setting up the scene of a new socialist fatherland with new communities. And as far back as 1966, *NBI* magazine, still referring to Halle-Neustadt as Halle-West, showed off to its readers a new mural by Willi Neubert, and in an enthused hypophora proposed: "A headline term? Is there really something special about this city? Settlements, new residential quarters have also arisen elsewhere in our Republic, emerging at present. And yet there is something special here: a city with its own character, the city of chemistry. She will look different than all the new cities of the Republic. Not only architects build her, but also painters and sculptors work on her. Stone, bronze, colourful works of art will characterise again and again and each time differently: Halle-West!"<sup>175</sup>

On the other hand, Hermann Henselmann did not write of Halle-Neustadt at all in his travelogue *Reisen in Bekanntes und Unbekanntes* (Travels to the Known and Unknown), despite Halle and Berlin being the main focuses of this work, believing that pieces of "showpiece urbanism" like Halle-Neustadt or Berlin's Unter den Linden and Karl-Marx-Allee primarily served as sets to broadcast political messages both domestically and internationally.<sup>176</sup> Indeed, privately it appears that the even those close to the SED acknowledged that the public was not entirely enthusiastic about new towns like Halle-Neustadt, as visible in notes from meetings of the *Akademie der Kunst* committee on the visits of Mexican muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros.<sup>177</sup> Nevertheless, it must be recognised that people were genuinely excited to move into Plattenbau buildings, as they provided space and modern utilities.<sup>178</sup>

---

<sup>174</sup> "DDR: Unser Vaterland," *Armee Rundschaü*, September 1967, 62-63.

<sup>175</sup> D. H., "Nachbar 'Kunst'," 20-21.

<sup>176</sup> Swope, *Building Socialism*, 201-202.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*, 234.

<sup>178</sup> Rubin, "Beyond Domination," 41.

What is interesting to note is that the FDGB already had a foot in the door as it were even in the early stages of the development of Halle-Neustadt. A report from late 1968 on celebrations in Halle-Neustadt for the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the GDR called for the intensification of various action points including completing children's playgrounds and planting linden trees under the slogan *Schöner unsere Stadt – mach mit!* ("Beautify our city – join in!"). The FDGB, along with the FDJ, DFD (Democratic Women's League), the *Kulturbund*, Urania, the DTSB (German Gymnastics and Sports Federation), and the GST (Sport and Technology Association) were to be involved in these activities. The report also specially noted the role of Leuna and Buna works in developing cultural life in Halle-Neustadt, remarking that the Leuna works were going to hold regular "theatre days", the Buna works planned to hold regular "music days", and that thanks to sponsorship from the two there would be regular events hosting the German State Opera, the Berlin Ensemble, and the Theatre des Friedens.<sup>179</sup> Although the FDGB is just one of a number of organisations listed here, it is clear that cultural events were actually under the purview of individual enterprises, confirming the idea that the *Kulturbund* did not have much input into its namesake events. Additionally, despite the fact that it would be expected that the mass organisations would be involved in an event like the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the GDR, if anything simply to show symbolic mass support of the state, this confirms that the FDGB was important to ritualistic state events.

Similarly, a joint statement dating from 1969 about the elderly showed how much the leadership cared about political rituals and how deeply involved in citizens' affairs the FDGB was. The report, in line with the 8th Congress of the FDGB, called for the union to not only involve citizens who were not organised in the trade union in events and debates but to also exert its influence through local trade union branches to ensure that older workers were also involved in the preparation for company festivals (provided that they were physically able). Union veterans were also to help explain the history of the GDR to younger people. Aside from the FDGB, the joint statement also included the Halle-Neustadt City Council, the National Front, the *Volkssolidarität* (People's Solidarity), the GDSF (Society for German-Soviet Friendship), the DFD, the Red Cross Society of the GDR, the FDJ, the DTSB, Urania, and the territorial administrations, most of which also had their own sections with respective

---

<sup>179</sup> Initiative Programme of the city of Halle-Neustadt in honour of the 20th anniversary of the founding of the GDR, Box AN 1.11, folder Nr. 10 Bd. 2, Stadtarchiv Stadt Halle (Saale), Halle (Saale), Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

tasks.<sup>180</sup> This case in particular shows that the FDGB played an important part in the functioning of Halle-Neustadt as part of the wider welfare state of the GDR, specifically in the sense of reducing the insecurities of a certain disadvantaged demographic and making sure that all were able to be involved in the community.

Looking again at events surrounding the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the GDR, a report from the 25th September 1968 proposed that in light of her diligence at work, completion of a typing course with good results, willingness to take part in further training courses, and her good standing with union members, a comrade R should receive a reward of 75 marks in celebration of Republic Day.<sup>181</sup> Similarly, a minutes report regarding a meeting of the union leadership of a factory touched on various issues including an excess of spaces at a children's holiday camp, an invitation by the city for the union leadership to meet with gastronomic educators, and calling on people to join a competition being held in honour of Republic Day.<sup>182</sup>

## Overview

The two essentially mundane reports on the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the GDR illustrate that the FDGB at the time was functioning as intended, and basically as a trade union should. Minutes were being taken down as usual, action points were being pushed forward, and the interests of members and their families were being upheld. To put it in another way, the communal interests of the state and the individual interests of workers were being balanced through the workings of the FDGB, and individual workers were receiving commensurate remunerations on their labour. As such, the future of Halle-Neustadt as a socialist planned city where alienation would be eliminated and social welfare upheld was looking optimistic. It is interesting to note though that there was a recognition that Halle-Neustadt could not rest on its laurels, with *Deutsche Architektur* reminding that “[if], however, the goals set in the basic concept are not constantly adapted to developments,

---

<sup>180</sup> Joint agreement to implement principles and measures to improve the medical, social and cultural care for the elderly and to encourage their greater participation in social life, as well as about the main complexes of ageing research, Box AN 1.4, folder Nr. 141 1056a, Stadtarchiv Stadt Halle (Saale), Halle (Saale), Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

<sup>181</sup> Award for comrade R on the occasion of Republic Day, Box P547-103, folder Nr 1, Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

<sup>182</sup> Minutes report about the meeting of the factory union leadership on March 6, 1968 at 2 pm in the HO restaurant “Gastronom” clubroom II, Box P547-103, folder Nr 1, Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

contradictions can arise between the programme specifications and the material possibilities.”<sup>183</sup>

Looking broadly at social policy (as has been defined earlier) in Halle-Neustadt and the FDGB’s role in implementing this, the period from 1968 to 1972 appears to be a golden age. The reason for Halle-Neustadt’s construction was explicitly laid out in the commemorative book *Halle-Neustadt: vom Werden unserer Stadt Jahrgang 68* as being “to demonstrate how we envisage improving the living conditions of working people”, with it being entailed that “a modern city is to be created, with numerous housing ensembles, schools, crèches, modern supply facilities, sports and cultural buildings, wide streets, a representative, high-rise building for chemistry towering over all, everything that makes up a new socialist city”.<sup>184</sup> As we have seen in examples illustrated above, there was a clear sense that public art was just as important as the more “traditional” aspects of social insurance in the new socialist city, and was carefully thought out in planning and also implemented in practice. Additionally, the FDGB had an important part to play in the system of social insurance, passing on workers’ complaints and relaying news of their good work to make sure they received help and due rewards.

The general picture of Halle-Neustadt in its early years from 1968 to 1972 is as such utopian with the sense that everything was running as it should. Starting from a clean slate, the new city would embody the new developing socialist society throughout its entire genome. Conceptually based on the newly rehabilitated ideas of the Bauhaus movement and cybernetics, the mistakes of previous planned cities had been ironed out and with these lessons ready to be shipped out to other states in the socialist world like Vietnam. The FDGB had been readily slotted into life in the new city and was running as an integrated part of the overall system, not just as a mass organisation, but as an everyday part of people’s lives.

---

<sup>183</sup> Czysch, “Gedanken zur Planung und zum Bau der Chemiarbeiterstadt Halle-Neustadt,” 536.

<sup>184</sup> Müller, Schlör, and Bachmann, eds., *Halle-Neustadt*, 5-6.



## Halle-Neustadt matures: The “new city” and the FDGB under Honecker, 1976-1978

The second half of the 1970s represent a shift both for the GDR as a whole and for Halle-Neustadt in particular. In national politics, Honecker had by this point settled into his new role as General Secretary of the SED and hence *de facto* leader of the country. Locally, Halle-Neustadt had also had roughly half a decade to mature as a city and a social project.

At this point it is prudent as well to consider the shift in leadership that had occurred in the GDR. Although Ulbricht’s replacement as leader of the GDR by Honecker happened in 1971 (however, Ulbricht retained the position of Chair of the National Council of State, making him formal head of state until his death in 1973),<sup>185</sup> and although Ulbricht had begun pursuing a socio-economic road in piecemeal for the GDR to gain legitimacy,<sup>186</sup> in reality the change did not simply occur overnight. To remove Ulbricht’s remaining powers as afforded to him as Chair of the National Council of State, the Council of Minister’s Law (*Gesetz über den Ministerrat der DDR*) was passed in 1972 which passed powers from the National Council of State to the Council of Ministers. Additionally, as has been mentioned previously, a new constitution was passed which removed references to the “German People”.<sup>187</sup> Finally, it was not until 1975 that the “unity of economic and social policy” was unveiled as a concept, although equally it must be recognised that as early as the VIII SED Congress in June 1971, Honecker had already proclaimed that the country’s “Main Task” would be focused on “raising the people’s material and cultural standard of living”.<sup>188</sup>

Upon taking up the reins of leadership, Honecker implemented a programme that post-1975 became known as the “unity of economic and social policy”, which sought to refocus on consumer goods and welfare.<sup>189</sup> By the mid-1970s, consumer goods of decent quality, variety, and choice were becoming available,<sup>190</sup> and after 1977 in addition to being expanded, the network of *Delikat* and *Exquisit* shops began selling Western goods.<sup>191</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, in 1978 the state was providing cooked meals in schools and factory canteens to between half and one-third of the population, amounting to 7 million meals

---

<sup>185</sup> Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, 36.

<sup>186</sup> Dennis, *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic*, 147.

<sup>187</sup> David Childs, *The GDR: Moscow’s German Ally*, 123-124.

<sup>188</sup> Steiner, *The Plans that Failed*, 143-144.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid*, 144.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid*, 157.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid*, 159.

daily.<sup>192</sup> Politically, the dominance of the SED was essentially unchallenged, and the party's 1976 statute proclaimed it to be the "highest form of socio-political organisation" and the "conscious and organised vanguard of the German Democratic Republic".<sup>193</sup> Even the frayed relationship between the state and the Protestant church seemed to have been somewhat settled with the signing of the Church-State agreement of 6 March 1978 which saw the church concede the victory of the secular *Jugendweihe* over Christian Confirmation and end its active opposition.<sup>194</sup> Yet in the midst of this seeming affluence and robust support, other crises lurked in the background.

Examples of goods and services that had to be restricted in the latter half of the 1970s included street lighting, petrol, and paper, whilst the purchasing of cocoa and tropical fruit with state money was halted. Hoarding of foodstuffs and textiles ensued as prices quietly crept up in 1977, and an attempt to limit the variety of coffee on offer to two with an additional blend mixed with a substitute led to unrest that led the government to backtrack on this policy.<sup>195</sup> Thanks to knock-on effects from the Yom Kippur War, which the GDR believed (with hindsight somewhat naively) that it would be insulated from, the price of the oil that the GDR imported from the Soviet Union jumped from 50% of world market value in 1976 to 80% in 1978.<sup>196</sup> During the period 1976/77, investments as a proportion of economic product (value added) stood at a little under 33%, a drop from the early 1970s, but conversely from 1976 to 1978 military spending shot up to 13% of expenditure, with the arms industry also growing suddenly from 1975.<sup>197</sup>

Nor was the political sphere as secure as it seemed, particularly at the local level. An investigation into conflict at the *VEB Kombinat Schwarze Pumpe* in Hoyerswerda undertaken in 1975 described mass handing-in of FDGB membership booklets in what was described as "the class enemy's ideological invasion for the purposes of hostile activity", and a file discussing the local SED leadership in the Leipzig district denounced "grotesque infringements of the Leninistic norms of party life, a tendency to disregard the unity and purity of the party" and "liberal behaviour inappropriate to party members".<sup>198</sup> The exile of

---

<sup>192</sup> Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 42.

