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Made in the GDR : the changing geographies of women in the post-socialist rural society in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania

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MADE IN THE GDR- THE CHANGING GEOGRAPHIES OF WOMEN IN THE POST-SOCIALIST RURAL SOCIETY IN MECKLENBURG-WESTPOMMERANIA

by

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ABSTRACT

MADE IN THE GDR- THE CHANGING GEOGRAPHIES OF WOMEN IN THE POST-SOCIALIST RURAL SOCIETY IN MECKLENBURG-WESTPOMMERANIA

BETTINA VAN HOVEN-IGANSKI

This thesis explores women's experiences in rural areas under state socialism in the GDR and in the New Germany since 1989. The study is located within feminist geographical thinking and draws on a variety of qualitative and quantitative sources. Data for the research were collated through various research methods both qualitative and quantitative including correspondence, focus group interviews, key informant interviews, and the consultation of documentary evidence and statistical sources. The thesis employs a modified grounded theory approach. Data were processed and analysed using the computer-assisted analysis programme NUD.IST Version 4.0.

The thesis focuses on questions that emerge from a critical analysis of social transformation. A key concern is to evaluate how dominant patriarchal power structures have impacted upon women's everyday lives under socialism and capitalism. Three main themes are foci of this thesis: the changes in social dynamics in rural villages, the impact of economic rationalisations on women, and the nature and extent of women's participation in new political structures.

With reference to the former GDR the research showed that many rural women found comfort in social relations they established within the village and the workplace. Such social networks became important elements for women's self-identification and helped counteract suppression through the patriarchal socialist State. German unification overthrew previous values and daily routines of many rural women through vast economic and political changes. The unfamiliarity with a new, sometimes undesirable framework of reference for everyday life and society caused many rural women to withdraw to the private sphere and question their previous identities as rural GDR citizens. Positive opportunities for women's futures have not outweighed negative experiences with transition. Instead, conflicts have prevented women's equal integration into the political and economic structures of the New Germany.

Further areas of research are proposed that may add depth to insights gained from this thesis as well as offering possible areas for gender-sensitive policy development in rural Mecklenburg-Westpommerania.

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LIST OF GERMAN TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- §249h: part-government-funded, short-term employment measure
- §41a: part-government-funded, short-term training measure
- Arbeitsamt: governmental employment office
- Arbeitsbeschaffungsmassnahme-ABM: government-funded, short-term employment and training measure
- Arbeitslosentreff: meeting place for unemployed, usually facilitated by the Arbeitslosenverband
- Arbeitslosenverband: NGO for unemployment issues
- Arbeit statt Sozialhilfe: government-funded, short-term employment and training measure: project for social welfare recipients
- ARROW: government-funded, short-term employment and training measure: project for social welfare recipients
- AWO: NGO for welfare issues, especially family oriented
- Bauernverband: Farmers' Association
- Blaues Kreuz: NGO to help people with alcohol problems
- Demokratischer Frauenbund: association for (mainly urban) women, used to be DFD before unification
- Deutscher Bundestag: Lower House of the Federal Parliament
- DFD: German Democratic Women's Association
- Diplom: Masters degree
- Elternzirkel: group for parent concerned with school issues
- Facharbeiter: skilled worker
- FDJ: Free German Youth
- GbR: private limited company
- GmbH: private limited company
- Hauptschulabschluss: qualification obtained from comprehensive school (grade 10)
- Hilfe zur Arbeit: government-funded, short-term employment and training measure: project for social welfare recipients
- KG: private limited company

- Kooperative Abteilung Pflanzenproduktion-KAP: co-operation of various crop production locations
- Landfrauenverband: NGO for the concerns of rural women
- Landjugendverband: NGO for the concerns of rural youths
- Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft- LPG: agricultural Co-operative
- LPG (P): co-operative specialised on crop production
- LPG (T): co-operative specialised on animal production
- Meister: foreman
- MTS: Machine loan station
- Örtlich Landwirtschaftlicher Betrieb -ÖLB: local agricultural enterprise
- Ostalgia: an expression used to describe nostalgic feelings for the former GDR
- Pommerania: organisation promoting international co-operation with Baltic states
- Sozialamt: social welfare office
- Stasi: state security service
- Treuhand: trust
- Volgseigenes Gut-VEG: People's Property
- Volksarmee- VA: People's Army
- Volkskammer: People's Chamber
- Volkssolidarität: NGO for the concerns of pensioners (also existed in the GDR)
- Wende: turning point
- Wiedereinrichter: a person who newly obtained land after unification and re-established a private farm

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

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Date: *7. July, 1999*

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Objectives

A variety of academic and literary publications have been stimulated by the transitions in the former East Bloc. In general, it can be said that, in spite of considerable academic interest, earlier discussions have focused largely on the technicalities of transformations induced by political and economic changes. Contributions to current knowledge have provided a reasonably comprehensive understanding of how far Western economic models can successfully be adapted to the East. Evident in political action and documentation, such developments are relatively easy for outside commentators to identify. Fewer contributions have, however, discussed the less perceptible social dynamics underlying these processes, such as identity formation and the consolidation of patriarchal power structures. In particular, the recording of in-depth experiences has largely been left to non-academic writing and has therefore proceeded in a less analytic and methodologically sound way.

This research critically analyses the impact of social transformations resulting from German unification on women in rural areas. It illustrates, in detail, the gendered nature of everyday experiences and demonstrates to what extent such experiences are determined by dominant patriarchal power structures. The thesis draws on a number of analytic concepts developed within a (white Western) feminist geographic framework. It predominantly utilises qualitative data, including correspondence, in-depth interviews and focus groups, for exploring experiences at the local level, whilst also consulting statistics and documentary evidence to establish links with the regional, national and, less frequently, international levels.

The thesis therefore aims to identify processes within the accounts of research participants that help explain the formation of gendered identities and exclusionary mechanisms within the restructuring process in the study area of Uecker Randow in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania. In this context, three initial objectives have been identified:

1) to assess the general implications of unification for women in rural areas with a focus on gender-specific changes in the labour market;

2) to explore the dynamics behind the formulation of norms and meanings in the GDR and the re-allocation of these in the social context of the New Germany;

3) to evaluate how such socio-cultural patterns have influenced the participation of women in the rural restructuring process.

Having gained an understanding of the nature and dynamics of the various processes taking place and their impact at the local level, conclusions are drawn about patriarchal power structures that have largely determined the local "choreographies" (Pred, 1988: 638) of women's lives. A rural location was chosen for the research as it comprised a highly conflictual space in which post-unification transformation took place. Before 1989, it was the location of particularly close-knit communities embedded in a comprehensively planned economic and political framework, whereas after unification it became an area of distinct economic and political processes leading to social exclusion.

Although carefully designed and conducted, no claim of comprehensiveness can be made for this research. Most significantly the study remains limited in that issues such as race, sexual orientation or disability have not received explicit attention. Nonetheless, the thesis sheds light on the specific context of women's lives in rural villages and contributes to current geographical discussions of wider power structures and the challenging of gender roles in a transforming ideological environment. It is hoped that it will provide an important reference for both policy makers and academics for a gender-sensitive evaluation of contemporary economic, social and political processes in rural East Germany.

1.2. Toward unification

In the mid-1980s, the President of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, initiated central reforms to liberalise society and economy in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European states. This led, for example, to significant changes in Poland where the Solidarity movement was legalised and won major support in the first free elections since the Second World War. In an attempt to relieve the economic disaster in Poland, the Communist Party (and the Catholic church) agreed on a political compromise with Solidarity which would enable Solidarity to operate

publicly and with greater freedoms whilst still subjecting it to Party control (Gwertzman and Kaufman, 1990).

Elsewhere in the former East Bloc further changes were increasingly perceptible. Although considerable resistance to liberal reforms was maintained by political leaders in Czechoslovakia and the GDR, there was an increase in activities by interest groups that supported Gorbachev's reforms from below. Events such as the Monday Demonstrations in Leipzig, and the establishment of the New Forum roundtable discussions signalled increasing public demands for reforms in the GDR (see also chapter five). Phrases such as "We are the people" and "We're staying here" became symbols of the peaceful demonstrations at that time (Conradt, 1996). The collapse of the GDR regime became evident only when Hungary, in conformity with the Geneva Accord on Refugees, opened its border to Austria (Conradt, 1996); Between August and October 1989, over 65,000 GDR citizens fled to the West via Hungary.

Within a month of the official opening of the border between East and West Germany, the West German government, under then-Chancellor Helmut Kohl, had prepared a programme for the establishment of a Federation that included the former GDR. Initially, a period of ten years was envisaged during which East and West Germany would act as equal partners. However, during his visits to major East German cities, Chancellor Kohl was greeted with calls for German unity by his East German audience. He was therefore convinced that the unification process should be accelerated (Conradt, 1996).

At the same time, there were efforts by East German interest groups to become part of the reform process. It must be emphasised that these were small groups operating outside existing political structures. Although they had played a significant role in the collapse of the East German regime, the groups were not in favour of German unification and, instead, called for an alternative to capitalism (Hudelson, 1993). The groups were proposing reform of the former GDR as an independent state to combine the virtues of socialism and capitalism (Stark, 1996). In so doing, aspects such as the right to work and housing, free health care and social policies would be preserved. In addition, these groups advocated direct citizen participation in a democratic system (Conradt, 1996). However, due

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to their lack of political experience and organisation, negotiation of a third way came to a halt and was eventually absorbed into dominant, Western political procedures. The political marginalisation of the interest groups was further reinforced by the outcome of the GDR elections in March 1990 which resulted in a grand coalition of the Alliance[1], the Free Democrats (FDP) and the Social Democrats (SPD).

Initially, this new GDR government was required to model laws after the democratic framework of the FRG and abandon those laws which had previously been the foundation of the socialist State (Wollmann, 1995). Subsequent policy negotiations included a proposal for the establishment of local democratic decision making, which had been a characteristic of the pre-unification period[2]. Such negotiations collapsed, however, with the implementation of a 'single Germany' programme. Instead of negotiating a new constitution with elected representatives from both the East and the West and approved through a people's referendum[3] (Conradt, 1996), unification took place "swiftly and with responsibility for the entire GDR" on the basis of Article 23 of the Basic Law[4] (Mazière quoted in: Wollmann, 1995: 502). Consequently, unification was characterised by a notion of a colonisation of the former GDR by the West in terms of both the legal framework and key political actors (Wollmann, 1995).

In spite of a "glacial uniformity" (Berger, 1994: 294) of Soviet-style repression in all East and Central European countries until the late 1980s, different models were adopted by each State toward a post-socialist transformation. Levine (1994), for example, termed the processes as (1) compromise in Poland; (2) electoral competition in Hungary; (3) capitulation in Czechoslovakia; and (4) reunification in East Germany. Whilst each of the transitions reflected the historical, social and political differences between these States, the process of re-installation of democracy in East Germany differs fundamentally from that of other post-socialist

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[1] The Alliance was a coalition of center-right groups which included the CDU.
[2] In West Germany, only one Bundesland (Baden-Wuertemberg) had similar regulations for decision-making at the local level whereby decision-making about significant communal matters could be initiated from within the community if 10 percent of residents supported the proposal (Wollmann, 1995).
[3] This was proposed by the SPD and Green Party in accordance with Article 146 of the constitution: "dieses Grundgesetz verliert seine Gültigkeit an dem Tage, an dem eine Verfassung in Kraft tritt, die von dem deutschen Volke in freier Entscheidung beschlossen worden ist."
[4] "Dieses Grundgesetz gilt zunächst im Gebiete der [alten Bundesländer]. In anderen Teilen Deutschlands ist es nach deren Beitritt in Kraft zu setzen."

countries in that it was essentially taken over and ceased to exist as an independent state.

For example, rather than allowing for the introduction of alternative ownership forms as was experimented with in Hungary (Stark, 1996; Morell and Kovàch, 1997), Bulgaria (Meurs and Begg, 1998) and China (Smart, 1998), the German approach relied entirely upon a prepared Western structure of full privatisation. Whereas other post-socialist countries sought to adopt "locally and historically appropriate" solutions (Meurs and Begg, 1998: 244) utilising internal expertise, the German approach disregarded the political legitimacy and adequacy of previous socialist structures. Instead of using internal expertise to develop adequate solutions, a framework of incentives was installed to promote privatisation and a rapid integration into the capitalist market economy. Largely with regard to its social consequences, this approach has been termed big bang or shock therapy (Rosenberg, 1991; Smart, 1998).

Meurs and Begg (1998) noted that contemporary developments in Eastern and Central Europe were largely dependent on a "certain set of variables [that] set a social system on a particular path" and therefore "facilitat[ed] some outcomes while making others much more difficult" (p.244)[5]. Such variables also influenced the transformations in the former GDR although it is more appropriate to distinguish between variables of endogenous and exogenous path dependence (Wollmann, 1995). Endogenous path dependence refers to the impact of historical structures and circumstances (legacies) on present development, and exogenous path dependence denotes the influence of outside structures and regulations (i.e. those from West Germany) on institutionalisation in East Germany.

1.3. Gender-specific outcomes of post-socialist transitions

With regard to the gendered impact of transformations throughout Eastern and Central Europe it must be noted that most social consequences are strikingly similar[6]. In general, women appear to have been the main losers in transitions, regardless of the political framework adopted by individual states. Various commentators have acknowledged that women were the group most adversely affected by the economic, social and political processes resulting from the 'big

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[5] See also Crawford and Lijphart (1995) for a definition of a 'legacies of the past' approach, or Stark (1994).

bang' (Dölling, 1991a, b; Kolinsky, 1996; Nickel, 1993; Sharp and Flinspach, 1995). Three key issues can be observed in all post-socialist countries. First, more women than men were displaced from the labour market and prevented from re-entering by active discrimination and the revival of traditional male-breadwinner models (chapter six). Second, women were more adversely affected by the substitution of state-supported socialist services and policies for market-oriented infrastructure (chapters six and seven). Third, women were increasingly pushed out of political decision-making (chapter seven).

In East Germany, even though women had been amongst the key actors in the demonstrations and negotiations leading to the *Wende* (Kolinsky, 1994; Rueschemeyer, 1994), the process of unification itself was increasingly handed over to male Western actors. Specific issues that emerged from post-unification transitions affecting women were largely neglected and little effort was made to provide adequate socio-political structures that facilitated and stimulated contributions by women (Kurz-Scherf, 1990; Merkel, 1991).

In addition to gender-specific differences resulting from post-socialist transformations, it must be acknowledged that rural areas were less able to adapt to capitalist, market-oriented structures than others (Wild and Jones, 1993). The following section details the characteristics of the study area Mecklenburg-Westpommerania, the most rural of the New Bundesländer.

1.4. The study area

Mecklenburg-Westpommerania (see Figure 1.1) is the Bundesland in the north-east corner of the New Germany, located at the edge of both Germany and the European Union. Although some optimistically described it as "strategically well located, [a]t the crosswires between metropolitan areas of Hamburg, Berlin, Copenhagen [...] and Stettin, [a]t the seam between middle-, north- and eastern Europe" (Staatskanzlei, 1997: 6), others have been less flattering referring to Mecklenburg-Westpommerania as the "black hole" (001)[7], the "end of the world"

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[6] See for example Graham and Regulska (1997), Kligman (1994), Meurs (1994a, b), Morell and Kovàch (1997) and Regulska (1998a, b).

[7] Quotations by research respondents are marked by number (key informants and correspondents) or pseudonym (focus groups).

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(Staatskanzlei, 1997:5), the "little GDR" (Spiegel, 1997: 105), or "the land of three 'seas': see land, see forest, see nothing" (001).

Fig. 1.1.: Map of Germany

Mecklenburg-Westpommerania is marked by its vast, largely agricultural areas. Almost 63% of the total area is arable land of which two-thirds are designated by the EC as disadvantaged areas. The agricultural regions in the south and north-east of Mecklenburg-Westpommerania have particularly poor soils and low population densities. The natural landscape is complemented by non-diversified farming and a low degree of industrialisation (Wirtschaftsminister, 1993). Key industries are indicated in figure 1.2. (Diercke Weltatlas, 1996; Wirtschaftsminister, 1993).

Industry	Locations
Dockyard-industry	Rostock, Stralsund, Wismar and Wolgast
Food-industry	Anklam , Güstrow, Loitz, Ludwigslust, Müritz, Neubrandenburg, Neustrelitz, Parchim, Pasewalk, Rostock, Schwerin, Stralsund, Waren, Wismar
Mechanic engineering	Güstrow, Neubrandenburg, Rostock, Schwerin and Wismar
Electronic engineering	Greifswald, Rostock and Schwerin
Tourism	predominantly Baltic Sea coast and Mecklenburger Seenplatte

Fig. 1.2.: Major industries in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania
(Source: Diercke Weltatlas, 1996; Wirtschaftsminister, 1993)

The infrastructure is relatively poorly developed and largely oriented toward Berlin. The major railways and roads (Autobahn) predominantly follow the coastline and, from Schwerin and Rostock, also lead to Berlin. There is no national or international airport located in the Bundesland (Wirtschaftsminister, 1993).

A striking feature of Mecklenburg-Westpommerania are the extensive areas designated as nature reserves: three national parks, one biosphere-reserve and a number of planned nature parks and landscape preservation areas. The parks are predominantly located on the Baltic coast, on the islands of Zingst, Hiddensee,

Rügen and Usedom, and in the lake district. In 1993, the regional planning programme[8] assigned most of Mecklenburg-Westpommerania as "regions with particular, natural suitability for tourism and recreation" (Wirtschaftsminister, 1993: 51). There are also, however, significant environmental hazards in numerous locations resulting, for example, from nitrate accumulation in the soil as a consequence of intensive farming practices and soil pollution resulting from military use.

The population density is low (80 people per square kilometres) and people are mainly grouped in a large number of villages with only a few sizeable cities. Only Schwerin, Rostock and Neubrandenburg (the former district cities) are central towns, eleven further cities have the function of 'middle-centres'. Altogether, approximately 29% of the population live in towns with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants. As a whole, the region is strongly affected by out-migration. Between December 1988 and 1991, the population decreased by 4.4%, by 1994 a further decrease of 5.9% was noted. At the same time there was a sharp decline of over 50% in birth-rates. It is expected that the region will experience a further reduction in population numbers of 6.2% by the year 2010 (Wirtschaftsminister, 1993).

In spite of the overall poor development prospects for Mecklenburg-Westpommerania, notable regional disparities have developed between the North and South and, even more so, from West to East. The planning region of Vorpommern, on the Polish border (see figure 1.3.) is one of the poorest in the Bundesland. Here, over 50% of the region is designated as disadvantaged with few prospects of reviving particularly the agricultural sector. There are only two notable, though peripheral, industrial centres, Pasewalk and Neubrandenburg (see figure 1.2.). The region is sparsely populated with often less than 20 people per square kilometres[9]. Simultaneously, considerable levels of out-migration are experienced. Between 1990 and 1994, Vorpommern saw a population decline of 7.3%, with a further 8.6% predicted by 2010 (Wirtschaftsminister, 1993). Furthermore, the area suffers from chronically high unemployment in relation to

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[8] Mecklenburg-Westpommerania consists of four planning regions all of which began operating at different points in time. No pre-existing administrative structures could be utilised for the region of Vorpommern, where the planning programme was established as late as 1998.

[9] The population density in the study villages was as follows (total polulation in 1996 in brackets): Charlottenburg 28.7 p/sqkm (587); Hellern 17.7 p/sqkm (334); Karlshorst 14 p/sqkm (279); Schinkel 16.5 p/sqkm (169); Wilmersdorf 18.6 p/sqkm (232); Wüste 16 p/sqkm (381).

the rest of Germany. The Statistisches Landesamt of Mecklenburg-Westpommerania (1997), for example, published figures indicating that 22% of women in Mecklenburg- Westpommerania were unemployed compared with 8% in West Germany.
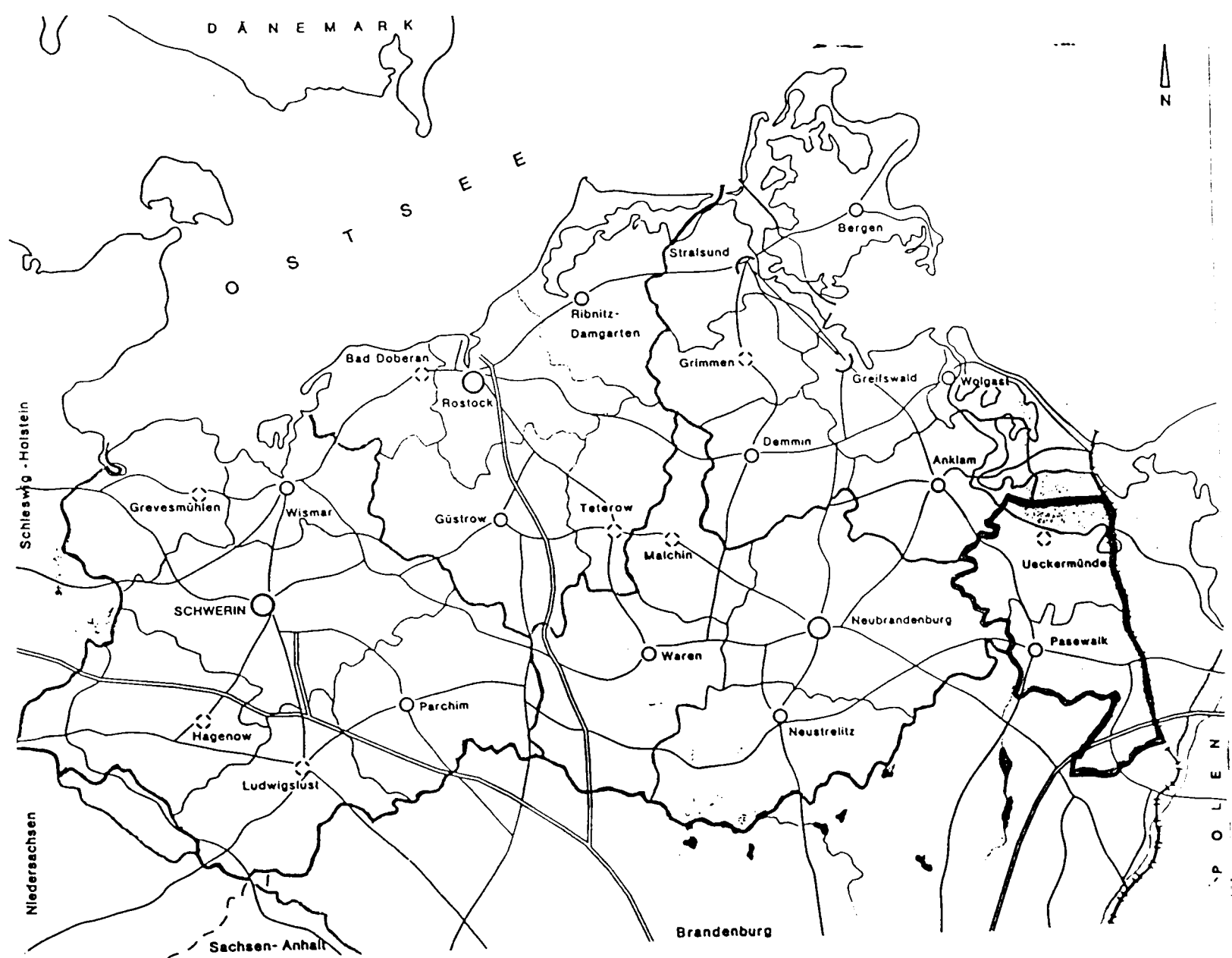
Fig. 1.3.: Map of Mecklenburg-Westpommerania

1.5. The structure of the thesis

Chapter two discusses themes in current geographic thinking critical to the contextualisation of the thesis and the conceptualisation of key issues within it. Although the discussion of feminist geography and rural issues composes the core of the thesis, the examination of post-socialism, women in the economy, and concepts of local democracy are also the significant themes emerging from the data. The aim of chapter two is to provide an overview of predominant issues dealt with in the existing literature and to identify areas of knowledge to which the thesis will contribute.