<sup>193</sup> Dennis, *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic*, 188.

<sup>194</sup> Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, 109.

<sup>195</sup> Steiner, *The Plans that Failed*, 159.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid*, 161-162.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid*, 151-152.

<sup>198</sup> Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, 73-74.

the musician Wolf Biermann in 1976 also backfired spectacularly, with a member of the Dresden state theatre noting that “up to 80 per cent of our citizens knew nothing about him, now he has become a hero”.<sup>199</sup>

The number and issues noted in *Eingaben* (“petitions” or “citizens’ communications”) of the time also reflect growing and unresolved crisis. Despite the “unity of economic and social policy”, in 1976 *Eingaben* regarding housing problems made up 46% of those sent to the Council of State, a very minor decrease from the 49% they comprised in May 1967, and from the mid-1970s there was a sharp rise in *Eingaben* concerning social issues from single parents, pregnant women, and working mothers. Additionally, the total number of *Eingaben* increased by 16% from 1975 to 1976.<sup>200</sup>

Other issues arose in the socialist city that Halle-Neustadt sought to be. Like in many other new planned towns in the GDR, crime was much higher in Halle-Neustadt and the areas around Buna and Leuna than in the old city of Halle, with the crime rate in fact a full 20% higher.<sup>201</sup> Additionally, environmental pollution was disproportionately high in Halle, along with Leipzig and Cottbus.<sup>202</sup>

None of this is to say that the GDR at this point was a crumbling wreck threatening to tear itself apart at the seams or that it was completely doomed to failure, although with hindsight it might seem easy to make such an argument. In fact, contemporary opinion polls give us exactly such a picture of a state that was not perfect but that continued to trundle along. In an opinion poll held in February 1976 amongst agricultural workers that sought to find whether they considered the GDR to be performing better than the FRG on a set of parameters, 80.3% said that the GDR performed better in social security, but in regards to income, productivity, leisure, and housing, these numbers dropped to 36.4%, 44.4%, 44.6%, and 47.6% respectively (it should also be noted that the remainder mostly responded with “I can’t say” or “no answer” rather than expressing pro-FRG responses). Other surveys held in 1977 found a majority of people believed that “basic material security” (*Sicherheit der Existenz*) and welfare provisions (*soziale Betreuung*) were better in the GDR, but a mere 13%

---

<sup>199</sup> Ibid, 83.

<sup>200</sup> Fulbrook, *The People’s State*, 278-279.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid, 64.

could bring themselves to say that restaurants were better in their country (to the point where 51.7% honestly admitted that they were simply “unsatisfactory”).<sup>203</sup> Additionally, writing in 1977, Jonathan Steele said of the FDGB that “With the extra and important advantage of a period of steadily increasing prosperity and no political upheavals, such as the GDR has now known for more than ten years, the trade unions seem to have achieved a broadly positive image in people’s eyes.”<sup>204</sup>

But first, let us briefly travel back to events occurring in the transitional period between the conception of the city and its maturation, as it is important to understand the context in which these events were occurring. In 1972 the FDGB demanded that a review on wage policies be undertaken with the aim of erasing existing inequities, and as a result reforms began in 1976 which sought to bring the basic wage back up to the level of roughly 90% of the total wage.<sup>205</sup> This would suggest that in the second half of the 1970s the FDGB continued to hold influence and serve its function as a trade union. The fact that such reforms were passed shows that the FDGB of this time period was certainly not a mere rubber stamp or corporatist organ simply relaying government dictates down to workers, but capable of successfully pushing the desires of the workers into the government sphere. Nevertheless, its limits in this regard should also be recognised; for instance, the 1978 Labour Code did not include the right to strike.<sup>206</sup> As such, it is clear that as has been discussed before, the FDGB was peculiar as a trade union in not being a vehicle of struggle against the State, but rather a measure of cancelling the disconnect between the interests of the individual workers and the general interests of the State.

In his book *Politics and Change in East Germany*, Scharf noted his belief that “an intermittent antagonism” existed between the FDGB and the SED, and also noted that three organisations had been listed as authors of the 1976 wage reform, namely the Central Committee of the SED, the Executive Committee of the FDGB, and the Council of Ministers of the GDR, which Scharf said “[implied] a sort of party-union-government triumvirate”,<sup>207</sup> something which shall be discussed in further detail.

---

<sup>203</sup> Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, 138-139.

<sup>204</sup> Steele, *Socialism with a German Face*, 134.

<sup>205</sup> Scharf, *Politics and Change in East Germany*, 98.

<sup>206</sup> Dennis, *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic*, 204.

<sup>207</sup> Scharf, *Politics and Change in East Germany*, 138-139.

In fact, such friction in the relationship between these party-state organs can be seen even at the local level in a new settlement like Halle-Neustadt. At the 79th meeting of the City Council of Halle-Neustadt, held on the 3 August 1977 in the “J.R. Becher” Clubhouse, Secretary of the FDGB District Board (*Kreisvorstand*) Wedel was invited to be a guest speaker. In the discussions on his speech, it was noted that cooperation between the cabinet of deputies, the FDGB District Board, and the district committee of the National Front could not be described as “satisfactory” (*kann nicht befriedigen*). Furthermore, it called for closer cooperation of representatives of the cabinet of deputies with the WBA (*Wohnbezirksausschuss*; residential district committee, an organ of the National Front). Wedel additionally stated that cooperation between FDGB and enterprise management was not yet sufficient, and the Secretary of the City Council was instructed to work even more closely with the FDGB and the National Front.<sup>208</sup>

From this we can surmise that the situation was one where core planning and development responsibilities were held jointly by the state organs, the FDGB, and the National Front, as implied by Scharf. Yet this is not comparable to the separation of powers in many states. Rather, to compare with the common analogy of the three-legged stool, the power-sharing between the three organisations was more akin to a tensegrity tripod. Each organisation had overlapping responsibilities but seemed to seek to tear away and follow its own path rather than work with the other two, yet structural realities and the political need to appear united in public meant that they had to express notions of cooperation with each other.

Indeed, the record of these minutes subtly displays a disturbing shift in the nature and functioning of the FDGB in what may be described as “bureaucratisation”. From this we can see the FDGB engaging in a sectioning of responsibilities, or arguably a bureaucratic turf war, with the other party-state organs, and losing its grip on its connection with the actual realities of what was happening in Halle-Neustadt. On account of this, the fact that an FDGB official would make such honest comments and criticisms at a meeting involving multiple different organisations is somewhat surprising, as it could undermine their position vis-à-vis representatives of the National Front or the City Council, and could also be considered overly harsh. This suggests that despite the seeming partial breakdown of cooperation between

---

<sup>208</sup> Minutes of the 79th Meeting of the City Council on the 3 August 1977 in the “J.R. Becher” Clubhouse, file 1710 00-03, microfilm Nr 40, Archive Nr 2517, Stadtarchiv Stadt Halle (Saale), Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

different party-state organs, the system of democratic centralism was still being upheld and that at least within internal discussions not visible by the public, there was open discussion on the failings of the organisation.

In a letter from the leader of the District Cabinet for Culture Siebmann (*Leiter des Kreiskulturkabinetts*) to an employee of the Culture Department of the City Council of Halle-Neustadt named Abraham, Siebmann proposed a series of measures in preparation for a district culture festival for apprentices, including the establishment of a working group that would include the Culture Department of the City Council, the Secretary of the District Board of the FDGB for the KSB pump factory, the Secretary of the FDJ District Management for KSB, the head of the district cabinet for cultural work, and the head of events management at the cultural centre. Included as part of the festival would be an exhibition titled “Leisure – Art – Joie de Vivre”, an event discussing evaluations of the apprentices’ performance, and an Apprentices’ Ball.<sup>209</sup> Of interest is the fact that along with representatives of the above-mentioned organisations, cultural institutions of the *Kulturbund* were also included as judges in evaluating the apprentices’ performances,<sup>210</sup> particularly when we consider as mentioned before that in 1949 the SMAD had placed all cultural organisations attached to state enterprises under the FDGB, and in fact, the FDGB’s remit placed it above all other mass organisations in the realm of culture, including even the *Kulturbund* and the *Volksbühne*.<sup>211</sup>

Similarly, a draft resolution detailing a concept for the development of intellectual and cultural life in Halle-Neustadt from 1977 to 1980 laid out various tasks for the FDGB to carry out. With the aim of improving work culture with emphasis on the fields of construction and municipal services (*Kommunalwirtschaft*), the FDGB was to cooperate with permanent commissions of the city council in sharing experiences between enterprises, with the first of such exchanges having been carried out in 1978. Annual cultural offerings were also to be organised again in a cooperative manner between the city council and the FDGB district board. The resolution also suggested that the state, trade union, and FDJ managements could cooperate more closely to improve the quality of festivals held by the Leuna and Buna enterprises to celebrate events such as the 60th anniversary of the Great October Socialist

---

<sup>209</sup> Siebmann to Abraham, 3 January 1978, Box AN 1.15, folder Nr. 39 Bd.1, Stadtarchiv Stadt Halle (Saale), Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

<sup>210</sup> Oppermann, Announcement for the II. District Culture Festival of the apprentices in the district of Halle, 3 July 1978, Box AN 1.15, folder Nr. 39 Bd.1, Stadtarchiv Stadt Halle (Saale), Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

<sup>211</sup> Kott, *Communism Day-to-Day*, 73-74.

Revolution and the 30th anniversary of the GDR. Interestingly, it stated that “[a]ll cultural institutions are obliged in cooperation with the *Kulturbund* to assume their responsibility in the development of intellectual and cultural life in residential areas”.<sup>212</sup>

Again, we see the FDGB playing a leading role in organising cultural life as was its remit, yet the *Kulturbund* was creeping in through ancillary roles, and in some cases had even begun to overstep the FDGB and become the central core in such activities. The fact that this could occur in such important festivals as anniversaries of the October Revolution and the founding of the GDR suggest that the *Kulturbund* was gaining increasingly significant influence and prestige to the detriment of the FDGB. Additionally, the draft resolution called for a culture advisory board to be formed under the city council’s department of culture that would be responsible for coordinating cultural activities, employing existing cultural facilities and capabilities in work, and further developing such capabilities.<sup>213</sup> Again, this shows the FDGB starting to lose its dominance in something that officially was firmly in its domain. As if this was not bad enough, even more embarrassingly, the draft resolution noted the importance of the annual Händel Festival as part of the cultural heritage and tradition of Halle-Neustadt, but also proclaimed that the Halle Philharmonic and the Händel Festival Orchestra were to work on a contractual basis with the Halle City Council only.<sup>214</sup>

Overall, the FDGB in the second half of the 1970s was still in overall command of cultural activities, but new players were entering the arena in the way of the *Kulturbund* and in the case of Halle-Neustadt the city council, even in such prestigious events as the anniversaries of the October Revolution and the founding of the GDR. However, it would not be fair to describe the FDGB as being anywhere near a stage of terminal decline at this point.

Referencing the IX Party Congress, the draft resolution called for the further development of artistic activities for the people as part of a folk-art initiative with the rather cumbersome slogan “[f]or the development of artistic talents, for the development of the people’s creativity – our contribution to the socialist way of life” (*Für die Entwicklung der künstlerischen Talente, für die Entwicklung der Schöpferkraft des Volkes – unser Beitrag zur*

---

<sup>212</sup> Abraham, Draft resolution for a concept for the development of intellectual and cultural life in the years 1977 to 1980, 17 May 1977, file 1710 00-03, microfilm Nr 40, Archive Nr 2517, Stadtarchiv Stadt Halle (Saale), Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany (hereafter cited as Abraham, Draft Resolution 1977-1980).

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

*sozialistischen Lebensweise*). The FDGB again had a part to play here, with the city council to work with the FDGB district board and other social organisations to develop a plan of work in that regard.<sup>215</sup> This involvement in folk art links the FDGB to attempts to develop a sense of *heimat* in the GDR, and shows a turn away from Halle-Neustadt's original public artworks which focused on the new and innovative, as well as scientific progress. From that, one could infer that the GDR's idea of itself had shifted from focus on the future to looking back to draw on the past and regional traditions to construct its concept of socialist nationhood. More broadly, it could also be a sign that there was a turn away from the initial international influences of Halle-Neustadt to a focus on more German-ness. Indeed, the mid-1970s saw an important shift in the conception of the "GDR-nation". The 1974 constitution defined the GDR simply as "a socialist state of workers and farmers" as compared with the 1968 constitution that had considered the GDR to be the socialist state of the German nation, which is to say a part of a nation that would be reunited at some point.<sup>216</sup> Whilst this might seem contradictory in that the GDR was redefining itself as not part of a German nation that should naturally be one yet was pushing folk art, it is important to remember that folk art would not only include "German culture" as a whole but also regional specialities, which would certainly have helped in defining the GDR as distinct against the FRG.

In addition, whilst following the standard Marxist-Leninist definition of a nation (common language, history, customs, mentality of the people, economic life),<sup>217</sup> the SED identified a fundamental difference between socialist and bourgeois nations in their modes of production and the dynamics of their power relations,<sup>218</sup> and in reference to the differences between the FRG and GDR, and specifically the fact that there were now two Germanies, claimed that: "The imperialist bourgeoisie completed their national betrayal by abandoning the unified nation state in the interests of their class rule in a plot with US imperialism and chaining the FRG to NATO. [...] As a result, solely through the fault of imperialism, there is no longer a unified German nation. Two nations have formed on German soil that differ fundamentally from one another. Like socialism and imperialism, they cannot be combined."<sup>219</sup> As such, the contradiction of referencing German culture whilst at the same

---

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> David Childs, *The GDR: Moscow's German Ally* (London: George Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Ltd, 1983), 124.

<sup>217</sup> Hänel, *Fragen und Antworten*, 290.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid, 290-291.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid, 295.

time establishing the GDR as a separate nation was solved through this ideological tool of analysis.

Looking outside Halle-Neustadt, the idea of the FDGB maintain a role as a major figure in arts and culture in the GDR in this time period is broadly supported elsewhere. In a resolution of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the SED titled “Measures to promote artistic folk creativity”, the FDGB is specifically pointed out as an organisation with responsibilities in organising cultural work, declaring that “planning and management of artistic folk creativity is based on the resolutions of the party of the working class through the consolidation of socialist community work between the state organs and all executive boards and directors of the social organisations, in particular the FDGB, the FDJ, and the National Front of the GDR”, whilst the *Kulturbund* is noticeably absent.<sup>220</sup>

Similarly, at the VIII Congress of the Association of Visual Artists of the GDR (*Verband Bildender Künstler der DDR*; VBK) held on the 21 November 1978, Willi Sitte, the organisation’s president, delivered a speech titled “Firmly connected with the Working Class and its Party” (*Mit der Arbeiterklasse und ihrer Partei fest verbunden*). Identifying trade unions as “important customers” (*wichtige Auftraggeber*), Sitte mentions a few examples of cooperation between the FDGB and the VBK including a joint exhibition for the 18th Workers’ Festival, the Workers’ Festival at Suhl, and support from the *LMW Nachterstedt* and the *Kombinat Chemieanlagenbau Staßfurt* enterprises. Complimenting the FDGB, stating that “[the] largest class organisation is a major patron, a generous patron of art”, Sitte declared that “it is our task to get to know and understand the work, the life of the working people even more thoroughly” and referenced obligations made in an agreement with the national board of the FDGB in which the VBK would enter close cooperation with the trade unions. In comparison, the *Kulturbund* is not mentioned even once in his speech.<sup>221</sup>

However, such bureaucratic turf wars were by no means limited to either Halle-Neustadt or this time period. As early as 1964, FDGB leaders at the company level had been noting down greater state influence in trade union affairs, particularly in cultural centres and

---

<sup>220</sup> “Beschuß des Sekretariats des ZK der SED ‘Maßnahmen zur Förderung des künstlerischen Volksschaffens’,” in *Dokumente zur Kunst-, Literatur- und Kulturpolitik der SED 1975-1980*, ed. Peter Lübke (Stuttgart: Seewald Verlag, 1984), 362.

<sup>221</sup> Willi Sitte, “Mit der Arbeiterklasse und ihrer Partei fest verbunden,” in *Dokumente zur Kunst-, Literatur- und Kulturpolitik der SED 1975-1980*, ed. Peter Lübke (Stuttgart: Seewald Verlag, 1984), 618-619.

libraries. Indeed, the head of the Cabinet for Cultural Work (*Kabinetts für Kulturarbeit*) in Halle complained that the “Order on the Rights and Obligations of the VEB” issued during the New Economic System led to “increased efforts by plant managers and economic officials [...] themselves interfering in clearly union affairs, particularly around clubhouses and libraries. Even if the state leaders put forward convincing arguments for their interventions [...], the intervention objectively remains a violation of our fundamental rights”.<sup>222</sup> Nevertheless, we can see that, both in Halle-Neustadt in particular and the GDR more generally, the *Kulturbund* was by no means eclipsing the FDGB in cultural work, and although its grip was relaxing somewhat locally, the FDGB still had a good hold in this field.

Looking at the origin of the focus on folk art, this does not seem to have arisen from within the FDGB itself, with the organisation not being the initiator of the turn towards folk art. The fact that the draft resolution detailing a concept for the development of intellectual and cultural life in Halle-Neustadt from 1977 to 1980 referenced the IX Party Congress, and the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the SED was pointing out the “responsibilities” of the FDGB, it appears that the FDGB was simply taking on orders from above, suggesting that at least in this regard the FDGB was acting as a “transmission belt” for party policy.

The FDGB was also to be involved in work regarding developing the intellectual and cultural life of the youth, with its district board being tasked along with the district leadership of the FDJ to work in cooperation with the city council’s department of culture in developing leadership examples for FDJ brigades at a number of institutions.<sup>223</sup> To understand the importance of this, we must first consider the context of the GDR’s system of education. A key concept in this was the idea of “polytechnical education”, which sought to balance out academic endeavours with what could broadly be described as vocational education, and had an intellectual heritage tracing back to working-class movements in the Weimar Republic-era. From an ideological perspective, this aimed to more closely link workers, teachers, and students. The GDR’s educational system had an important role in the outward representation of the state, as it was the basis for the Finnish educational system and the polytechnical education concept was admired by a number of Western scholars even if it was not adopted

---

<sup>222</sup> Annette Schuhmann, *Kulturarbeit im sozialistischen Betrieb: Gewerkschaftliche Erziehungspraxis in der SBZ DDR 1946 bis 1970* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2006), 105-106.

<sup>223</sup> Abraham, Draft resolution for a concept for the development of intellectual and cultural life.

over the Iron Curtain.<sup>224</sup> Whilst it might seem obvious that the FDGB would be involved in the handling of vocational education, as we have seen with the *Kulturbund* and cultural development, political manoeuvring in the GDR could outflank what seemed to be common sense. The implied international aspect of this endeavour would also give more prestige to the FDGB through its involvement.

Additionally of note, in his autobiography *From My Life*, Honecker devoted a small but highly commendatory section to the FDGB in the chapter “Trust in the strength of the people”, expressing the following opinion which is worth quoting in full:

“In my functions in the party and the state I have always been for the trade unions being able to represent and safeguard the interests of blue and white collar workers in every possible way. As we have already seen, this was of course not just a matter of desk work. I consider encounters with trade unionists and shop floor representatives in factories among the most valuable opportunities to get to know what is going on. Every day they have to represent a multitude of trade union interests. They consider it their task to further the progress of the competition and innovation movement. They deal with work and wages issues, work safety and social insurance, the allocation of homes, holiday places in facilities owned by the FDGB or the enterprises, canteen food, the organisation of holiday camps the children of employees, questions of further education and culture. In our talks they don’t hold back anything. They are responsible people who have the flourishing of socialism at heart and who have to solve many everyday problems. I encourage them to muster up that portion of obstinacy without which trade union representation of interests is not possible. They must never give in when there are difficulties to be overcome. I should not like ever to go without seeing and hearing on the spot how trade unions work for the well-being of working people, how they help to achieve the increased economic performance which we need, or how socialist competition contributes to increased efficiency and quality in production so that the material and cultural standard of living of the people can be raised.”<sup>225</sup>

Clearly then, the FDGB still held enough relevance to be afforded a mention in a high-profile publication targeting an international market, and even though it was a large mass

---

<sup>224</sup> Bruni de la Motte and John Green, *Stasi State or Socialist Paradise?: The German Democratic Republic and what became of it* (London: Artery Publications, 2015), 58-60.

<sup>225</sup> Erich Honecker, *From My Life* (Oxford: Pergamon Press Ltd, 1981), 221-222.

organisation, this was something that was certainly not given, as will be seen later. It also demonstrates the continued importance of political ritual that we have seen prior.

Looking back to the conception of the city and the planned usage of art, the draft resolution stated that “further formation of a developed socialist society requires the role of the arts as an important contribution to personal development and the shaping of the socialist way of life”, stressing the importance of permanent art displays. Specific art projects that were singled out included the “Monument to the Builders of the City” (*Monument der Erbauer der Stadt*) by Professor Martin Wetzels and Eberhard Roßdeutscher, a plastic portrait titled of Boris Jigorow by Gerhard Rommel, a fountain designed with the concept of “Fruits of the Sea” by Hans Rothe, and the interior design of the Restaurant Complex East (*Gaststättenkomplex Ost*) jointly worked on by 23 artists from the Halle and Magdeburg districts. Also as part of this concept, it called on the Office for Urban Planning and Architecture (*Büro für Stadtbau und Architektur*), the Association of Fine Artists, and the city’s work collective to establish an Advisory Board for Urban Design and Fine Arts (*Beirat für Stadtgestaltung und bildende Kunst*) by September 1977 which would be appointed by the city council.<sup>226</sup>

Hence, we can see that the initial idea of Halle-Neustadt having art imbedded in its plan that was present during its conception being continued through the 1970s. Whilst we saw in the conception of Halle-Neustadt there was a clear plan on the placement of art as an integral part of the city, we see here in the late 1970s further development in the formalisation of such a process into the organisational DNA of the city. Indeed, art was so closely integrated into the city that Halle-Neustadt has even been called the “largest open space gallery for art in the public space in the GDR”.<sup>227</sup> Such an idea was not only implicit and hidden in city planning documents, but also outwardly extolled. For instance, the guidebook *Architekturführer DDR: Bezirk Halle* published in 1977 notes that “In Halle-Neustadt, a synthesis of town planning, architecture and fine arts was sought. Large-scale architecture, such as the wall designs at the boarding school, canteen and swimming pool (education centre) as well as the gable design of ‘Lenin’s words’ in Residential Complex I are a significant presence in the urban space.”<sup>228</sup>

---

<sup>226</sup> Abraham, Draft resolution for a concept for the development of intellectual and cultural life.

<sup>227</sup> Maleschka, *Baubezogene Kunst DDR*, 313.

<sup>228</sup> Böttger, *Architekturführer DDR: Bezirk Halle*, 53-54.

Another thing to take note of is that the FDGB appears to have had a lateral method of input into decisions regarding public art in Halle-Neustadt through the inclusion of the city's work collective in the Advisory Board for Urban Design and Fine Arts. Such an arrangement does not seem to have been a given throughout the GDR, as in Leipzig, Karl-Marx-Stadt, and Rostock, the Association of Fine Artists established offices on its own to create contract and procurement policy surrounding the implementation of fine arts in architecture, with these offices networking with other institutions.<sup>229</sup> As a result, it seems that the FDGB had a particularly strong hold on architectural art in Halle-Neustadt, a situation not shared in other cities.