Chapter three describes the methodological framework adopted for the researching of this thesis. It draws attention to feminist issues central to the thesis. The rationale for the choice of methods and their application in the field are also outlined. Data analysis by means of a modified grounded theory approach, and by use of the computer-assisted analysis programme NUD.IST, is discussed in the final section of this chapter by reference to illustrative examples from the study itself.

Chapter four discusses the development of agricultural co-operatives (LPGs) in the GDR and how women were integrated into LPGs. First, it describes the consolidation of land since the Second World War and the subsequent establishment and specialisation of socialist farming structures. Second, it focuses on specific regulations, institutions and social spaces that were significant to women's daily routines. The chapter therefore provides the basis for comparison with the wider changes in the New Germany. In addition, it outlines processes and structures that are subsequently analysed with respect to underlying patriarchal power structures.

Chapter five is concerned with the impact of unification on women in rural villages. It begins by giving an overview of externally induced political and economic changes affecting the village, including privatisation and the institutionalisation of planning regulations. Next, various aspects of unification that influenced the level of social continuity are illustrated. Of particular concern are those changes which affected the extent to which equality and safety are experienced by women.

Furthermore, processes are introduced that help explain the transformation of women's identity.

Chapters six and seven address two key problems emerging from the more general overview presented in the previous chapter. In chapter six, the effects of labour market changes on women as a group are discussed. Gender-differentiated patterns present in the GDR and the re-institutionalisation of such patterns are discussed with specific reference to the level of unemployment in the New Germany. The significance of this development for women is explored whereby issues of equality and identity assume particular relevance. Consequently, the chapter assesses the meaning of the work-place as socio-political space for women prior to unification. The adequacy of short-term employment measures to address the social problems resulting from unemployment in small villages is then evaluated.

Chapter seven deals with women's integration into the local political culture. Before discussing women's involvement in local politics, the chapter clarifies how women themselves have defined and experienced democratic rights and freedoms after unification. The chapter identifies key issues that contribute to the general indifference of women to the political process.

The concluding chapter attempts to place observations made in chapters four to seven into an overall theoretical, feminist framework. It interprets women's pre- and post-unification experiences in relation to patriarchal power relations at the local level. In so doing, the chapter discusses key mechanisms that have contributed to the construction of gendered identities and power structures within the consolidation of land, the division of labour and in policy making. Finally, the chapter considers the "counterspaces"[10] in the GDR that women established for themselves where the dominant patriarchal power structures were less prevalent.

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[10] See Phua and Yeoh (1998: 313).

CHAPTER TWO

POSITIONING THE THESIS

2.1. Introduction

In light of the research objectives stated in chapter one, a key aim of this research was a contribution to making visible a group of people who have not received much geographic attention to date: women in rural East Germany; the 'new ones' (Spiegel, 1990) in the unified Germany; those sometimes spoken of as 'losers' of the *Wende* (see for example, Shaw, 1996). The geographic literature devoted some attention to the previously 'silenced' group of rural women (Garcia-Ramon *et al.*, 1993; Leckie, 1993; Liepins, 1995; Little and Austin, 1996; Reed, 1997; Seymour, 1994; Whatmore *et al.*, 1994) and women in post-socialist countries (Meurs, 1994 a, b; Regulska, 1998a, b) but both have rarely been combined (with the notable exception of Meurs, 1998).

Although represented as different issues in this thesis through an artificial division into chapters (i.e. the development of LPGs, the *Wende*, employment, and local democracy), the thematic areas of the workplace, the community and the home, and the political and the personal[11] are linked. With regard to its regional focus, the research explores relatively new grounds by focusing on rural women in the post-socialist context. The findings complement previous investigations on issues of women's concepts of place through time, women's everyday experiences, the gendered nature of the local, and the meaning of place for women's identity.

This chapter provides a conceptual framework in which the research for this thesis is positioned. In so doing, it will be oriented by the main themes of the thesis and therefore structured in five sections. First, I will review previously researched themes and approaches in feminist geography. Then, the significance of the *Wende* and women in post-socialist countries in geographic literature will be outlined. In the third section, issues around women and employment will be discussed. The focus on 'everyday knowledge/ experiences', 'difference/ otherness' and 'the meaning/ social construction of place' will be emphasised in

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[11] Bowlby et.al. (1986) and Dyck (1993), for instance, noted that these areas had often been investigated individually or paired but not as interrelated.

all three sections as most relevant to the development of theoretical ideas for this thesis (for issues of empowerment and ethics in feminist research refer to chapter three). The fourth section on local democracy extends the discussion of feminist issues such as empowerment and otherness, and is a key section in that it provides the framework for much of the interpretation in this research. Lastly, main themes within rural gender studies are reviewed in relation to issues that emerged from this thesis.

2.2. A place in feminist geographies[12]

In spite of some existing geographical texts about and by women (but also by men), it was not until Zelinsky *et al.* (1982) argued for a "substantial shift in the angle of vision" as "women [...] exist under much different conditions and constraints [than men]" (p.353) that the neglect of "the other half" (Monk and Hanson, 1982: 11) in geography was seriously and rigorously addressed. Zelinsky *et al.*'s (1982) review and prospectus on the status of women in geography has widely been regarded as the 'foot in the door' after which both descriptive and theoretical discussions of women (and other previously silenced social groups) in geography were intensified and diversified.

Although there was also some discussion of women geographers in Academia (Berman, 1984; Momsen, 1980; Morrison, 1982; and later Hansen *et al.*, 1995; McDowell and Peake, 1990), most research in the 1980s was on issues located outside of Academia. In a special issue of *Antipode* (1984), for example, various authors adopted a radical and socialist feminist framework of analysis. Hence, most papers in this issue were concerned not merely with describing women's activities but with exploring issues of patriarchy and power, and women as active agents (see also Bowlby *et al.*, 1986). Thematically, most published research in the 1980s focused on women in employment and women in urban settings (Darke, 1984; Green *et al.*, 1986; Pollard, 1989). Although located in an urban setting, too, research by Dyck (1989), Hayford (1985) or Valentine (1989) proceeded to address the significance of women's everyday experiences as sources of geographic knowledge and foci of geographic interest.

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[12] I prefer using the plural here as suggested by McDowell (1997: 383) to indicate the presence of different levels (both horizontally and vertically) in feminist geographic research (see also Women and Geography Studies Group, 1997). Kitchin (1999) similarly uses 'geographies' as an indication of his acceptance of multiple truths in the construction of knowledge.

Reinforced in the 1990s was the application of feminist thinking established in other disciplines to geography. This interest was evident in the research process itself, i.e. the feminist, political agendas of research (see *Antipode*, 1995; Garvin, 1995; Gibson-Graham, 1994; *Professional Geographer*, 1994) and research methods (see *Canadian Geographer*, 1993; *Professional Geographer*, 1995) as well as the perceived need to challenge previous perceptions of knowledge, and who can be 'knowers' and actors.

Initially, feminist scholars were these 'knowers' acknowledging that a preliminary task was to make women visible within geography (McDowell, 1993). Therefore, information on women's activities needed to be collated, before initiating a discussion of the category 'woman' itself, of gender and place, and patriarchal power. Descriptive accounts of women's issues and activities in the (predominantly urban) environment continued to persist in the 1990s with key themes such as employment (Breathnach, 1993; Chant, 1996; Duncan, 1991; Gilbert, 1998; Hanson and Pratt, 1991; Hardill, 1998; Pinch and Storey, 1992); migration (Cockerton, 1996; Fan and Huang, 1998; Hemmasi, 1994; Huang and Yeoh, 1996; King and O'Connor, 1996), and health (*Geoforum*, 1995; Ross *et al.*, 1994).

Due to the increasing political involvement implied by feminist research, a central concern became 'difference' and 'otherness'[13] such as class, 'race', sexuality, or disability (Bondi, 1993; Bowlby, 1992; Brooker-Gross, 1991; Chouinard and Grant, 1995; Longhurst, 1994; 1997; McDowell, 1992b; Pratt, 1993; Valentine, 1993). Extending the notion of making 'otherness' more visible, research on women in developing countries, too, appeared more frequently in geographical literature[14].

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[13] Accounts in *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* represent the integration of this consciousness into the teaching approach (see, for example, *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 1997; McDowell, 1997; or Raghuram et.al., 1998).

[14] See, for example, Cravey, 1998; Davis, 1996; Gray, 1993; MacKenzie, 1993; Momsen and Townsend, 1987; Paul, 1992; Raghuram and Momsen, 1993; Townsend and Bain de Corcuera, 1993; Wickramasinghe, 1993; Yeboah, 1998.

The challenge of politicising and making visible previously static, gendered categories of knowledge also embraced the investigation of themes such as the meaning of public spaces for women's identity (Bondi and Domosh, 1998; Dowling, 1993; Scarpaci and Frazier, 1993; Valentine, 1992), political action (Robertson, 1997; Teather, 1997), dichotomies (Alcoff, 1996; Bondi, 1992b; Vaiou, 1992), postmodernism (Bondi, 1990a), gender symbolism (Bondi, 1992a), and gender identity (Rose, 1994). In the second half of the 1990s, feminist research was then taken further by a personal commitment of the researcher to social and political change, and empowerment of the research subject. Therefore, some feminist geographers aimed to include the 'Self' in the interpretation of that part of the social world they wished to understand largely for methodological and epistemological reasons. The focus of the investigation remained on the research subject(s) and the political aim of giving voice to marginalised or dis-empowered social groups. The research participants themselves had become primary 'knowers' in the process of investigation.

The methodological re-positioning of scholars was, initially, a controversial issue. However, this shift also contributed to the recognition of achievements and knowledge production of early women geographers, the debate between Domosh (1991a, b) and Stoddart (1991) on the necessity of a feminist historiography of geography, for example, shed light on those women who, noticed and unnoticed, advanced the discipline through explorations or academic merits. In spite of earlier acknowledgements of contributions made by particular women geographers such as the physical geographer Mary Somerville (Baker, 1948), or the human geographer Ellen Churchill Semple (Bushong, 1975; Wright, 1962), historic accounts by women travellers in the nineteenth (Flad, 1995; McEwan, 1998; Morin, 1998) or early twentieth century (Gilmartin, 1990; Kearns 1997; McManis, 1990; Squire, 1995) were discovered as components in the production of geographic knowledge as late as the 1990s. This belated recognition of early achievements by women travellers and explorers is largely due to an (ongoing) discussion of what constitutes geographical knowledge and 'valid' contributions to the discipline (see, for instance, Livingstone, 1992). In this context, it has been contended, too, that "standard constructions of historical periods assume an elitist, male-oriented view of what constitutes significant past events" (Kay, 1991: 449), a criticism which contemporary feminist geographers have equally validated.