To look again at the bigger picture, the overall image of the FDGB in the latter half of the 1970s that we can gather thus is one of an organisation that was in its golden age, but with signs that this was the ending cusp of it.

Generally speaking, the documents discussed here support the concept of the party-union-government triumvirate proposed by Scharf, and on closer examination it shows less of a system of joint-leadership and more of a dance of three organisations competing in overlapping jurisdictions vying for influence. In that regard, we can also see the continued importance and influence of the FDGB up through the late 1970s, able to push forward legislation on behalf of the interests of its constituents, push back against organisations such as the *Kulturbund*'s attempts to step into areas which the FDGB had carved out and included in its remit, and even having influence in both underlying and overtly international projects. On the other hand, the FDGB seems to have been particularly weak in terms of its control over organising cultural activities in Halle-Neustadt, a peculiarity that does not seem to have been reflected in the wider GDR. Even then, it still held a position of strength in this regard. Additionally, it is important to note that the evidence presented does not suggest anything beyond a bureaucratic tug-of-war as regards the vying for leadership in arranging cultural events or in other aspects of cooperation with the other mass organisations and apparatuses of the state, and the defensiveness of the FDGB in protecting its turf might have instead been the result of the conferment of greater responsibilities to the organisation as per the SED's VIIIth Congress in 1967 as discussed earlier. In particular, the minutes of the 79th meeting of

---

<sup>229</sup> Thomas Topfstedt, "Baubezogene Kunst in der DDR: Ein kulturelles Erbe," in *Vom seriellen Plattenbau zur komplexen Großsiedlung: Industrieller Wohnungsbau in der DDR 1953-1990*, ed. Philipp Meuser (Berlin: Dom Publishers, 2022), 1:113.

the City Council of Halle-Neustadt read less like a debate regarding the role of the FDGB in relation to the other mass organisations and more like a bureaucratic attempt to place blame.

The FDGB's role in developing the idea of *heimat* in the GDR also becomes clearer in this time period, particularly in its involvement in projects concerning folk art. As regards the city itself, Halle-Neustadt retained its original concept of using public art to create a planned community that would create a new socialist personality. Additionally, as compared with the situation regarding cultural activities, the FDGB seemed to have had an unusually strong grip on the implementation of fine art policy in architecture and urban planning in Halle-Neustadt compared with in other cities. However, the shift towards folk art was not a decision made by the FDGB, and is a sign of the FDGB not being fully independent but serving in some cases as a "transmission belt", so if one is to accept Scharf's idea of the party-union-government triumvirate, it is also important to recognise that this was not an arrangement between equals per se.

On the other hand, perhaps the most important sign of a creeping decline is the comparative lack of focus on local grassroots issues, which can be seen in the example in Hoyerswerda where FDGB membership booklets were handed in, suggesting a feeling amongst those involved that the FDGB was not properly representing their interests. From that, it could be inferred that the FDGB in Halle-Neustadt was no longer viewed as bringing together the interests of the State with the individual interests of workers, increasing the feeling of alienation within the latter group, something which is supported by the increased rate of crime in the city.

All of these issues lead into a more general understanding of social welfare (in the GDR-specific sense we have laid out) in the latter half of the 1970s in Halle-Neustadt. As has been elaborated on earlier, the "unity of economic and social policy" promulgated by Honecker has been considered by various historians in the context of being directly involved in the concept of social welfare. Hence, it is necessarily sensible to investigate whether the maturation of the Honecker government and realisation of the shift in leadership had a relevant effect. As regards the FDGB's role in the provision of social welfare, the wage reform of 1976 clearly demonstrated an attempt to provide just remuneration, whilst the organisation of cultural events such as celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution and the 30th anniversary of the GDR, as well as the joint art

exhibitions with the VBK displayed attempts to enrich cultural life, both considered part of the enhancement of social security which was itself considered a component of social welfare in the GDR, as previously discussed. These examples also demonstrate that the FDGB was involved in the provision of social welfare both in its own right and in cooperation with other mass organisations, again taking into account the much broader approach to social welfare in the GDR.

To conclude, whilst describing this as an inevitable beginning of the end would be too extreme a statement to make in the tail end of the 1970s, it is also clear that the role of the FDGB was shifting, and not necessarily to the benefit of its constituents.

## A familiar story?: Decline and decay in the 1980s

The beginning of the 1980s appears to have been marked by hope and enthusiasm based on the passing of the 30th anniversary of the GDR in 1979. The acquisition of consumer goods shows a rosy picture, and in 1980 for every 100 households in the GDR there were 38.1 motorcars, 105 TV sets, 108.8 refrigerators, and 84.4 washing machines, up from 26.2, 87.9, 84.7, and 73, respectively, in 1975, showing a marked increase across the board.<sup>230</sup> The GDR was also insulated from the jump in crude oil prices in the period 1979 to 1989 by Comecon price settings that basically amounted to subsidies from the Soviet Union.<sup>231</sup> Finally, the debt crisis was dealt with thanks to help from the FRG's new CDU-led government, and the GDR was at the peak of its international reputation.<sup>232</sup>

However, this veneer of what looked like a golden age hid increasing problems under the surface that would become more apparent as the decade progressed. Looking to a report from August 1980, operations director Emmerich of the Publicly Owned Enterprise Large Bakery of Halle-Neustadt (*VEB Großbackerei Halle-Neustadt*) noted that “[the] objectives that we have set ourselves in the programme were influenced by the outstanding achievements of the 30th anniversary of the GDR and the decisions and results of the 11th meeting of the Central Committee of our party”, and nine production brigades had competed for the title “area of excellent quality work” However, they did also note that planned savings in working time could not be achieved, and that “due to the complicated labour situation, the planned reduction in overtime could not be achieved in the first half of the year”. Additionally planned improvements to working and living conditions through the renovation of the canteen and dining room could not be achieved due to stagnation in investments.<sup>233</sup>

In a debriefing report concerning the 3rd District Culture Festival of Apprentices in Halle-Neustadt held on the 29 April 1980 as part of a company festival of the District Board of the FDGB, it was noted that the help and support provided by the secretary for culture, education, and sport of the District Board of the FDGB had improved from previous years, and that an agreement had been reached to hold regular future events of the same type as part

---

<sup>230</sup> Steiner, *The Plans that Failed*, 159.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid, 163.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid, 171.

<sup>233</sup> Emmerich, Reporting on the achieved status of the results and other initiatives and activities in socialist competition in preparation for the 10th party congress of the SED in the VEB Großbackerei Halle-Neustadt, August 29, 1980, Box P547-217, folder Nr 16, Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

of these company festivals, despite the fact that the sound systems available lacked professional installation and operation, and a fanfare that was to be held by Buna's fanfare band had to be cancelled due to the inability to secure transport to Halle-Neustadt. One issue that seemed to be of particular concern was serious difficulties in securing catering, which apparently was something that had occurred previously.<sup>234</sup>

Indeed, the 4th District Culture Festival of Apprentices in Halle-Neustadt held on the 5 May 1981 was again supported by the District Board of the FDGB's secretary for culture, education, and sport, and the debriefing report for the event gave special mention to them. Evidently it proved very popular especially with programmes including one titled "Fashion – Hairstyles – Cosmetics" and another with apprentices displaying their skills in driving vehicles. However, the catering issue arose yet again.<sup>235</sup> In the 10th Company Festival that followed, the District Board of the FDGB, the District Management of the *Kulturbund*, URANIA, and the city library arranged a competition to find the ten best brigade diaries, which they called in a joint report "an important part of socialist working, learning, and living". It is interesting to note the specific wording used in the joint report, which stated that "[the] 10th Company Festival is being prepared and organised by the district trade union organisation in the usual manner, in close cooperation with the state organs, the management of the FDJ, the National Front, the *Kulturbund* of the GDR, and other sponsors of cultural work." Additionally, the report stated that "[the] The 10th company festival and the events taking place in Halle-Neustadt in preparation for it are intended to convey a variety of cultural experiences as folk festivals of socialist culture and art in an atmosphere of love for the GDR, joie de vivre and closeness to home [*Heimatverbundenheit vielfältige*] and contribute to the further development of socialist lifestyles and habits." It further noted that "[all] trade union leaders and board members of our district union organisations have the task of drawing up appropriate conditions for realising these goals. The management activity is to be directed towards the fact that the striving for new artistic achievements in the joint work of professional and folk artists is closely connected with the revolutionary art traditions of workers' movement and the intense care and appropriation of the humanistic and

---

<sup>234</sup> Evaluation of the preparation and implementation of the 3rd District Culture Festival of Apprentices in Halle-Neustadt, Box AN 1.15, folder Nr. 39 Bd. 1, Stadtarchiv Stadt Halle (Saale), Halle (Saale), Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

<sup>235</sup> Evaluation of the preparation and implementation of the 4th District Culture Festival of Apprentices in Halle-Neustadt, Box AN 1.15, folder Nr. 39 Bd. 1, Stadtarchiv Stadt Halle (Saale), Halle (Saale), Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

revolutionary cultural achievements of the past and is interpreted in high quality.”<sup>236</sup>

Concrete examples of sponsorship as mentioned in the report can be found in the Halle region, with the Leuna plant sponsoring the painters Erich Lange and Karl-Erich Müller, and VVB Ashelm Halle sponsoring the actor Zeiß-Orwell.<sup>237</sup>

It has been noted that the *Solidarność* problem in Poland raised concerns in the GDR, with seven workers in Thuringia being arrested in 1981 for suggesting that the FDGB should be democratised into a *Solidarność*-esque organisation. In response to the rise of the *Solidarność* movement, the head of the FDGB and member of the SED’s Politburo Harold Tisch denounced *Solidarność* as a “meeting place of anti-socialist, anti-Soviet elements whose hatred of socialism knows no bounds”.<sup>238</sup> In Halle-Neustadt itself, in an information report the District Board of the Union of Food, Luxuries and Hospitality (*Kreisvorstand der Gewerkschaft der Handel, Nahrung und Genuß*), a colleague’s remark that “it is correct that exit and entry to and from Poland is temporarily limited, since our citizens must be protected from the enemy agents operating in Poland, especially those from the FRG” was noted.<sup>239</sup> In another report, it was a worker of the *VEB Großbackerei Halle-Neustadt* that was recorded as stating that “the socialist community of states stands firmly on the side of the PZPR (Polish United Workers’ Party) and the Polish working people and would under no circumstances allow Poland to be separated from this community.”<sup>240</sup>

Interestingly, a report (again from the District Board of the Union of Food, Luxuries and Hospitality) noted that in a personal conversation with chairman Krüger, a colleague surnamed Groß had expressed the opinion that “developments in Poland in particular should be a good reason for us to educate our members to become class-strong personalities who stand by the decisions of the party and help to implement and enforce them through good working days.”<sup>241</sup>

---

<sup>236</sup> Call for participation in the competition for the 10 best brigade diaries from Halle-Neustadt in 1981, Box AN 1.15, folder Nr. 39 Bd. 1, Stadtarchiv Stadt Halle (Saale), Halle (Saale), Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

<sup>237</sup> Schuhmann, *Kulturarbeit im sozialistischen Betrieb*, 76.

<sup>238</sup> Martin McCauley, *Power and Authority in East Germany: The Socialist Unity Party (SED)* (London: The Institute for the Study of Conflict, 1981), 25.

<sup>239</sup> Information report on Union Membership Month October 1980, Box P547-217, folder Nr 16, Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

<sup>240</sup> Information report on union member life in the organisational area HWG – Month November 1980, Box P547-217, folder Nr 16, Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

<sup>241</sup> Krüger, Information report on union member life in the month January 1981, Box P547-217, folder Nr 16, Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

Contemporary writing from Western authors also provides some interesting insights as regards the situation of the FDGB and organised labour in the GDR in the context of the *Solidarność* disturbances occurring in the background. David Childs wrote that East German workers had greater bargaining power due to the labour shortage in the GDR as compared with Poland, and also that due to a bitter feeling that they would not receive help from the West thanks to the historical experiences of 1953 and 1961, as well as similar instances in 1956 in Hungary and 1968 in Czechoslovakia, workers in the GDR were loath to risk their hard-won gains by striking. Finally, he also noted that due to the disdain held for the Poles, it was unlikely that workers in the GDR would seek to emulate *Solidarność*.<sup>242</sup> Whilst the last point in particular might initially seem oversimplistic, such sentiments were shared even at the highest levels of the GDR leadership and in the security services, with some SED members blaming the *Solidarność* disturbances on *Polnische Schlamperei* (“Polish sloppiness”) and Stasi officers describing *Solidarność* as “typically Polish”.<sup>243</sup>

Additionally, shortages in Halle-Neustadt were becoming more acute. A report from December 1980 noted how three department stores were having trouble acquiring vegetables such as brussels sprouts, leeks, and (evidently highly desirable) canned beetroots on time, with pasta, *Kaßlerkamm* (a meat product similar to gammon steak), ribs, roast beef, and roulades being absent from shops entirely.<sup>244</sup>

A shockingly honest confession can be seen in a report dated from the 27 February 1981, which is worth quoting in full: “There are also few opinions and good deeds for the forthcoming X. Party Congress of the SED. Good beginnings, such as B. in the HOG ‘Gastronom’ unfortunately came to nothing again with the change of the object management. This fact proves to us once again that state leaders are not sufficiently aware of their responsibility as political leaders and that the trade union leadership responsible cannot find any suitable partners for targeted political and ideological awareness training for waiters,

---

<sup>242</sup> David Childs, *The GDR: Moscow's German Ally*, 157.

<sup>243</sup> John O. Koehler, *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 77.

<sup>244</sup> Report on the control of the supply of basic foodstuffs until closing time in Halle-Neustadt, December 11, 1980, Box P547-217, folder Nr 16, Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

cooks and other employees in the catering industry.”<sup>245</sup> Indeed Krüger ended his report with the following: “This example shows us how necessary and important trade union discussions are in the groups and that it is precisely in the trade union groups that actual trade union member life must take place. Seen in this way, the union group officials are of exceptionally high importance in the life of our organisation and it is constantly growing, because the union group is the centre where all questions and problems can be openly discussed and advised on.”<sup>246</sup> Despite this acknowledgement of the importance of trade union officials, Chairman Krüger of the District Board of the Union of Food, Luxuries and Hospitality noted the problem of not having trained enough young trade union cadres in his report on preparations for the 1980/1981 trade union elections.<sup>247</sup>

A report from the District Board of the Union of Employees of State Organs and the Communal Economy (*Kreisvorstand der Gewerkschaft der Mitarbeiter der Staatsorgane und der Kommunalwirtschaft*) dated 1 July 1986 noted that there were no “special occurrences” in the previous 90 days, and citizens’ petitions were limited to two letters asking for help regarding individual problems, namely an issue with pay grades and a request to access support for childcare, both of which are reported to have been solved. Although a 90% drop in proposals was noted, the degree to which proposals had been realised had significantly improved. Regarding suggestions for improving work and living conditions, some issues noted included insufficiently warm working environments due to renovation and inspection of the heating systems as well as problems in housing, but ultimately nothing too serious.<sup>248</sup>

Conversely however, a report dated 14 January 1987 from the same District Board regarding special occurrences and citizens’ petitions revealed many disturbing incidents. First on its agenda was the fact that two people had given in their resignations from the municipal city lighting facility on the grounds that they had submitted applications to leave the GDR. There was also a break-in at the local recreation facility where a cassette was stolen. Additionally, a conflict had occurred on the 15 June 1986 due to a collective not receiving

---

<sup>245</sup> Krüger, Information report on union member life in the month February 1981, Box P547-217, folder Nr 16, Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Krüger, Information report on political-ideological and cadre preparation for the 1980/81 trade union elections, October 2, 1981, Box P547-217, folder Nr 16, Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

<sup>248</sup> Re. info-request for half-year analysis regarding special occurrences, citizens’ petitions, and suggestions, notes, and criticisms, July 1, 1986, Box P547-225, folder Nr 20, Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

work orders and hence its workers essentially having a reduction in their pay. Also worrying was the fact that the report noted that no citizens' petitions were received at all.<sup>249</sup> Looking broadly, the two reports were from the same organisation and in fact seem to have been written by the same person, so there would appear to be little reason for them to have lied that generally things were going fine only to suddenly recant just half a year later.

In a report covering happenings in January 1989 written by then-chairman Seifert of the District Board of Union of Food, Luxuries and Hospitality, it was noted that workers at the *Großbackerei* were incredulous at an article in *Freiheit* that reported on the manufacture of pyrotechnics, which they considered to be completely unnecessary, raising the opinion that the 8 million marks spent in that endeavour could have been put to use elsewhere.<sup>250</sup> Yet a report from the 6 February 1989 by the District Board of the FDGB of Halle-Neustadt continued to suggest that nothing negative of note was occurring, waxing lyrical about how the visit of the Swedish President-Minister to the GDR had led to a rise in patriotism amongst medical workers who were “proud ‘that the GDR can refer to the successful maintenance and preservation of cultural heritage’”, the fact that 18,000 trade unionists in Halle-Neustadt had pledged themselves to be willing to “actively participate in the further realisation of the SED’s policy aimed at the well-being of the people and peace”, and that workers at the *Großbackerei* pledged to use CAD/CAM workstations to free up energy for other tasks.<sup>251</sup>

Clearly, there was a disconnect, and of particular interest is a report penned by Deputy Chairman Günzel of the District Board of the FDGB of Halle-Neustadt, which states that a topic of discussion was the cessation of subscriptions to Sputnik magazine, with a construction worker of the district trade union organisation stating that: “That is correct! We don’t have to publish such political rubbish in our republic. We have more than enough with the FRG-television.”<sup>252</sup>

---

<sup>249</sup> Info-request 2nd half-year 1986 regarding special occurrences and citizens' petitions, January 14, 1987, Box P547-225, folder Nr 20, Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

<sup>250</sup> Seifert, Information report for the month of January 1989, February 2, 1989, Box P547-102, folder Nr 11, Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

<sup>251</sup> Günzel, Information report on the content and progress of the trade union general meetings in January 1989, February 6, 1989 Box P547-102, folder Nr 11, Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

<sup>252</sup> Günzel, Information report on the content, course and results of the trade union general meetings in KGO in November 1988, December 5, 1988, Box P547-102, folder Nr 11, Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

It would appear that some trade unionists expressed their frustration through apathy, as seen in the monthly report on union membership life for January 1989 from the *VEB Getränk kombinat Dessau*, which included only two lines, both under the section “assessment of the general meeting and the opinions of the members on current political issues”: “discussion cadre [squad] set up” and “internal problems”,<sup>253</sup> though this still does not compare to another report dating back to September 1988 from the *VEB Großhandel OGS Halle Stammbetrieb*, which was blank save for the printed template itself!<sup>254</sup> This is not to say that such an attitude was entirely pervasive throughout, as a similar report for the same month from the *Handelsorganisation* (HO) in Halle-Neustadt included a much more detailed account of the meeting at hand, with emphasis put on how every worker had a chance to put forward suggestions.<sup>255</sup>

The period around May Day of 1989 saw little cause for celebration. Shortages of even basic products including meat, vegetables, fruits, and the whole range of household chemical products were reported, beer could not be carbonated due to a shortage of carbonic acid, goods were being spoiled due to discontinuous operation of refrigeration units, and to top it all off, what was described by one trade union group as the state management’s “rejection of glasnost and perestroika” was leading to workers becoming uninterested in political events. This is evidenced by the fact that whilst the growth of neo-Fascism was listed on the agenda for discussion at a meeting, nothing could be recorded of it.<sup>256</sup>

A report for the Board of the FDGB from June 1989 on the *Handelsorganisation* in Halle-Neustadt depicted a sorry state of affairs. Despite the completion of renovations at two department stores, one had experienced serious difficulties in the process due to shortages of both workers and building materials, and sales had been affected in another shop due to what was described as “heavy moisture penetration phenomena” (i.e., a leak), with the simple solution of setting up “water containers” being considered problematic as it would entail

---

<sup>253</sup> VEB Getränk kombinat Dessau, Monthly report on union membership life January 1989, Box P547-102, folder Nr 11, Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

<sup>254</sup> VEB GH OGS Halle Stammbetrieb, Monthly report on union membership life September 1988, Box P547-102, folder Nr 11, Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

<sup>255</sup> Handelsorganisation, Monthly report on union membership life January 1989, Box P547-102, folder Nr 11, Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

<sup>256</sup> Monthly report on union membership life May 1989, Box P547-102, folder Nr 11, Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

extra work and also potentially lead to goods spoiling.<sup>257</sup> The political-ideological situation was not much better, with a report from the same month from chairman Seifert of the District Board of the Union of Food, Luxuries and Hospitality revealing that discussions at the *Großbackerei* following on from municipal elections in Halle-Neustadt included questions asking whether the GDR represented an “island” within the socialist camp, as well as much discussion on the situation in the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, and China (exactly what these discussions entailed was not recorded though),<sup>258</sup> rather ironic considering that it was Poland that had been considered to be at risk of being separated from the socialist world in 1980.

Yet despite all of these problems, in some aspects Halle-Neustadt was still doing better than Halle (Saale) itself during the 1980s, partially due to the fact that priority for the construction of new large-scale housing was focused on the former, with Thomas Topfstedt complaining in 1988 that apart from “the exception of the Schülershof building area (1964-1970), which was gained through demolition, no new residential areas were created [in Halle (Saale)] before the 1980s, while the old building stock increasingly fell into disrepair.”<sup>259</sup>

Nevertheless, these reports point towards an increasing sense of alienation amongst the workers of Halle-Neustadt, as well as a seeming lack of capability from the FDGB to resolve these issues, which particularly intensified in the second half of the 1980s. The shortages which led to a lack of even basic foodstuffs as well as cuts to work orders that were essentially cuts to pay would have created fertile ground for an increasing feeling amongst workers that what they received from their labour was not what was deserved. Additionally, the focus of the State authorities (as represented by the senior district management of the FDGB) on such issues as growing neo-Fascism and pursuing concepts of peace did not align with the individual workers, not only in the private sense but also in their work. Overall, this would thus have led to an increased sense of alienation amongst the workers, which can also be seen in the apathy of some FDGB branches during meetings.

---

<sup>257</sup> Monthly report on union membership life June 1989, Box P547-102, folder Nr 11, Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

<sup>258</sup> E. Seifert, Info-report for the month of May, June 2, 1989, Box P547-102, folder Nr 11, Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

<sup>259</sup> Philipp Meuser, “Komplexe Rekonstruktion in der Altstadt von Halle (Saale),” in *Vom seriellen Plattenbau zur komplexen Großsiedlung: Industrieller Wohnungsbau in der DDR 1953-1990*, ed. Philipp Meuser (Berlin: Dom Publishers, 2022), 2:323.

There is a possible explanation for the disconnect between the higher-level FDGB functionaries and their comrades on the shop floor that requires some context. In 1966, an organisation called *Kommerzielle Koordinierung* (KoKo) was created that aimed at acquiring as much hard currency as possible for the GDR. KoKo would become a buttress for the state economy to lean on, but in reality, could only function as a firefighter dealing with individual problems rather than as a broad solution for the country's economic woes in general. Adding to these troubles was the fact that from 1976 KoKo was subordinated only to Honecker and Günter Mittag (secretary of the Economic Commission), and was assigned to Erich Mielke (Minister for State Security).<sup>260</sup> In essence, what we can see here is a situation where the workers on the ground and their shop stewards knew what the grassroots reality was and the serious problems they were facing personally, but might not be able to connect the dots due to only having information relevant to them, and only the extreme top level of the political establishment having the full picture. In the middle then were the higher-level FDGB functionaries who were essentially removed from both, and thus had an image of the situation that was completely disconnected to actual material reality, creating a rift in the system.