It is interesting to note that, aside from the application of 'objective' scientific measurement and reporting on environmental features by female geographers such as Mary Kingsley (Domosh, 1991a, b; Kearns, 1997), for instance, much of the documentation provided by women geographers is subjective in the form of diaries, narratives or travel reports (Kay, 1991; McEwan, 1998a; Squire, 1995). As these literary texts consisted largely of women's everyday experiences, they have been criticised as invalid to the furtherance of geographic knowledge. Stoddart(1991), for example, stated that:

> "simply for a person to travel about the world in the late nineteenth century did not by emerging standards of the time constitute a contribution to the discipline of geography. I am not aware, for example, that Isabella Bird ever made a measurement, a map or a collection, or indeed ever wrote other than impressionistically about the areas she visited" (p.484).

With this assertion, Stoddart(1991) implied that such a concept of place, i.e. through relatedness to the home or the social environment is less meaningful than one based on place as physical or economic region. Consequently, Morin (1995) criticised that contributions to a "geography of the domestic" (p.196) such as that by Catherine Bates have been neglected. In much contemporary 'feminist' geographical research, everyday knowledge (see for example Domosh, 1997; Eyles, 1989; 1993) and accounts of personal interaction with the study site have become significant elements in the furtherance of geographic and situated knowledge.

In spite of the wealth of studies on women around the globe, and the repeated theoretical aims of politicised feminist research, only a relatively small amount of published research is, strictly speaking, feminist. By that I mean research accounts that explicitly address the researchers' commitment to and involvement in socio-political change. Figure 2.1. summarises the results of a literature review of 17 geographic journals between 1974 (where available) and June 1999 (see Appendix I for list of journals). It is notable that only 4% of all articles about women and women's issues and 8% of 'feminist'[15] geographical accounts represent applied research in which the researcher describes herself as agent

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[15] In this context, 'feminist' means discussing and 'making visible' issues of power/ patriarchy in society women's lives.

shaping the research process with and/ or to the benefit of her research subjects. Another 8% (16%) are methodological papers in which the researcher reflects on specific political/ ethical aspects of her project.

Geographical research about women (gender geography[16]) 177		
of which feminist aims 88 (50%)		
of which theory 18 (10%[17]; 20%[18])	of which applied research 41 (23%; 47%)	of which methodological accounts 29 (16%; 33%)
	researcher 'in' 7 (4%; 8%)	researcher 'out' 34 (19%; 39%)	researcher 'in' 14 (8%; 16%)	researcher 'out' 15 (8%; 17%)

Fig. 2.1.: Research on women in geography

The methodological accounts in this thesis include my own voice in the form of reflection on planning and conduct of research (see chapter three). It can, however, only be regarded as moderately feminist in a political sense. Although I intended to make visible a disadvantaged group of people, integrate the value of their everyday knowledge and uncover relations of power and patriarchy manifested in space, I had no *personal* commitment to become part of the struggle my research subjects encountered (see also chapter three). Furthermore, I did not feel I spent enough time in the field to contribute to socio-political change at the local level. I did not believe, as Moss (1995) suggested that, "by being inside the process I would be able to set effective goals for myself as well as participate in setting emancipatory goals for social and political change collectively from within" (p. 84) (see also G. Rose, 1993; or Shaw, 1995). Lastly, I would not have found it

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[16] Johnson, in Bondi (1990b) "distinguishes between feminist geography and what she terms 'gender geography': the latter treats gender simply as another dimension of social life to be incorporated within existing frameworks; the former seeks a transformation not just of geography but of how we live and how we work" (p.238).

[17] Percentage of all articles about women in geography (total = 177).

adequate, as an outsider, to interfere with social structures in small villages and withdraw from the field after a significant and consequential (perhaps even negative) disruption in my respondents' lives. Instead, I was, as McDowell (1997) proposed, "looking at the actions and meanings of gendered people, at their histories, personalities and biographies, at the meaning of places to them, at the different ways in which spaces are gendered" (p.282) largely as a cultural 'outsider'.

Whilst adopting this standpoint, I also sympathise with Hägerstrand's approach whereby attention is focused on the region as "an interdependent set, or system, of human, natural and technological 'populations'" (Pred, 1977: 642) and the individual. Such "collateral processes", or "large-scale, historical-political developments" (Pred, 1977: 645) which intersect micro-scale development are, for example, the transformations from socialism to market economy, changes on the labour market, the challenge of establishing democratic citizenship and, lastly, 'the rural' as a stage for local activities. All of these processes are discussed in turn in sections 2.3.- 2.7.

2.3. The Wende and women in post-socialist countries

In this section I will first outline the previous foci on East Germany since the Wende in geographic literature, before turning to 'otherness' as insightful concept in my own thesis. Aside from more general overviews of events and problems after unification (Blacksell, 1997; Harris, 1991), the most prominent strand of literature discusses the nature and geographic dimensions of economic change and regional disparities as a consequence of unification (Blien and Hirschenauer, 1994; Jones and Wild, 1997; Kramer, 1998; Schweigel, 1993; Wild, 1992; Wild and Jones, 1993; 1994). The impact of constitutional reforms on public administration (Goetz, 1993; Leonardy, 1994; Osterland, 1994; Wollmann, 1995) and the restitution of property (Blacksell, 1995; Blacksell et al., 1996; Bohlander, 1997; Born, 1997) composed a further key interest.

There is a wealth of literature on post-unification issues in the political and social sciences. The political challenges of unification have been dealt with broadly (Conradt, 1996; Glässner, 1996; Lewis and McKenzie, 1995), or focused on

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[18] Percentage of all articles from those specified as 'feminist' (total = 88).

specific issues (Habermas, 1994; Müller-Hartmann, 1993; Phillips, 1994), and even in more humorous accounts (Schneider, 1992). The consequences of the "natural experiment" (Offe, 1992: 1) of the *Wende* have been evaluated largely by means of statistics that assessed the differences in political and moral values between East and West Germans (Häder and Häder, 1995; Meulemann, 1997; Rose and Page, 1996; Winkler, 1992), and infered how the notion of national identity may have been (re-) constructed (Bauer-Kaase and Kaase, 1996; Veen, 1997; Veen and Zelle, 1995), or what problems were encountered during the restructuring process (Bachmann, 1996; Bachmann and Wurst, 1996; Geissler, 1993; Pollack, 1992), to name some prominent examples.

Few geographic studies centre on the role and experiences of women in post-socialist countries, particularly those in East Germany. It is therefore necessary to consult the non-geographic literature as well to obtain an overview of 'knowledge' about women in this region. In other disciplines, much attention has been devoted to exploring the transformations which affected women in the entire former East Bloc (Corrin, 1992; Einhorn, 1993a; Funk and Müller, 1993; Kligman, 1994; Rueschemeyer, 1994; Watson, 1995). Women in East Germany, too, have been subject to a diversity of investigations which sought to understand the changes in women's lives generally[19], with a view to the family (Beckmann and Bender, 1993; Böckmann-Schewe *et al.*, 1995; Fink, 1994; Kolinsky, 1998; Meyer and Schulze, 1992; Nave-Herz, 1990; Pfaff and Roloff, 1990), or regarding women's status in the labour market (see section 2.4.).

Aside from work by Altmann (1998), DeSoto (1997), Panzig (1994; 1997), or Purgand (1995), however, women in rural East Germany have rarely received academic interest (see also section 2.6. below). The study region for this thesis has not been subject to investigations within any of the areas of interest outlined above. In addition, little published research has explicitly expressed women's own voices to describe experiences and insights gained around the time of unification (with the notable exception of Dodds and Allen-Thompson, 1994; Fischer and Lux, 1990; Ludwig and Franzke, 1993; Panzig *et al.*, 1993), something which was

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[19] See, for example, Bachmann and Wurst (1996), Boa and Wharton (1994), Diemer (1992), Dodds and Allen-Thompson (1994), Dölling (1991a,b), Geiling-Maul *et al.* (1992), Fischer and Lux (1990), Kolinsky (1995, 1996), Lange (1992), Ludwig and Franzke (1993), Marx-Ferree (1993), Nickel (1992), Neumann

a key aim in the context of this thesis. In the following section, I will focus on the concept of 'otherness' which gained significance in those geographies attempting to understand predominantly social issues in East Germany.

In the introduction to this chapter, I made reference to a headline in 'Der Spiegel'. In this article, a sense of difference and 'otherness' was established by pointing to East Germans as 'the new ones' (as if West Germans were not 'new' to the unified Germany) and using the phrases 'them' and 'us'. This notion of 'otherness' has received a fair amount of attention in more recent critical geographic accounts with a view to both East Germany and other, unrelated issues. Feminist geographic literature (see above) has embraced this concept, which was originally derived from Said's (1978) writings on orientalism, to describe methodological concerns as well as denoting problems with socially constructed categories and established dichotomies.

Kitchin (1999) offers a definition which seems to be adopted by both feminist and critical geographers alike. He defined 'others' as

> "those groups in society who are generally marginalised or excluded on the basis of some characteristic(s) (e.g. disability, race, gender, sexuality, lifestyle)" (p.45).

He further stated that

> "[o]thers [...] are a group of people who are perceived to be different, inferior and less deserving than another group" (p.46).

Kitchin then related the concept of otherness to a belonging in (or exclusion from) space and place. He contended that much of the everyday world imposes restrictions onto the activities of certain groups of 'others' such as the disabled causing so-called "design apartheid" (Imrie in Kitchin, 1999: 48)[20].

In Germany such 'design apartheid', leading to the exclusion of 'others' such as women and the unemployed, is apparent in the consolidation of both the West

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(1992), Penrose (1990), Rosenberg (1991), Sharp and Flinspach (1995), Schenk and Schlegel (1993) Sourbut (1997).

German planning system (e.g. access to services through level of mobility, or prioritisation of urban over rural areas- see chapters five and seven) and cultural norms (prejudices against East Germans and the unemployed, or designation of a specific role to women- see chapters five and six). As will be shown below, this has significant implications for the sense of belonging that East German women previously assigned to the community as a physical place and social space. Difference had become such a dominant feature of women's lives since unification that they themselves contributed to the social construction of 'otherness' and consolidated drawn boundaries in their everyday lives.

Hörschelmann (1997) similarly problematised the drawing of boundaries between the two Germanies but argued that

> "the narrative point of departure (and return) is rarely questioned and yet determines, from the outset, a certain perspective on 'the East' as 'other', as an island that can be visited for observation, researched, enjoyed perhaps, but which can always be left behind" (p.389).

In doing so, the (West German) visitor has, however, no real interest in learning from the (East German) 'other', but rather seeks to confirm negative images or assert his/her own power and superiority[21]. The notion of superiority and inferiority associated with the 'two Germanies' and expressed in different values and socio-political 'abilities' (as defined by the Western model) has been discussed elsewhere, too. For example, Smith (1996) shows that there is a common assumption East Germans need to 'catch up' with West Germans and therefore much attention is focused on assessing what is needed and how much time the 'catching up' may take.

Thus, the compliance with exclusionary practices (both in the built and social environment) and unwillingness to challenge these by rural East German women themselves, alongside an expressed disinterest and feeling of superiority by many West Germans (see, for example, Smith, 1996), considerably complicates the mutable nature of existing categories and intra-German understanding. In the

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[20] Hägerstrand, too, discussed the impact of restrictions, in the form of "capability constraints", "coupling constraints" and "authority constraints" (Pred, 1977: 638), on the time-geography of individuals although not exclusively 'others'.
[21] An example may be found in Wiesenthal (1995) who characterised eastern German political competence as "constrained" (p.70).

context of other geographic research, variations of contestation of specific 'meaningful' spaces were, for example, discussed in the post-socialist context by Graham and Regulska (1997), Meurs (1994a, b), Regulska (1998b), Rueschemeyer (1993), or Smith (1996a, b) (although the latter was not specifically a 'gender' study), and in the non-socialist context by Liepins (1998), Scarpaci and Frazier (1993), or Shurmer-Smith and Hannam (1994). The following section develops a framework in which the work-place comprises a 'meaningful' space with economic, political and social implications for the daily activities of women.

2.4. Women in the economy

The gender-specific/feminist interest in the labour market has produced a considerable geographic literature. The vast majority of studies were concerned with investigating conditions of the labour market in urban settings, although the effect of economic restructuring on women's work in developing countries also received much attention.

With regard to the Western urban context, the wealth of studies ranged from gendered implications of job searches (Hanson and Pratt, 1991; Hardill, 1998), gender divisions at the work-place (Bartram and Shobrook, 1998; Breatnach, 1993; Lewis, 1984) and in the labour market (Duncan, 1991; Pinch and Storey, 1992) to the consequences of labour market participation for women's daily patterns (Dyck, 1989; Green et al., 1986; Wekerle, 1984). Studies that were concerned with developing nations include research on the redefinition of daily patterns and spaces for migrant women (Fan and Huang, 1998; Hardill and Raghuram, 1998; Huang and Yeoh, 1996; Raghuram and Momsen, 1993), the effect of economic restructuring on women workers (Chant, 1996; Yeboah, 1998), particularly in rural areas (Barrett and Browne, 1988; Gray, 1993; MacKenzie, 1993; Paul, 1992), as well as the gendered construction of work itself as 'male' or 'female' (Phillips, 1998).

The regional framework and prevailing political ideologies within the Eastern and Central European socialist and post-socialist context is scarcely represented amongst published research. In spite of the marked difference in regional foci, however, many of the findings and theoretical conceptualisations in existing

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studies can equally be related to the context of this research. Hence, this research adds knowledge about a new geographic region to our understanding of the relevance of *global*, gender-differentiating trends and their effects on women at the *local* level.

I will briefly outline the thematic emphases of gender/feminist geographic research before turning to concepts which assume relevance in this study as well. In general, studies obtained from the literature were about women in part- or full-time employment, in informal, home-based, or formal work, and the impact on women who changed their employment status within these categories was frequently attended to. However, the regression from full employment to unemployment has not been the focus of many geographic studies, neither in the Western capitalist nor in the post-socialist context. But it is not simply the change of status which is of interest in this research. Rather, the complex relationship, 'interference', or dominance of work and the work-place in women's daily lives and spatial activities are sought to be disentangled.

In her study on integrating home and wage workplace, Dyck (1989) described the interrelations between economic change, everyday experiences and the local and therefore appropriates questions also significant to this thesis. A key notion is that women's role in the labour market may (or should) be viewed with respect to local processes. Dyck (1989) thus stated that:

> "the rapid economic, social and demographic changes [...] have presented a new reality for investigation, fostering a reconceptualization of urban [and rural] structuring, and prompting questions concerning the implications of social and economic restructuring for contemporary life in the spaces of the [community]. How, in fact, are everyday experiences and actions connected to wider social and economic processes, and what new issues might be addressed in our interpretations of the complex relationships between agency, space, and structure? A renewed emphasis on place in analysis stresses the value of close investigation and detailed accounts of empirical change in depicting and understanding the ways in which localities both shape and are shaped by everyday actions" (p.329).

In some of the 'employment' studies, commentators pointed out the need for more in-depth data reflecting *everyday experiences* at the workplace or, more generally, in people's working lives (Dyck, 1989; Kyriazis, 1998; McDowell, 1994). These experiences have largely been neglected in non-geographic literature on East

German women's position in the new labour market. For example, few accounts are concerned with investigating constraints women face in labour market choices (Baylina and Garcia-Ramon, 1998), the meaning of work to women themselves (Kyriazis, 1998), the disruptions and transformations of identities based on economic change (McDowell, 1994) or as a consequence of women's location within liberal market economies (Perrons, 1995). Most of the literature in the East German context relied, instead, on the representation of labour market inequalities based on statistics (see, for instance Maier, 1993; Fink *et al.*, 1993; Fink and Grajewski, 1994; Gerhard and Veil, 1990; Marx-Ferree and Young, 1993; Pfeiffer, 1996; Quack and Maier, 1994; Rudolph, 1990; Sørensen and Trappe, 1993) and only few drew on women's everyday experiences, the meaning of interactions at the work-*place*[22] (with the notable exception of Beck, 1998; Beer and Müller 1993), and the need for surrogate socio-cultural spaces today (with the notable exception of Panzig *et al.*, 1993).

Some labour market studies conducted at the regional level in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania (or Brandenburg) do focus specifically on the situation of women. These studies were predominantly concerned with stating, in quantitative terms, how women were disadvantaged as long-term unemployed, often under-qualified and relatively immobile group, regarding their 'employability', participation in short-term employment measures or 'women projects' such as in rural tourism and crafts (see, for instance, Altmann, 1997; Dahms *et al.*, 1994; 1996; Putzing, 1996; Slawinski, 1996). Although Ackermann *et al.* (1993) found that work (but not the work-*place*) was significant for women's quality of life, no further discussion was offered to explore this theme.

In spite of valuable insights into labour market dynamics and the nature of gendered exclusions in non-geographic literature, few studies have added a geographic dimension to previously observed social and economic processes. Research from employment studies in geography, particularly using qualitative data, would thus add new dimensions to the existing literature on post-socialist, gendered labour markets. I will illustrate this with the help of some examples.

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[22] Women's past work-*place*, in this research, refers to the agricultural co-operative

By investigating both the gender division and gendered meaning of the past and present work-*place* in East Germany, for instance, an understanding of the variation of women's socio-economic status through time and space (as suggested in Yeboah, 1998, for example[23]) can be gained. I embrace the dimension of spatial variation, because East German women 'migrated' even though they did not move physically. The West German system was placed *onto* the former socialist territory whereby a new space of reference was created for those inhabiting the affected region. In addition, the work-*place* in the study area must itself be regarded as a significant social space as it was essentially equal to the confinements of the village. Depending on how narrow one draws boundaries in the conceptualisation of work-*place*, this could indeed be regarded as an 'unfocused locale' (Dyck, 1990; Phua and Yeoh, 1998) as it provided space for chance meetings, as well as a 'focused locale' when functioning as organised space for community work or activities in the working collective (see also chapter eight). In this research, I utilise the boundaries women respondents suggested adopting a definition of work-*place* which is generous in its spatial extent and therefore include the entity of the village.

The restricted mobility of many women in relation to the accessibility of the work-*place* has been repeatedly stated both in the geographic and non-geographic literature. Gilbert (1998) also noted that, sometimes, mobility is incorrectly equated with power and immobility with powerlessness, which is "too simplistic to capture spatiality of women's daily lives" (p.616). Fan and Huang (1998) found that, in their study, marriage became a "means for achieving [geographic and economic] mobility" (p.246), whilst Gilbert (1998) investigated the nature of immobility, i.e. the "spatial entrapment of women" through "patriarchal structures of inequality" (p.616). She concluded that communal boundaries can both constrain and enable women depending on the level of women's rootedness in the community and their use of local networks. Raghuram and Momsen (1993) similarly reinforced the use of social networks to enable women's local activities. The nature and effect of job search strategies, for instance, can be affected by these networks (Hanson and Pratt, 1991). In particular, the issues of patriarchal power, rootedness and local networks are also of interest in the context of this research (see discussion below).

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[23] see also discussion of Hägerstrand's concept of time-geography in Pred (1977), for example.

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[23] see also discussion of Hägerstrand's concept of time-geography in Pred (1977), for example.

discussion in the recent literature. The following section draws from this discussion and outlines key themes relevant to this thesis.

2.5. Concepts of local democracy

This thesis draws attention to significant spatial changes at the local level. Post-unification changes such as privatisation of agricultural means of production and local services impacted on the gendered use of space in the village and altered (or even terminated) activities and meanings previously associated with specific places (see also chapter eight). Other changes such as the restructuring of the labour market accelerated the formation of new socio-spatial patterns within the community. Emerging dichotomies such as employed/unemployed, mobile/ immobile, integrated/excluded, public/private or masculine/feminine became significant denominators for who gained democratic citizenship and who did not. Various commentators in different cultural contexts stated, for instance, that democratic "citizenship (and access to political process)" is related to property (Cravey, 1998: 530), which is often restricted to men. This section presents a critique of traditional democratic concepts and the feminist framework adopted for this thesis.

Relatively few accounts within feminist geographic have focused on local democracy compared with more abundant discussions in both (feminist) sociological and political literature. Hence, the argumentation for this theoretical framework draws largely from non-geographic texts.

The exclusion of women from democratic citizenship at large is often ascribed to the patriarchal nature of the democratic process. This has been observed by commentators of both the Western (capitalist) and Eastern (post-communist) societies. In addition, some authors have criticised that Western democratic concepts have been accepted as a model for the East irrespective of the need of revision in light of their relevance to the aspect of gender (Eisenstein, 1993) and the post-communist context (Przeworski, 1995). Other authors have ascribed great importance to the local as setting for the integration of women into the political process (Regulska, 1998a, b), or to addressing power issues and gender in the context of rural politics (Bourke and Luloff, 1997).

According to some radical democratic theorists, democracy can empower people as they become both knowledgeable and more aware of the needs of others and themselves (Warren, 1996). Radical democrats adhere to a notion of universal rather than individual interests which politics should be concerned with. Young (1989) argued that this standpoint can, however, ignore the interests of marginalised or oppressed groups. Watson (1995) quoted Giddens to reinforce this claim:

> "Modernity [...] produces difference, exclusion and marginalisation. Holding out the possibility of emancipation, modern institutions at the same time create mechanisms of suppression, rather than actualisation of self."(p.485)

Eduards' (1994) discussion implied that women are marginalised in the way Giddens describes because, as a "sex group" (p.183), they lack choices and control over their own lives and are thus victims of politics. Warren's (1996) perspective on democracy focused predominantly on reflections of the individual, rather than the universal or the group, and his discussion promoted the potential of a democratic development for autonomy, i.e. an individual interpretation of one's own needs. A key notion, however, that Warren seems to under-value is a feminist viewpoint which ascribes importance to uniqueness as an individual *as well* as sameness in the group of women within the concept of democracy[24] (Phillips, 1992; Eisenstein, 1993).

Feminism recognises that women live as part of a sexual class and thus as part of a collective existence. Eisenstein (1993) criticised radical democrats for not specifying that citizens are of both sexes. She challenged the restricted concept of equality between sexes merely as equality of the right to work, a notion evident in Liberalism and Marxism. By restricting equality and democracy to economic aspects, which is almost exclusively the case in both theoretical debates, women's issues are marginalised and women themselves disadvantaged (see also Eduards, 1994). With respect to this notion, Regulska (1998a) quoted Walesa in observations on Poland:

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[24] The latter point has also been criticised with regard to postmodern literature in that it dis-empowers women to assemble as a group for political purposes (Gibson-Graham, 1994). Mc Dowell (1990) stated, for instance, that "the radical relativism of postmodernism leads to political paralysis, the increasing sensitivity

"The principle that guides Poland's social and economic policy, which gives priority to material goods over human needs caries serious dangers for the entire society, but in particular for women." (p.33)

Watson (1995) stated that patriarchy had been a characteristic of both the socialist and the post-communist political system. However, whereas under communism, both men *and* women were disempowered together contemporary socio-political developments throughout the former Eastern Block take place in a highly gender-differentiated way. Graham and Regulska (1997) exemplified this in the case of Poland by arguing that the new political ideology facilitated a gender division by offering men the freedom to discriminate against women. Hence, they state that "democracy's celebration of individual freedoms does not translate into liberation for women" (p.5). Przeworski (1995) reiterated that public powers need to protect the rights of individuals and that certain social (such as education, access to welfare services) and economic (such as material security) prerequisites are necessary if individuals are to exercise their citizenship effectively. Within the discussion of findings in this thesis, Przeworski's observation becomes a key issue in bridging gaps within currently established dichotomies (see above) at the local level.