Another additional point of interest which can be seen not only in issues surrounding Halle-Neustadt but also more broadly across the GDR is the sanitation of the FDGB from publications in the late 1980s. An article titled “Ein Freundschafts – Geschenk zum Spielen” (A Friendship – Gift to play with) from the January 1987 edition of the magazine *Wohnen im Grünen* discussing the joint collaboration of the FDJ and visiting workers from Ufa in the Soviet Union to build a new playground in Halle did not mention the FDGB at all, despite the fact that the input of the city council was noted and the *Straßen-, Brücken und Tiefbaukombinat* (Road, Bridge, and Civil Engineering Combine; SBTK) provided material and technical support.<sup>261</sup> In September 1988, *Neues Leben* ran an article about the Leuna Workers' Youth Theatre that again focused instead on the role of the FDJ, despite the fact that the theatre was housed in the Workers' Clubhouse, the title of the article was taken from a note posted on the notice board of said facility, and the members of the theatre travelled to perform at the Workers' Festival in Frankfurt an der Oder.<sup>262</sup> Finally, the book *Sozialismus in der DDR 2000: Gesellschaftsstrategie mit dem Blick auf das Jahr 2000* (Socialism in the

---

<sup>260</sup> Steiner, *The Plans that Failed*, 154.

<sup>261</sup> Michael Weiß, “Ein Freundschafts – Geschenk zum Spielen,” *Wohnen im Grünen*, January 1987, 38.

<sup>262</sup> Ines Söllner, “Hier wird nichts vertuscht,” *Neues Leben*, September 1988, 18-19.

GDR 2000: Society strategy with a view to the year 2000) published in 1988 made no reference to the FDGB at all!

So were the 1980s, traditionally seen as the waning years of the GDR characterised by decay, as such in Halle-Neustadt? For a start, there was clearly a disconnect between the senior district management of the FDGB and those in workplaces. Aside from different focuses, with senior district management seeming to care more about much more abstract focuses such as international peace and fighting neo-Fascism, local FDGB representatives in workplaces were concerned with more practical matters such as shortages of goods and workplaces falling apart, sentiments which seemed to be shared by workers. This disconnect was made evident by the fact that senior district management seemed to be living in a world of their own, divorced from reality and doggedly convincing themselves that whilst there may be problems, things were generally running as intended.

Potential reasons for such a situation are discussed in Eszter Bartha's article "Workers against technocrats" which looks at attempted economic reforms with the case study of the Carl Zeiss Jena plant. In it she shows that middle management could find themselves at the mercy of the biddings of those from higher-levels, stating that "the local organs 'normally' were not in the position to criticise a cadre, in whom the higher party organs placed their trust", with higher-level party leadership blaming management for employees' lack of information,<sup>263</sup> and had a policy which meant they simply would not blame workers but expect middle management to deal with problems by giving some concessions be it in the form of pay rises or leniency towards certain behaviours.<sup>264</sup> They also found themselves under attack from an unsympathetic grassroots, with Bartha stating that "workers, then, defiantly – we can even say, militantly – refused to accept Taylorist practices [...] workers also refused to side with the 'Taylorist' technocrats, and this double pressure – at least domestically – severely curtailed the effect to which the reform could have been carried out."<sup>265</sup>

---

<sup>263</sup> Eszter Bartha, "Workers against technocrats: The failed economic reform and the rise of consumer socialism in the German Democratic Republic," *Business History* ahead-of-print, no. ahead-of-print (2022): 8.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*

Additionally, the relevance of individual union branches could be closely linked with personality, specifically how enthusiastic the branch secretary was in fulfilling their duties, as has been seen from some of the more austere reports submitted from branch meetings. The apathy shown by these branches also points to an increasing sense of alienation amongst the population in Halle-Neustadt. At a more general level, political control had become a more serious problem during the 1980s, partially due to the influence of *Solidarność* in Poland, as well as the expression of feelings by the middle of 1989 that the GDR was increasingly becoming alone in the socialist world (presumably in its hard-line stance against *glasnost* and similar reforms).

Both in Halle-Neustadt in particular and in the GDR more broadly, it is clear to see that the FDGB was losing its political weight from the fact that it was simply not being talked about in publications, which can be interpreted as a refusal to even play lip service to the idea that the FDGB was a serious governing partner together with the SED and Council of Ministers, contrasting with its previous role as part of a *de facto* triumvirate with those two entities during the 1970s.

As a whole then, the story of the FDGB in Halle-Neustadt during the 1980s generally follows the traditional narrative of the GDR in that time period, with a sudden precipitous collapse from its prosaic functioning during the latter half of the 1970s.

## Generalisation

Having now looked at the history of Halle-Neustadt and the role the FDGB played in it, what generalisations can we take away to further build up the broader understanding of the FDGB and planned cities throughout the GDR? Let us begin first by picking out the peculiarities of the situation in Halle-Neustadt.

Whilst the general plan for Tol'iatti may have been considered something of an ultimate blueprint for Soviet and GDR students of urban planning to pour over,<sup>266</sup> ultimately, Halle-Neustadt came after it and continued to evolve, further developing the conception of the planned city in the GDR. As such, could we consider Halle-Neustadt to be the perfection of the socialist planned city?

For instance, unlike as had happened in Eisenhüttenstadt, Hoyerswerda, and Schwedt, a conscious decision was made in Halle-Neustadt to establish a *Beirat für bildende Kunst und Baukunst* (Council for Art and Building Art) to organise in advance the commission and placement of artwork throughout the city as opposed to simply dispersing art in an *ad hoc* fashion as had occurred before.<sup>267</sup>

Halle-Neustadt stood alongside Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, and Karl-Marx-Stadt (now Chemnitz) as one of the cities of the GDR in which the synthesis of art and architecture, with the book *Kunst und Architektur: Baugebundene Kunst in der DDR* (Art and Architecture: Building-Related Art in the GDR) claiming that this was part of a new conceptual approach to urban design, stating that “[the] city is a living, constantly renewing, and at the same time constant organism, a field of tension between diverse individual and social interests, always in motion and change, and art as one of its elements will also be in constant motion and change always reflecting the spirit and face of their epoch in new ways.”<sup>268</sup>

Writing in 1971 in *Deutsche Architektur, Diplom-Arch.* Bernd Czysch proclaimed that “planning ideas call for new considerations of the urban structure of Halle-Neustadt in order to incorporate the knowledge and experience gained and to define new structures”, further going on to say in reference to the challenge of building for a city with a young demographic,

---

<sup>266</sup> Siegelbaum, “Modernity Unbound,” 73.

<sup>267</sup> Jenkins, *Picturing Socialism*, 109-110.

<sup>268</sup> Topfstedt, “Baubezogene Kunst in der DDR: Ein kulturelles Erbe,” 1:113.

“[the] construction of multifunctional facilities was a first step towards being able to steer this development. Is that enough? We think not! We are of the opinion that the programmes have to be adapted to this problem in order to adapt the city to the changing living conditions of the population groups.” Finally, Czysch asserted that “the city structure should be designed on the basis of our economic means, using all the capacities of the client, the preparation, project planning, and construction in such a way that it fulfils today’s programmes and can make later changes possible. However, the prerequisite is a clear objective that is not limited to guidelines, standards and defined programmes, but also takes further social development into account, which can then be implemented in reality in a joint effort by all those involved.”<sup>269</sup>

Clearly then, we can see that the idea of the planned city was still developing with the growth and evolution of Halle-Neustadt. Perhaps then, whilst Halle-Neustadt might not have been the perfected form of the planned city, seeing that it was still undergoing changes, but it shows that it was part of further innovation and that Tol’iatti was not the be all and end all. Further from that, we can conclude then that planned cities in the GDR were not necessarily direct copies of Soviet practice, and could have a specifically East German flavour to them.

The fidelity to the consideration of the placement of art as well as promotion of cultural activities can be viewed through the lens of the GDR’s social policy and its unique “welfare state” model.

The FDGB in Halle-Neustadt also had its own particular strengths and weaknesses, specifically as regards its role in culture, with its authority on organising cultural events gradually slipping to the benefit of groups such as the *Kulturbund*, but retaining a high level of control over architectural art that was not necessarily shared by branches in other cities. Rather unsatisfyingly, there is little to suggest that this was caused by anything other than simple circumstance, for example due to the Association of Fine Artists not opening an office to coordinate architectural art in Halle-Neustadt.

The broader implications that we can infer from looking at Halle-Neustadt to apply more widely throughout the GDR include a confirmation of the narrative that the 1980s were

---

<sup>269</sup> Czysch, “Gedanken zur Planung und zum Bau der Chemiarbeiterstadt Halle-Neustadt,” 537.

a period of terminal decline, as seen by the internal problems the FDGB had between its higher management and its grassroots representatives.

The FDGB's role in cultural work in Halle-Neustadt can also be seen as a microcosm of the development of a new sense of *heimat* in the GDR. From the obsession with science and technology in the late 1960s and early 1970s, to the shift towards folk art events in the second half of the 1970s, we can see a shift in how the GDR wanted to define itself as a nation.

## Conclusion

What can we conclude from the case of Halle-Neustadt in how the FDGB functioned as a trade union, and how it served in helping control the problems of alienation? Overall, the FDGB served as an effective regulatory device to manage the interests of the state and workers up through the 1970s. However, the severe split between its higher levels and its representatives on shop and factory floors during the 1980s proved its undoing. With upper management seemingly unwilling to recognise the growing acute problems, apathy set in. Halle-Neustadt itself should have also served as part of this self-regulating system, as we have seen that there was an expectation that the city would change as its situation developed. Whilst it might be easy with hindsight to point to the early funding issues in the city and to say that its collapse was inevitable, this is an unfair assessment.

This idea of the FDGB and Halle-Neustadt as elements of a holistic self-regulatory system, with its links to the precepts of cybernetics, can be understood through the lens of the GDR's broad concept of social welfare, and by extrapolation, the management of the causes of alienation. It is clear that Halle-Neustadt itself and the FDGB in the city certainly aimed for the lofty goals of providing a form of social welfare that encompassed such aspects and intellectual, cultural, and social standards. Projects such as the *Plasteblock* and public art made from plastics which brought the products of the workers at the Leuna and Buna plants to their living spaces, directly reconnecting them to the products of their labour show this, and particularly in the early years of Halle-Neustadt, the FDGB directly pushed for just remuneration and rewards for the workforce.

How effective Halle-Neustadt as a built environment and the FDGB as an organisation in Halle-Neustadt ultimately were in countering the causes of alienation is another issue altogether. Even at the beginning of the city's life there were concerns regarding a lack of sufficient investment, and even by the demise of the GDR the city was arguably incomplete, with a planned Palace of Culture never being built, and the city centre that was to be Halle-Neustadt's shining glory remaining a neglected plot of land until the 1990s.<sup>270</sup> The efficacy of FDGB branches was very much correlated with the enthusiasm of its shop stewards, as is clear in the evidence presented, and its middle-management found itself in a limbo where

---

<sup>270</sup> Peer Pasternack, "Das Betriebssystem einer sozialistischen Stadt: Halle-Neustadt 1964-1989 – Eine Rekonstruktion," in *50 Jahre Streitfall Halle-Neustadt: Idee und Experiment. Lebensort und Provokation*, ed. Peer Pasternack (Halle (Saale): Mitteldeutscher Verlag GmbH, 2014), 28.

they had neither all the strategic information of the higher-level national leadership and also lacked the on-the-ground picture available to shop stewards, with these issues creating serious problems evident in the 1980s. This image of middle-management being sandwiched between unsympathetic workers and higher-level leadership follows a pattern that has been recognised by other scholars, as evidenced by Eszter Bartha's article "Workers against technocrats" that displays similar themes at the Carl Zeiss Jena plant as previously mentioned.