The functioning and sustainability of democracy is also dependent on the extent to which institutions manage to generate notions of social, economic and political equality and in how far democratic institutions can effectively regulate 'major' conflicts. Przeworski (1995) did not address the issue of gender-relations in his discussion. It is necessary to explicitly address the rights of women as individuals and as a sexual class and turn political attention to securing social and economic requirements to empower them as effective citizens. Furthermore, issues that are significant to women and their access to public power must be regarded as 'major conflicts' that are fundamental to democracy, aside from an almost exclusive focus on economic growth.

Regulska (1998b) claimed that women's political empowerment includes access to resources. Women's focus is therefore on social issues such as housing, education, safety, and the environment, and their initiatives are directed at the

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to difference within feminism is combined with an ideal of unity [...] that ensures political purpose is never eclipsed" (p.165).

redistribution of such resources (see also Meyer and Loboa, 1994; Sachs, 1994). These issues, for instance, could be thought of as 'practical politics' (Eduards, 1994; Pettersen and Solbakken, 1998). Such an approach to the political process is based on everyday activities within meaningful spaces at the local level. In addition, it demonstrates that 'the political' and 'the social' are essentially inseparable (see also, Regulska, 1998b).

The above discussion suggests that women are purposeful actors and, indeed, Eduards (1994) argued that "given the chance, people will try to influence the course of events as much as possible, rather than sit back and suffer changes." (p.181) The recognition that this capability may differ as a result of the socio-political background of actors does not reduce the overall claim that women, were they not politically repressed by a patriarchal system, would be active agents of change. However, Warren (1996) stated that it is more likely the political process as such is to be regarded as unattractive irrespective of gender. He argued, for instance, that theories of radical democracy assume universal social bonds and solidarity facilitate political activity, but ignore the demands of political activity on the individual actor. Warren claimed that political engagement is unattractive to individuals, and he indicated further that avoidance of political involvement or acceptance of the given can be more satisfying options. Graham and Regulska (1997) extended this argument to (Polish) women by saying, as noted above, that women in particular regard politics as a dirty game.

Graham and Regulska, Warren, and Young all implied that the lack of educational opportunities and spaces in which to practice democratic experiences, and the lack of significant impact of individual political activity, caused political dialogues to remain problematic. Women as a group should realise that they must act as a collective agency (Graham and Regulska, 1997). They need to examine comprehensively which barriers and, more importantly, which opportunities there are in political participation (see also Kamenista, 1997). Graham and Regulska (1997) also stated that the meaning others ascribe to women as socio-political actors, as individuals or as collective agency has, however, been neglected. In the context of this research this has been particularly problematic as a significant number of women are also unemployed. Therefore, 'public' perceptions of women

as incompetent political agents need to be challenged as well as the stigmatisation of the unemployed.

Due to defensive patriarchal structures at the higher political and administrative levels, women's entry to formal politics is greatly impeded. This, in turn, raises questions about the extent to which women *can* effectively exercise their rights and obligations as citizens. In the case of Poland, Graham and Regulska (1997) argued that women mistrust the public sphere and the significance of politics for local progress. These feelings of suspicion, in addition to a general uncertainty about the future and the threat of a socio-political reform to previously enjoyed benefits, have caused women to retreat to the private sphere and 'wait-and-see' rather than become active agents. Nonetheless, it is at the local level that women can develop skills such as knowledge about rules, laws, operating procedures and power dynamics within the political process, and establish networks which will facilitate a step towards their integration into higher levels of the political process (Kamenista, 1997)[25].

The above review of democratic frameworks suggests that a key problem is the inappropriateness of existing democratic institutions which do not sufficiently legitimise women as political agents, and which do not formalise women's concerns in the form of a political agenda. Greater political attention is therefore needed to transform women's legal rights to social and economic equality into de facto rights. Regulska (1998a) reinforced that the importance of women's participation at the local level needs to be more explicitly recognised and the need for their political contribution translated into local activism. Hence, the local political culture must support local and integrative strategies.

The observations made by Regulska (1998a, b) and Graham and Regulska (1997) in Poland can largely be assumed for East Germany as well. Even though East Germany, unlike Poland, was subsumed into a ready-made political system, the economic and social consequences of the collapse of communism on the rural population reveals considerable similarities between the two regions (see chapter one). In the "New Länder", the local level has remained an important unit for

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[25] Sachs (1994), Schmitt (1994) and Teather (1994) offered examples on the significance of local initiatives for women, and the challenge imposed by the staticness of gender roles, in rural areas.

women's political participation because women are not only dependent on progress in the village due to lack of mobility, but because women are emotionally still "deeply rooted" (p.7) within the locally confined area (Altmann, 1997).

Women's issues are, however, not considered to be compelling by dominant political actors compared with other, more immediate and 'universal', economic and societal problems. Thus, political negligence of women's issues and the deterioration of women's social and economic situation today, compared with that before unification, have contributed to an actual repression of the expression of women's interest and consequently of women's political power (Rueschemeyer, 1994). This research augments the discussion of the efficiency of democratic institutions in drawing women into the socio-political process by investigating women's own perceptions of and experiences with local democracy.

2.6. The rural 'stage'

Of the issues reviewed in the previous sections, few have obtained significance in the context of rural studies. Instead, the bulk of rural literature is concerned with the impact of changes in economic structures on women by addressing labour market issues (for instance, Blekesaune et al., 1993; LeClere, 1991; Padavic, 1993). Women's roles as farmers, off-farm workers, industrial homeworkers and/or domestic workers are investigated in relation to differences in regional processes (Cotter et al., 1996; Little, 1994; McLaughlin and Perman, 1991; Tickamyer and Bokemeier, 1988) and the local socio-cultural context (Gringeri, 1993; Meyer and Lobao, 1994; Sachs, 1994; Teather, 1994). Previous studies investigated, for example, how women became involved in farming and what kind of duties and control they have had (O'Hara, 1994; Haugen, 1994; Whatmore et al., 1994). Similarly, several commentators have interpreted women's activities in local organisations as a response to agro-political and socio-political 'wrongs' in the local context (Mackenzie, 1994; Sachs, 1994; Teather, 1994; 1996) and discussed the implications of such activities for women's empowerment (Alston and Wilkinson, 1998; Wells, 1998).

Shortall (1992) claimed that

"studies conducted in almost all parts of the world, with differing agricultural systems and at various stages of development, have come up with similar findings about the role and position of women" (p.143).

However, most published research has been carried out in the US, UK, or Australia (except, for example, Barrett *et al.*, 1991; Blekesaune, 1993; Clay and McAllister, 1991; Pfeffer, 1989; Tisch and Paris, 1994; Williams *et al.*, 1997). Thus, knowledge has been obtained largely from within the Western capitalist context but not the socialist. In spite of some rural research reported from Eastern Europe (such as that on family farms by Abrahams, 1994; Dobreva, 1994; Kovách, 1994), I am aware only of contributions by Meurs (1994a, b) who explored the impact of post-socialist transitions on rural women.

In the majority of studies the focus is on the family, instead of women and/or men as individuals. The conceptualisation of women as component of a family or as 'wife' (Dorfman *et al.*, 1988; Godwin and Marlowe, 1990; Lorenz *et al.*, 1993; Moore, 1989) assumes the persistence of traditional models of the nuclear family oriented toward farm life. Women's involvement in the community has often been described as taking place in the context of their membership in women's groups, and detached from their lives as family-farm-workers (see Alston and Wilkinson, 1998; Pettersen and Solbakken, 1998; Verstad, 1998). As family-farmers, women were also involved in capitalist structures of ownership, and the management of production and sale of farm products. In general, the farm was therefore part of the home[26] (see, for instance, Alston, 1995; Gray, 1996; 1998). Fitchen (1991), for example, concluded that "farm families in upstate New York not only *live on* their dairy farms, they *live* their farms" (p.15, original emphasis).

In order to generate extra income for the family, rural women turned to off-farm opportunities whilst still remaining responsible for the household. But neither women's work on the family-farm nor income generated through non-farm activities raised their status within the family, in terms of power or decision-making, to that of men (Harper Simpson *et al.*, 1988; Hillebrand and Blom, 1993; Keating and Little, 1994; Meares, 1997; Pfeffer, 1989) unless women assumed managerial positions (Rogers and Vandeman, 1993).

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[26] In contrast, de Haan (1993) stated that a "separation between family and farm [...] within farm families are increasingly occupying farmers" (p.164) (see also Djurfeldt, 1996; Kritzinger and Vorster, 1996; Walter and Wilson, 1996).

In the former GDR, rural women were part of working collectives similar to those in the industrial sector. Although the family was also regarded as important, women were seen predominantly as workers and mothers, working within the agricultural co-operative independently of their husbands' or partners' employment and/or status. Women were still responsible for the management of the household and the care of the family but many household tasks were 'socialised' such as through public childcare, kitchens, cleaning and mending services (see chapter four). In addition, few women were involved in 'traditional' farm women occupations such as preservation and processing of food for personal use, or doing traditional crafts at the home. More likely, women's 'spare time' was composed of activities within the collective and various local groups or, in the home, recovering from work in front of the tv (see chapter seven).

Rather than perceiving the farm as part of the home, the home in the GDR was largely separated from the place of gainful employment. The 'farm', i.e. the co-operative, was a communal undertaking, and a considerable number of communal activities were organised and carried out in the context of working collectives. Instead of regarding "the farm as family" (Kritzinger and Vorster, 1997: 131), the co-operative was equivalent to the village (see chapters four, six and seven). Ownership of the 'farm' was only theoretical and partial in the sense of having, at some point in the past, contributed land and farming equipment to the co-operative farm. Returns from farm produce were in the form of wages or end-of-year- premiums. Managerial problems such as organising the labour force, or dealing with supply problems were not part of every-day life for women/ families in the GDR (see chapter six).

Women's income contributed to about 40% of the overall household income. In order to generate extra income for the family, women turned to farming opportunities on small private plots at the home before and after normal working hours. Private plots have been described elsewhere with reference to family farms in Eastern Europe (Kovách, 1994), or more specifically Estonia (Abrahams, 1994) or Bulgaria (Dobreva, 1994). Particularly Kovách's (1994) contribution indicated that private plots essentially had the function of private part-time family-farms. In this research, however, respondents referred to such plots exclusively as

gardens, even if animals were kept, indicating it was more like a recreational activity. In spite of many similarities in work tasks completed on these plots in the GDR and other socialist countries prior to 1989, their significance is very different today. Dobreva (1994) suggested that the 'private-plots-turned-family-farms' still provided part of the national output in Bulgaria after 1989. Due to the prevailing market-oriented structure in eastern Germany though, this option was no longer viable for rural women.