Halle-Neustadt can then be interpreted as a case study in which the GDR had set up goals and therefore expectations amongst its citizens which it simply could not materially achieve, with views towards providing citizens with a kind of social welfare broader than that traditionally conceived, but without the means to make good on these promises. As a result of these numerous approaches that have been used through this investigation which intersect with many different fields, other avenues of enquiry have been opened up as well. Whilst the art history of the GDR has been documented in considerably depth in recent years, this investigation has unearthed a connection between arts and cultural production with the FDGB, something outside the scope of this project but worth further inquiry.

The idea of cybernetics and its impact on city planning is another topic worth consideration. Whilst there have been explorations into the use of cybernetics in cities, as with Maros Krivý's work on Etarea, there has not been much written on cybernetics being integrated into a city not in the sense of the use of computers and technology, but rather with the city structure and built form itself being a feedback system, particularly in the sense of enacting social change. Although Peer Pasternack outright states that in Halle-Neustadt, "city construction was intentional, took place in a cybernetic mode, aimed at realising a 'socialist way of life' and was valid from 1964 to 1989",<sup>271</sup> there is little further in-depth analysis of this. Additional comprehensive analysis of Halle-Neustadt in comparison to the tenets laid out in *The Ideal Communist City* could thus be fruitful.

Another aspect that has been raised in this investigation is the idea of the socialist city and its development during the global 1960s. As is evident from what has been discussed of Halle-Neustadt's development and its pedigree as a planned city in a post-war socialist state,

---

<sup>271</sup> Pasternack, *Zwischen Halle-Novgorod und Halle-New Town*, 5.

there was cross-pollination of ideas regarding urban planning and the development of such principles not just within the socialist world but across the other side of the Cold War divide as well. An inquiry into what defines a socialist planned city and how that definition developed would certainly be of benefit for the field. Additionally, the collapse of the Eastern European socialist states has resulted in a situation where some socialist planned cities are now located in post-socialist states, whilst others in Asia exist in socialist states that have adapted to contemporary circumstances. Study into what this means for these cities and their development would thus be another topic of interest, and there has begun to be such works being published in the field, such as Christina Schwenkel's *Building Socialism: The Afterlife of East German Architecture in Urban Vietnam*.

Overall, to return to the concept put forward at the start of this investigation, Halle-Neustadt and the FDGB's role in the city are in many ways both exceptional and normal. In many ways, the city follows the standard narrative we understand of the GDR, especially in regards to decay during the 1980s. Similarly, Halle-Neustadt follows the story of inordinate spending for disappointing results that have been seen in other projects pursued by the GDR, such as microelectronics. However, Halle-Neustadt can also be considered exceptional in that things were not as bad in Halle-Neustadt compared with other areas of the GDR, as has been seen when setting crime statistics in Halle-Neustadt and the original city side by side. Additionally, the clout that the FDGB had in Halle-Neustadt as regards the cultural sphere is of particular note, especially as much of the public art in the city invoked ideas of a certain conceptualisation of what the GDR as a socialist nation stood for, and created a very particular idea of what it was as *heimat*.

In the final analysis, this investigation has shown that there is an entire field waiting to be explored regarding the connections between industry, culture, and mass organisations in the GDR. The case study of Halle-Neustadt has demonstrated the transnational aspect of the study of the history of socialist Eastern Europe, firmly countering the idea of their isolation. Whilst in some ways traditional narratives regarding decay (specifically looking at the 1980s) have been upheld, it should be clear at this point that the totalitarian approach to history can be buried as a polemical and ultimately obsolete viewpoint. Through the use of a certain understanding of the welfare state, as well as analytical tools such as the concept of alienation, this study of the GDR has built on existing trends that have emerged in the field of the history of the GDR as evidenced by works such as Mary Fulbrook's *The People's State*

and uses tools that are being rediscovered and re-evaluated for their usefulness as in Eszter Bartha's *Alienating Labour*.

As a whole then, this investigation has synthesised many different strands and approaches that have been developed since the opening of the former GDR to the historical field to create a fusion greater than the sum of its parts. Whilst not providing a general overview of the FDGB as an entire organisation, it has certainly built up a greater understanding of it outside the tired stereotypes of an impotent puppet and displaying the influence it had in certain locales, as well as showing how built environments guided by such directions fit into the holistic view of social welfare as understood within the GDR. Last but not least, it has opened up another field in terms of the transnational connections and developments of socialist cities. Whilst outside its scope, further investigation would yield fruitful insights for the field of socialist urban planning and social development.

## **Bibliography**

### Archival sources

Box AN 1.15, folder Nr. 39 Bd. 1. Stadtarchiv Stadt Halle (Saale), Halle (Saale), Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

Box P547-102, folder Nr 11. Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

Box P547-103, folder Nr 1. Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

Box P547-217, folder Nr 16. Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

Box P547-225, folder Nr 20. Abteilung Merseburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Merseburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

Initiative Programme of the city of Halle-Neustadt in honour of the 20th anniversary of the founding of the GDR, Box AN 1.11, folder Nr. 10 Bd. 2, Stadtarchiv Stadt Halle (Saale), Halle (Saale), Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

Joint agreement to implement principles and measures to improve the medical, social and cultural care for the elderly and to encourage their greater participation in social life, as well as about the main complexes of ageing research, Box AN 1.4, folder Nr. 141 1056a, Stadtarchiv Stadt Halle (Saale), Halle (Saale), Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

Microfilm Nr 40, Archive Nr 2517. Stadtarchiv Stadt Halle (Saale), Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

### Published documents, contemporary sources, and memoirs

“Beschuß des Sekretariats des ZK der SED ‘Maßnahmen zur Förderung des künstlerischen Volksschaffens’.” In *Dokumente zur Kunst-, Literatur- und Kulturpolitik der SED 1975-1980*, edited by Peter Lübbe, 358-362. Stuttgart: Seewald Verlag, 1984.

Böttger, Dietrich, ed. *Architekturführer DDR: Bezirk Halle*. Berlin: VEB Verlag für Bauwesen Berlin, 1977.

Czysch, Bernd. “Gedanken zur Planung und zum Bau der Chemiarbeiterstadt Halle-Neustadt.” *Deutsch Architektur*, September 1971.

“DDR: Unser Vaterland.” *Armee Ründschaii*, September 1967.

“Die asoziale Lebensweise.” In *Jugend zu zweit*. Leipzig: VEB Bibliographisches Institut Leipzig, 1985.

*Directives issued by the 11th Congress of the SED for the Five-Year Plan for the GDR’s national economic development 1986–1990*. Dresden: Verlag Zeit im Bild, 1986.

- “Freier Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (FDGB).” In *Arbeitsrecht von A bis Z*. Berlin: Staatsverlag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1983.
- H., D. “Nachbar ‘Kunst’.” *NBI*, June 1966.
- Hänel, Dagmar, ed., *Fragen und Antworten zum Programm der SED*. Berlin: Dietz Verlag Berlin, 1983.
- Honecker, Erich. *From My Life*. Oxford: Pergamon Press Ltd, 1981.
- Honecker, Erich. *Report of the Central Committee to the 9th Congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany*. Dresden: Verlag Zeit im Bild, 1976.
- Müller, Manfred, Frieder Schlör, and Rolf Bachmann, eds. *Halle-Neustadt: vom Werden unserer Stadt Jahrgang 68*. Halle/Saale: Druckhaus Freiheit, Halle, 1968.
- Scholz, Ilse. *Sozialismus in der DDR 2000: Gesellschaftsstrategie mit dem Blick auf das Jahr 2000*. Berlin: Dietz Verlag Berlin, 1988.
- Sitte, Willi. “Mit der Arbeiterklasse und ihrer Partei fest verbunden.” In *Dokumente zur Kunst-, Literatur- und Kulturpolitik der SED 1975-1980*, edited by Peter Lübke, 605-620. Stuttgart: Seewald Verlag, 1984.
- Söllner, Ines. “Hier wird nichts vertuscht.” *Neues Leben*, September 1988.
- “Sozialversicherung (SV).” In *Arbeitsrecht von A bis Z*. Berlin: Staatsverlag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1983.
- Weiß, Michael. “Ein Freundschafts – Geschenk zum Spielen.” *Wohnen im Grünen*, January 1987.
- Wiznitzer, Louis “New York: Hauptstadt der Prostitution.” *Das Magazin*, November 1976.
- Ziegler, G. “DDR Bezirk Halle – Zentrum der Chemie.” *Urania*, October 1988.
- Secondary sources**
- Alekseyeva, Anna. *Everyday Soviet Utopias: Planning, Design, and the Aesthetics of Developed Socialism*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2020.
- Allinson, Mark. “1977: The GDR’s Most Normal Year?.” In *Power and Society in the GDR, 1961-1979: The ‘Normalisation of Rule’?*, edited by Mary Fulbrook, 253-277. New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2009.
- Augustine, Dolores L. *Red Prometheus: Engineering and Dictatorship in East Germany, 1945-1990*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007.
- Bach, Joachim. “Neues Bauen für die neue Gesellschaft: Die konzeptionellen Referenzen bei Planung und Bau Halle-Neustadts.” In *50 Jahre Streitfall Halle-Neustadt: Idee und Experiment. Lebensort und Provokation*, edited by Peer Pasternack, 25-28. Halle (Saale): Mitteldeutscher Verlag GmbH, 2014.

- Bartha, Eszter. *Alienating Labour: Workers on the Road from Socialism to Capitalism in East Germany and Hungary*. New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2013.
- Bartha, Eszter. "Workers Against Technocrats: The Failed Economic Reform and the Rise of Consumer Socialism in the German Democratic Republic." *Business History* ahead-of-print, no. ahead-of-print (2022): 1-15.
- Briggs, Asa. "The Language of 'Class'." In *History and Class: Essential Readings in Theory and Interpretation*, edited by R.S. Neale, 2-29. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983. Reprint, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984.
- Briggs, Asa. "The Welfare State in Historical Perspective." *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 2, no. 2 (1961): 221-258.
- Bruce, Gary. *The Firm: The Inside Story of the Stasi*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Burdumy, Alexander. "Reconsidering the Role of the Welfare State Within the German Democratic Republic's Political System." *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48 no. 4 (October 2013): 872-889.
- Caldwell, Peter C. *Dictatorship, State Planning, and Social Theory in the German Democratic Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Childs, David. *The GDR: Moscow's German Ally*. London: George Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Ltd, 1983.
- Crampton, R. J. *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century – And After*. 2nd ed. Abingdon: Routledge, 1997.
- Crowley, David, and Susan E. Reid. *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2012.
- Clover, Gwyneth. "'Ostalgie' Revisited: The Musealization of Halle-Neustadt," *German Studies Review* 37, no. 3 (October 2014): 615-636.
- De la Motte, Bruni, and John Green, *Stasi State or Socialist Paradise?: The German Democratic Republic and what became of it*. London: Artery Publications, 2015.
- Dennis, Mike. *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1990*. Essex: Longman, 2000.
- Eckardt, Frank. "Germany: Neighbourhood Centres – A Complex Issue." *Built Environment* 32, no. 1 (2006): 53-72.
- Fay, Sidney B. "Bismarck's Welfare State." *Current History* 18, no. 101 (January 1950): 1-7.
- Frank, Rüdiger. "Lessons from the Past: The First Wave of Developmental Assistance to North Korea and the German Reconstruction of Hamhùng." *Pacific Focus* XXIII, no. 1 (April 2008): 46-74.