In spite of the observed, general trends in the Western capitalist, rural context and the marked differences to socialist farming, some developments were similarly experienced in both systems. Regarding social issues in agriculture, for instance, a remarkable similarity is the reproduction of agricultural gender roles. Several authors (Brandth, 1995; Brandth and Haugen, 1998; Liepins and Schick, 1998; Pettersen and Solbakken, 1998; Schmitt, 1998; Walter and Wilson, 1996) have investigated elements that contribute to the formation and reproduction of gender roles in the rural societies. It is interesting to note from Schmitt's (1998) article on gender segregation in farm apprenticeships in West Germany that women's real choices regarding their future occupation are significantly obstructed by people with social (see also Brandth, 1995; Schmitt, 1998) and political power (see Alston and Wilkinson, 1998; Pettersen and Solbakken, 1998; Verstad, 1998). Although in the GDR the State clearly decided and implemented the nature and extent of gender-differentiation in agricultural professions, in the West social norms and the role of official advisors reproduce "existing gender relationships and the corresponding hierarchy" (Schmitt, 1998: 313). This issue of obvious restrictions in women's socio-political freedoms will gain significance in the discussion of local democracy in chapter seven.

With respect to economic developments, a phase of restructuring and expansion of farms observed in the US in the 1970s, for instance, also took place in the GDR. But due to differences between the two systems in ownership structures and government planning, the impact on individual persons, on gender roles and gender relations was not even. Problems for women in relation to off-farm labour market dynamics, access to public services and mobility resulting from agricultural restructuring were, until 1989, divergent. Since unification, however, East German women have become subject to similar, market-oriented agricultural structures

including European agricultural policies and cutbacks in social services. The impact of global structures on the local context can now be more readily compared. The Eastern European studies mentioned above indicated that the family-farm will gain significance for rural women in those regions as well. However, Bergmann (1992), Kovách (1994) and Krambach (1991), for instance, shed doubt on the successful implementation of this model throughout all of the former GDR.

The discussion above indicates that knowledge about farm women is regionally unbalanced. It is then interesting to note what is known about women's different experiences within the capitalist, family-based compared with socialist, co-operative-based farming structures until and since 1989, and how such knowledge has been produced. With respect to the latter, a key observation is that the vast majority of studies on women in families and as wives in the Western context have employed a quantitative methodology. Key analytical tools are regression and multivariate analysis (see, for instance, Slesinger and Cautley, 1988; Willits et al., 1988). In spite of some critical reviews of the predominance of this approach to rural studies (Doorman, 1989; Harris et al., 1995), few research accounts are narrative, ethnographic, or feminist (with the notable exception of studies collated in a special issue of Sociologia Ruralis, 1998). It appears that, perhaps as a result of this "methodological monism" (Harper, 1991: 70), the thematic foci are relatively limited to descriptions of issues that can be statistically referenced. However, even issues that appear to benefit from a qualitative research design, if not contribute more significantly to an understanding of the issue under investigation, are addressed in quantitative terms.

For instance, Albrecht (1998) 'measured' the implications of industrial transformations on family structures and socio-economic conditions solely by means of indices for poverty, employment, marital status and household income. Similarly, Albrecht et al. (1998) measured how respondents 'experienced' the community using indices, Tickamyer and Bokemeier (1988) accounted for the 'experience' of men and women in the labour market in the same way, Simons et al. (1997) researched the quality of parenting with statistics, and Dorfman et al. (1988) demonstrated retirement satisfaction of rural couples. Perhaps more significantly, though, Moore (1989) investigated agrarian and non-agrarian

identities by means of statistical categories and Hooper and England (1988) even the *liberation* of women from traditional sex roles through rapid growth, themes that beg a feminist approach.

Scott (1996) equally pointed out that women and men may use different descriptions and wordings to illustrate their farm lives[27]. Statistical categories can therefore be misleading and may lose explanatory powers. Fortman *et al.* (1997) concluded that "[c]learly, in-depth field studies are called for" (p.309) (see also Axinn and Fricke, 1996; Evans and Ilbery, 1996; Kritzinger and Vorster, 1996).

In spite of notable qualitative contributions to rural studies such as by Alston (1995), Chiappe and Butler Flora (1998), Gray (1998), Keating and Little (1994), Meares (1997), or Salazar (1995)[28], much remains to be learnt about 'others' in rural areas[29], or the everyday experiences of farm workers. All of these contributions are from a non-socialist perspective and can serve as a basis for comparisons with post-socialist development of changing gender roles and gender relations, particularly where family-farms have been "re-generated" (Abrahams, 1994: 354). But with regard to accounts of rural, socialist women much information obtained now will be post-hoc or even speculative. Rueschemeyer's (1981; 1983) studies on the working collective in the GDR captured some elements of women's experience that are equally valid for many rural women. Furthermore, Kritzinger and Vorster's (1996) research on rural working-class women in South Africa raised issues that also emerged in the process of this research. The thesis, then, intends to contribute to illuminating yet more of rural Eastern European women's lives in socialism and since the beginning of capitalist and democratic transformations around 1989.

2.7. Conclusion

This chapter set out to illustrate how the thesis as a whole embraces a variety of theoretical strands in current geography. Although analysed data are presented as separate themes by means of chapters in the thesis, issues discussed in this chapter are weaved throughout the 'story' as a whole. The chapter has argued

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[27] In light of Scott's statement, it is interesting to note that a considerable number of articles are also written by men as sole researchers or part of male or mixed research teams.

[28] For mixed methods see, for instance Axinn and Fricke (1996), or Dahlström (1996).

[29] With the exception of Bell and Valentine, 1995; Fitchen, 1992; Lawrence, 1995

that academic interest in feminist research has shifted from making women visible per se to focusing on the standpoint of women themselves. An awareness of power relations in research and the significance of women's everyday knowledge therefore assumed a central position. I then noted that various 'collateral processes' need equally be discussed in order to appreciate the complexity of developments at the micro-scale. The review of earlier studies assisted in establishing an interdisciplinary framework in which this research may also be positioned whilst, at the same time, revealing how it may contribute to the furtherance of 'knowledge'.

First, the discussion of post-unification developments has focused on economy and large-scale politics whilst largely neglecting the social trauma that resulted from the transitions. Some commentators contended there was little or no interest in learning from the 'other' in East Germany on equal terms. Learning from the 'other' in this research embraces broadly three areas: that of rural living, the labour process and the local political culture. As noted above, this research complements earlier studies on women's everyday experiences in employment by illustrating differences in the integration of women into socialist and capitalist working conditions. Particularly the investigation of the unemployed status with its complex social, economic and political consequences for women at the local level contribute to current geographic discussions. With reference to the concept of 'time-geography', this research also provides further insight into various constraints to women's daily movements. A key constraint is that of authority. This chapter discussed previous literature on democratic theory and problems emerging as seen from a feminist standpoint. This research adds perspectives to the discussion of democratic citizenship by examining various elements that contribute to power relations which have affected women throughout their lives. Although it does not offer solutions, the study aims to provide more depth to an understanding of the local as a 'container' for social, economic and political spaces. Consequently, knowledge of such interrelated processes can help challenge inflexible power relations and gender roles. Particularly where findings of this study are related to wider regional or global processes in rural areas as outlined in this chapter, the research can enhance current discussions by academic commentators and political actors of the experience of women in remotely situated regions.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH PLANNED AND PRACTISED: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.1. Introduction

The purpose of this research was to investigate socio-economic and political changes in rural areas in the former East Germany. Focusing specifically on women, key concerns were (1) experiences at the work-place as a meaningful social, economic and political space and as significant component of women's identity pre-1989; and (2) the gender-specific impact of socio-economic restructuring on the changing dynamics in the labour market and the formation of democratic citizenship post-1989.

A preliminary investigation was undertaken in August 1996 and a pilot focus group in April 1997 and key informant interviews in June 1997. Between October 1996 and May 1998, data was also collected through correspondence. Further empirical research was carried out using focus groups in six villages in the Uecker Randow region of Mecklenburg-Westpommerania in July 1998. Where necessary, this material was supplemented by regional statistics, academic literature and documentary sources obtained from GDR archives. The analysis utilised a modified grounded theory approach and the computer assisted analysis package NUD.IST version 4.0.

This chapter is divided into four main sections. First, the three research objectives are reviewed with regard to assumptions made prior to the research, and methods applied to investigate each objective. Then, key principles within feminist methodology are described with a focus on empowerment and ethical issues. Both empowerment and research ethics play a major role in the selection of research methods for this thesis. In the third section, the research process is outlined and the rationale behind sampling, the means towards achieving validity and reliability and the theoretical framework for data analysis are explained. Last, the computer-assisted analysis is discussed using illustrative examples from this research.

3.2. Research objectives, assumptions and methods

The following section reviews the research objectives outlined in chapter one, initial research questions related to the objective (where appropriate) and the methods chosen to achieve the objective. The rationale for each method is explained in greater detail in section 3.4. which also contains examples of topic guides used within the fieldwork.

3.2.1. Objective one

The first objective was to assess the general implications of unification for women in rural areas. The assumptions underlying this objective were that (1) unification had a significant impact on women's lives[30] and (2) the impact on women in rural areas was more negative than that in urban settings (see, for example, Blien and Hirschenauer, 1994; Franzky and Wölfing, 1997; Thöne, 1993).

In order to address objective one, research questions that were posed were, for example: (1) What are the changes women have experienced since unification? (2) What are the consequences of such changes for women's everyday lives and quality of life? (3) How can the observed changes be categorised, i.e. are there recurrent themes? (4) Are some changes more significant than others and why? (5) Do women identify sources that have caused positive and negative changes?

During the preliminary analysis of data obtained from correspondence, it became apparent that the most significant change was that of women's employment status. Therefore, the research objective was altered to accommodate this finding which then offered scope for a more focused investigation of post-unification changes.

In order to explore the above research questions four techniques were adopted: correspondence, key informant interviews, focus groups and the use of literature. Chapter six comprises a discussion of the initial questions and further questions that emerged during the collection of data or analysis. As the most significant

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[30] Although it is not argued that the implications for men were insignificant, it has been asserted elsewhere that women were affected most by post-unification changes (see, for example, Dölling (1991a, b) Kolinsky (1996), Nickel (1993), Rosenberg (1991), Sharp and Flinspach (1995)).

issue was the change in the labour market dynamics, this theme was separated from the general discussion and placed in chapter seven.

3.2.2. Objective two

The second objective was to explore the dynamics behind the formulation of norms, meanings and motivations as 'cultural capital' determining the level of women's integration. As with objective one, this objective was altered through the research process itself.

Both correspondence and key informant interviews identified the working collective as a key factor with regards to the two phenomena of (1) women's perceptions of their overall well-being before unification and (2) women's withdrawal from public life and socio-political activities since unification. GDR literature offered little information on the context of the working collective and more recent post-unification literature merely hints at the significance of the lost social context of work. In order to substantiate and possibly verify the hypothesis that the working collective influenced current motivations in women's participation in the restructuring process, the correspondents were asked to comment on their experience of working and socialising in their collectives. Furthermore, as soon as 'the collective' became an issue in interviews, it was integrated into the topic guide. Consequently, I asked for activities undertaken in the collective, who organised activities, if the organisers were rewarded and in which way, and what happened to the collective and its members after unification. Data obtained in relation to this topic were ordered both chronologically and thematically, and are discussed throughout chapters five to eight.

3.2.3. Objective three

The third objective was to evaluate critically how pre-and post- unification patterns have influenced the restructuring process in rural areas , i.e. to identify the range of factors which motivate or inhibit women to participation in the restructuring process today.

Assumptions underlying this objective were that women's pre-unification experiences contributed to certain behavioural patterns at the time of this research. The concept of path dependence (see chapter one) is adopted in this

part of the inquiry. Women's past and contemporary experiences could develop into barriers to or potentials for women's participation in village restructuring today. For instance, women might have developed certain communication skills in their working collective, and some acquired specific qualifications which enabled them to contribute to the establishment of networks in the restructuring process (*potential*). However, failed expectations of continued work and social care as well as high social risks, have left many women dismayed and unwilling to contribute to new developments in their village (*barrier*). In addition to these and other *internal* barriers prevalent in women, *external* structures related to the planning initiatives themselves can compose further factors influencing the participation motivation.