- Fuhrmann, Christine. "Eine Stadtkrone für Halle Saale." In *Eine stadtkrone für Halle Saale: Walter Gropius im wettbewerb*, edited by Christine Fuhrmann and Leonhard Helten, 19-53. Halle (Saale): Stiftung Moritzburg, 2011.
- Fulbrook, Mary. *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949-1989*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Fulbrook, Mary. "The Concept of 'Normalisation' and the GDR in Comparative Perspective." In *Power and Society in the GDR, 1961-1979: The 'Normalisation of Rule'?*, edited by Mary Fulbrook, 1-30.. New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2009.
- Fulbrook, Mary. *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008.
- Godard, John. *Industrial Relations, the Economy, and Society*. 2nd ed. North York, ON: Captus Press Inc., 2000.
- Gorsuch, Anne E. and Diane P. Koenker. "Introduction: The Socialist 1960s in Global Perspective." In *The Socialist Sixties: Crossing Borders in the Second World*, edited by Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker, 1-21. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013.
- Grosch, Daniella. *Verschwundene Orte der DDR*. Berlin: Bild und Heimat, 2018.
- Grossman, Victor. *A Socialist Defector: From Harvard to Karl-Marx-Allee*. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 2019.
- Gutnov, Alexei, A. Baburov, G. Djumenton, S. Kharitonova, I. Lezava, and S. Sadovskij. *The Ideal Communist City*. Facsimile. Translated by Renee Neu Watkins. Edited by Ute Meta Bauer, Karin G. Oen, and Pelin Tan. Boston, MA: i press incorporated, 1971; Singapore: NTU Centre for Contemporary Arts Singapore, 2022.
- Harsch, Donna. *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- Hortolani, Valerie. "Self-Portraits and Alter Egos: Styling the Artist in the GDR." Translated by Kate Vanovitch. In *Behind the Mask: Artists in the GDR*, edited by Ortrud Westheider and Michael Philipp, 28-41. Munich: Prestel Publishing, 2017.
- Hoyer, Katja. *Beyond the Wall: East Germany, 1949-1990*. London: Allen Lane, 2023.
- Jäger, Frank Peter. "Rooms Bathed in Light for the New Human." In *East German Modern*, edited by Hans Engels, translated by John Sykes 5-15. Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2019.
- Jampol, Justinian ed. *The East German Handbook: Arts and Artifacts from the GDR*. Cologne: TASCHEN GmbH, 2017.

- Janus, Boleslaw. "The Politics of Culture in Poland's Worker Paradise: Nowa Huta in the 1950s." *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 56, no. 4 (2008): 542-553.
- Jenkins, J. R. *Picturing Socialism: Public Art and Design in East Germany*. London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021.
- Johnson, Molly Wilkinson. Review of *Die politische Rolle des FDGB-Feriendienstes in der DDR: Sozialtourismus im SED-Staat*, by Thomas Schaufuß. *The English Historical Review* 130, no. 542 (February 2015): 256-258.
- Koehler, John O. *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999.
- Kott, Sandrine. *Communism Day-to-Day: State Enterprises in East German Society*. Translated by Lisa Godin-Roger. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2014.
- Krivý, Maros. "Automation or Meaning? Socialism, Humanism, and Cybernetics in *Etarea*." *Architectural Histories*, 7 no. 1 (2019): 1-17.
- Krivý, Maros. "Cybernetics as a Balancing Act? Architecture and the Socialist Future in 1960s Czechoslovakia." *Calculating Control: (Net)Art and Cybernetics #journal*, (2021). [https://netzkunst.berlin/pdfs/ZfN\\_CC\\_Journal\\_Krivy.pdf](https://netzkunst.berlin/pdfs/ZfN_CC_Journal_Krivy.pdf).
- Lange-Berndt, Petra. "Art Production in the Plural: Collectives and Collectivity in the GDR." Translated by Kate Vanovitch. In *Behind the Mask: Artists in the GDR*, edited by Ortrud Westheider and Michael Philipp, 42-55. Munich: Prestel Publishing, 2017.
- Lebow, Katherine. *Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society, 1949-56: Unfinished Utopia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013.
- Lüdtke, Alf. "The World of Men's Work, East and West." In *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, edited by Katherine Pierce and Paul Betts, 234-249. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008.
- Maleschka, Martin. *Baubezogene Kunst DDR: Kunst im öffentlichen Raum 1950 bis 1990*. Berlin: Dom Publishers, 2022.
- Malmassari, Paul. *Armoured Trains: An Illustrated Encyclopaedia 1825-2016*. Rev. ed. Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2016.
- Marotz, Sören, Elke Sieber, and Stefan Wolle. *DDR Museum Guide: A Companion to the Permanent Exhibition*. Edited by Quirin Graf Adelman and Gordon Freiherr von Godin. Berlin: DDR Museum Verlag GmbH, 2017.
- Marx, Karl. "The German Ideology: Part I." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*. 2nd ed., edited by Robert C. Tucker. New York, NY; W. W. Norton & Company, 1978.

- McCauley, Martin. *Marxism-Leninism in the German Democratic Republic: The Socialist Unity Party (SED)*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1979.
- McCauley, Martin. *Power and Authority in East Germany: The Socialist Unity Party (SED)*. London: The Institute for the Study of Conflict, 1981.
- McLellan, Josie. *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Meuser, Philipp. “Komplexe Rekonstruktion in der Altstadt von Halle (Saale).” In *Neue Städte, Großsiedlungen und Ersatzneubauten*, edited by Philipp Meuser, 323-335. Vol 2 of *Vom seriellen Plattenbau zur komplexen Großsiedlung: Industrieller Wohnungsbau in der DDR 1953-1990*. Berlin: Dom Publishers, 2022.
- Millington, Richard. “‘Crime Has No Chance’: The Discourse of Everyday Criminality in the East German Press, 1961-1989.” *Central European History* 50 (2017): 59-85.
- Musson, A.E. *Trade Union & Social History*. 1974. Reprint, Abingdon, Routledge, 2006.
- Palmowski, Jan. *Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics of Everyday Life in the GDR 1945–1990*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Pasternack, Peer. *50 Jahre Streitfall Halle-Neustadt: Idee und Experiment. Lebensort und Provokation*. Halle (Saale): Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 2015.
- Pasternack, Peer. “Das Betriebssystem einer sozialistischen Stadt: Halle-Neustadt 1964-1989 – Eine Rekonstruktion.” In *50 Jahre Streitfall Halle-Neustadt: Idee und Experiment. Lebensort und Provokation*, edited by Peer Pasternack, 25-36. Halle (Saale): Mitteldeutscher Verlag GmbH, 2014.
- Pasternack, Peer. “Die größte Freiraumgalerie der DDR: Kunststadt Halle-Neustadt.” In *Baubezogene Kunst DDR: Kunst im öffentlichen Raum 1950 bis 1990*, Martin Maleschka. 28-40. Berlin: Dom Publishers, 2022.
- Pasternack, Peer. *Zwischen Halle-Novgorod und Halle-New Town: Der Ideenhaushalt Halle-Neustadts*. Halle (Saale): Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg Forschungsberichte des Instituts für Soziologie, 2012.
- Pence, Katherine. “Grounds for Discontent? Coffee from the Black Market to the Kaffeeklatsch in the GDR.” In *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe*, edited by Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger, 197-225. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Petersen, Klaus, and Jørn Henrik Petersen. “Confusion and divergence: Origins and meanings of the term ‘welfare state’ in Germany and Britain, 1840-1940.” *Journal of European Social Policy*, 23 (1): 37-51.

- Pfützner, Katharina. *Designing for Socialist Need: Industrial Design Practice in the German Democratic Republic*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2019.
- Pittaway, Mark. "Introduction: Workers and Socialist States in Postwar Central and Eastern Europe." *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 68 (Fall 2005): 1-8.
- Port, Andrew I. *Conflict and Stability in the German Democratic Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Pozniak, Kinga. *Nowa Huta: Generations of Change in a Model Socialist Town*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014.
- Rainer, Peter Michael. *Mit 250 bar zum Ammoniak: Gaskompressoren im Leuna-Werk 1916-1997*. Wettin-Löbejün: Verlag Janos Stekovics, 2022.
- Rau, Christian. "Socialism from Below: Kommunalpolitik in the East German Dictatorship between Discourse and Practice." *German History* 36, no. 1 (2017): 60-77.
- Ross, Corey. *The East German Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR*. London: Arnold, 2002.
- Rubin, Eli. *Amnesiopolis: Modernity, Space, and Memory in East Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Rubin, Eli. "Beyond Domination: Socialism, Everyday Life in East German Housing Settlements, and New Directions in GDR Historiography." *Imaginations* 8, no. 1 (2017): 34-47.
- Rubin, Eli. *Synthetic Socialism: Plastics & Dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008.
- Sanchez-Sibony, Oscar. *Red Globalization: The Political Economy of the Soviet Cold War from Stalin to Khrushchev*. Paperback ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Scharf, C. Bradley. *Politics and Change in East Germany: An Evaluation of Socialist Democracy*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984.
- Schaufuß, Thomas. *Die politische Rolle des FDGB-Feriendienstes in der DDR: Sozialtourismus im SED-Staat*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot GmbH, 2011.
- Schuhmann, Annette. *Kulturarbeit im sozialistischen Betrieb: Gewerkschaftliche Erziehungspraxis in der SBZ DDR 1946 bis 1970*. Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2006.
- Schwenkel, Christina. *Building Socialism: The Afterlife of East German Architecture in Urban Vietnam*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020.
- Siegelbaum, Lewis H. "Modernity Unbound: The New Soviet City of the Sixties." In *The Socialist Sixties: Crossing Borders in the Second World*, edited by Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker, 66-83. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013.

- Smith, Mark B. "Social Rights in the Soviet Dictatorship: The Constitutional Right to Welfare from Stalin to Brezhnev." *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 3, no. 3 (2012): 385-406.
- Solli, Rolf, Barbara Czarniawska-Joerges, Peter Demediuk, and Dennis Anderson. *Searching for New Welfare Models: Citizens' Opinions on the Past, Present and Future of the Welfare State*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, an imprint of Springer Nature, 2021.
- Stanek, Łukasz. *Architecture in Global Socialism: Eastern Europe, West Africa, and the Middle East in the Cold War*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020.
- Steele, Jonathan. *Socialism with a German Face: The state that came in from the cold*. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1977.
- Steiner, André. *The Plans that Failed: An Economic History of the GDR*. Translated by Ewald Osers. New York, NY: Routledge, 2013.
- Sukrow, Oliver. "Networks: On the Utopian Qualities of Technology, Cybernetics, and Participation in the GDR of the Late 1960s." *GHI Bulletin Supplement*, 14 (2019): 89-104.
- Sumorok, Aleksandra. "The Socialist City – A Homeless City?: A Contribution to the Research on Model Implementations." *Art Inquiry*, no. 13 (2011): 203-228.
- Suri, Jeremi. "The Promise and Failure of 'Developed Socialism': The Soviet 'Thaw' and the Crucible of the Prague Spring, 1964-1972." *Contemporary European History* 15, no. 2 (2006): 133-158.
- "Surplus Labour." In *A Dictionary of Political Economy*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1985.
- Swope, Curtis. *Building Socialism: Architecture and Urbanism in East German Literature, 1955-1973*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.
- Tomita, Hideo. "The Construction of a Socialist City by East German Engineers in the Late 1950s: Post-war Reconstruction of Hamhung." Paper presented at International Planning History Society Conference, Yokohama, July 2018.
- Topfstedt, Thomas. "Baubezogene Kunst in der DDR: Ein kulturelles Erbe." In *Historischer Kontext, Serientypen und bezirkliche Anpassungen*, ed. Philipp Meuser, 111-129. Vol 1 of *Vom seriellen Plattenbau zur komplexen Großsiedlung: Industrieller Wohnungsbau in der DDR 1953-1990*. Berlin: Dom Publishers, 2022.
- Young, David. *Stasi Wolf*. London: Zaffre Publishing, 2017.

Zarecor, Kimberly Elman. *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1960*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011.

Ziegler, Merle. "Bauen ohne Vergangenheit: Staatsarchitektur und Kybernetik in Bonn." In *Zwischen Sputnik und Ölkrise: Kybernetik in Architektur, Planung und Design*, edited by Oliver Sukrow, 48-65. Berlin: Dom Publishers, 2018.