Official documentation and secondary literature were used to obtain an insight into the general structure of regional planning initiatives with a focus on the social structure at the local level as well as incentives for participation. Key informant interviews assisted in gaining an understanding of different rural restructuring instruments for development at a local level. Such instruments range from regional to international funds and guidelines, some of which legally binding, others merely advisory.

3.3. Feminist influence, empowerment and ethical issues

In order to choose suitable methods of inquiry, including the selection of field sites and sampling strategy, the research approach was guided by the research objectives. With regard to a methodology for this research, a feminist approach was adopted. German unification, often regarded by social researchers as a 'natural experiment' (see, for instance, Jefferey, 1995; Offe, 1992), produced a form of transformation by which

> "old boundaries [were] being transgressed and disrupted and replaced by new divisions... whereby men and women ... [were] differentially affected, and the links between identity and a sense of belonging to a particular territory or place are being remapped" (McDowell, 1996: 38).

However, rather than doing research *on* women after unification, this investigation adhered to a key feminist aim, namely to produce a study *for* women[31] (see, for example, Gilbert, 1994; Harding, 1987). The roles that both myself as the researcher and the women as participants played constituted a significant part of the project. Thus, a largely participatory research strategy was designed; (1) to provide a means towards empowerment; (2) to raise the respondents' awareness of their own part in the research and; (3) to comply with research ethics. All of these concerns received much attention in the research tradition of both critical social scientists and feminist researchers (see, for instance, Dyck, 1993; McDowell, 1992a; D. Rose, 1993 for context in geography). Although many feminist geographers approved of the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods for gender-based research (see, for example, McDowell, 1992 or; McLafferty, 1995), other feminist researchers also claimed that quantitative methods were incapable of "verbalising" (Finch, 1991: 197) women's experiences. Instead, quantitative research attempts to take place in an "ultra-rational and objectified way" and thus "represent a distortion of women's experience" (Finch, 1991: 197). As this research was concerned with obtaining 'thick' descriptions of the complexity of women's own experiences, qualitative methods constituted the preferred method.

In addition, there was a political, feminist research aim in that I myself took a strong personal interest in the study (see also Reinharz, 1983) and tried to do the research in the interest and to the benefit of women (see also Gilbert, 1994; Harding, 1987). In contrast to some other feminist studies, this research does not take a stance whereby it is claimed that all women are discriminated against, excluded and oppressed in society, neither does it incorporate a commitment at a personal level to "the transformation of gender relations" (Ramazanoglu, 1992: 207) and stimulate change within a feminist movement (Gilbert, 1994). But empowerment of research participants, as well as research ethics, were prominent concerns in this research and were incorporated because they represented features of my own research morale. I therefore sympathised with Katz's (1994) standpoint of "fram[ing] questions that are once of substantive and theoretical

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[31] This refers predominantly to the research process itself rather than the end-product. Although, as stated above, it may be a useful reference for policy-makers it is unlikely that the study will initiate policy changes. In addition, as long as the thesis is available only in (academic) English, the vast majority of women in the study area will find it inaccessible.

interest as well as of practical significance to those with whom we work" (p.72). As will be discussed below, feedback from the correspondents indicated that the aim of 'practical significance' to the women respondents had been achieved.

3.3.1. Empowerment

An assumption made prior to the research was that rural women in the study area would be largely passive with respect to their socio-political involvement in communal life. Hence, Neuman's (1994) discussion of prevalent social conditions prior to empowerment became significant in this research context. He stated that

> "people are creative, changeable, and adaptive. Despite [this], people can also be misled, mistreated, and exploited by others. They become trapped in a web of social meanings, obligations, and relationships. They fail to see how change is possible and thus lose their independence, freedom and control over their lives. This happens when people allow themselves to become isolated and detached from others in similar situations" (p.69).

A key aim of critical theory is to change such conditions and

> "to supply people with a resource that helps them understand and change the world... A good critical theory teaches people about their own experiences, helps them understand their historical role, and can be used by *ordinary people* to improve conditions." (Neuman, 1994: 70, emphasis added)

As mentioned above, this study incorporated qualitative methods into the research design for they may "allow us to both describe women's actions and reveal the meaning of these actions for them" (Dyck, 1993: 53) more effectively than do quantitative techniques such as survey questionnaires[32]. Due to the limited interaction and equality between researcher and participant as well as restricted personal satisfaction for the participants, quantitative methods neither contribute sufficiently to the aim of empowerment of research participants nor to the ongoing researcher-participant dialogue (see, for example, Acker *et al.*, 1983, or Duelli-Klein, 1983). It is primarily for these reasons that techniques such as focus groups (Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1988, 1993, 1998a, b), key informant interviews (Gildchrist, 1992) and correspondence (Letherby and Zdrodowsky, 1995; Zdrodowsky, 1996) were applied. By combining methods in an experimental and 'experiential' way (Reinharz, 1992; Hammersley, 1992), this research also aimed

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[32] The divide between quantitative and qualitative research methods and methodologies were discussed in Bryman (1994), Robson (1993) or Sarantakos (1993), for example.

to contribute to "expanding qualitative, interpretative and ethnographic methods" which can be "more sympathetic to the human beings involved" (Pile, 1991: 458).

Related to the issue of empowerment was the claim of many feminist researchers that the researcher-participant relationship is exploitative and unbalanced in more traditional, non-feminist research (Duelli-Klein, 1983). McDowell (1992a) also argued that the researcher carries great responsibility to achieve a non-hierarchical relationship. With regards to empowering respondents, McDowell continued to suggest that this aim could itself be regarded as a feature of domination. She also noted that "expectations of positive intervention on behalf of the women being studied" (p.408) can arise which lead to a disappointing research experience. Access to resources, for instance, is often easier to achieve for the researcher than her subjects and thus the researcher can provide means towards empowerment by sharing these resources through the research procedure.

A feature which characterises 'domination' by the researcher in research relationships was, for example, how 'the other'[33] was represented in this research account (see, for example, Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1996). England (1994) argued that the researcher chooses quotations suitable for the 'story line' and thus demonstrates a hierarchical relationship which is "simply part and parcel of the (conflictual) role of the researcher" (p.86). She also suggested an opportunity to at least weaken this feature of research albeit not removing it, by the researcher's commitment to reflexivity and overall openness and honesty during the research process. In doing so, the researcher would acknowledge that she is not studying the 'real' social world but rather

> "a world that is already interpreted by people who are living their lives in it and [the] research would be an account of the betweenness of their world and [hers]" (p.87).

The research for this thesis undoubtedly utilised power structures. Although key respondents were consulted with regard to site selection and participants in the

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[33] Although, as stated above, this concept is predominantly associated with Said's (1978) work on Orientalism, it has been adopted also by feminist researchers (see, for instance, Opie, 1992) who are concerned with the representation of women of different ethnic, educational or other background than themselves.

focus groups, and focus group participants were given the opportunity to withdraw their consent (see Appendix II), most choices with regards to the research were made by myself. The phrasing of questions, the choice of quotations and the methods of distribution of knowledge were all directed by my own research concerns.

3.3.2. Ethical issues

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992), amongst others, argued that ethical issues can arise from (1) the research problem itself; (2) the research setting; (3) the research procedures as dictated from the research design and (4) the research participants. Kimmel (1988) stated that, in certain circumstances, it can be more ethically incorrect not to carry out a research project than to do so. A commitment to confidentiality would, therefore, be sacrificed 'for a good cause'. Preliminary investigations suggested that the research problem was a 'real world' problem which had largely been neglected by political actors. From this 'Utilitarian' standpoint (May, 1993), the investigation *itself* could be considered 'ethically correct'. Galliher (1982) further supported this view when indicating that a key function of social research is "to further public accountability in a society whose complexity makes it easier for people to avoid their responsibilities" (p.154).

As noted above, this study aimed to adhere to ethical principles of research by acknowledging the worth of its research subjects independently from the research process. Therefore, this research incorporated 'codes of behaviour' such as justice, gratitude and beneficence to the respondents (Kimmel, 1988). In this study, the participants were not, at any point, deceived of either study purpose or procedures and I was accessible for questions by telephone when in the field or by mail after leaving the field. Before taking part in the focus groups, all respondents were briefed about the research and asked to complete 'informed consent' documentation (Appendix II). In addition, respondents had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. At the time of publication of results participants' responses remained confidential, i.e. recognised as a number or by pseudonym only. By incorporating the above concerns, I complied with elements of the 'Statement of Ethical Practice' of the British Sociological Association (1996) and the University of Plymouth's 'Ethical Policy and Guidance for Ethical Approval

of Research' (1994). The University's Ethics Board formally approved of this research.

3.4. Research process: methods, validity and reliability

Although I aimed to adopt a grounded theory approach to conduct the research for this thesis, I found that the original grounded theory approach as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) needed to be modified and adapted to 'real life' research concerns. This meant, for example, that I could not carry out data analysis of each transcript before conducting the next interview in the field due to time and budget constraints. The following briefly outlines the alternative strategy of data handling adopted for analysis.

After initial data collection through correspondence, I summarised the correspondent accounts by using open coding and categorising, and verified my understanding of the data through respondent validation. These preliminary codes were then used in a topic guide for subsequent interviews in the field, together with other topics generated from the literature or, at a later stage, further interviews. Full coding of interview data was done *after* completion of the field work using the computer-assisted analysis programme NUD.IST Version 4.0 (see also Singh, 1996 for similar adaptations to practical research demands). A key stage for the conceptualisation of some data was the writing up of data in chapters. Woolcott (1990) described writing as a way of thinking and Singh (1996), too, valued the writing stage as a process of inquiry.

The research stages and the methods used in each stage related to the fieldwork are presented in figure 3.1. It must be emphasised that these stages do not represent an ordered time scale. Data collection and analysis took place intermittently in two exploratory and two main research phases.

By the time key informants were interviewed in the first main research stage, the study area of Uecker Randow had been specified and information regarding rural planning initiatives were subsequently sought for this particular region. As noted in chapter one, the region was chosen because it had inherited notable structural problems and anticipated critical developmental prospects (see also chapter five).

In addition, preliminary fieldwork suggested that in regions of vast change and pessimistic development outlook such as this, women were more disillusioned and less inclined to become politically active than elsewhere. The findings would therefore be particularly interesting to policy-makers. The identification of the study area was directed by an evaluation of regional statistics, documentation and confirmation with key informants. Indicators for structural problems and developmental prospects included the level of unemployment amongst the total population and women in particular, migration, birth rates, infrastructure, mobility of women, availability of services, maintenance of social networks and the availability of restructuring projects.

Stage	Method(s) *(Sampling)*
(1) Initial data collection and analysis: Identification of initial key indicators of changes in the lives of women	(a) Correspondence (self- selected, snowball) (b) Literature review (focused on related studies within the wider area of Mecklenburg-Westpommerania) (c) Key informant interviews (see figure 3.3) (theoretical, stratified purposive, snowball[34]) (d) Modified grounded theory[35]
(2) Identification of research units a) field site b) participants	(a) Literature review (governmental documentation, statistics) (b) Key informant interviews (theoretical, stratified purposive, snowball)
3) Recruitment of participants	(a) Key informants (see above) (b) Personal initiative
4) Data collection and analysis: a) Identification of further indicators/ categories for analysis (incl. Theoretical memoing) b) Analysis by interpretation of categories and development of concepts c) Verification: in part by triangulation and respondent validation	(a) Focus group interviews/ key informant interviews (b) Modified grounded theory (c) Literature review (d) 'Editing analysis'[36]
5) Development of a 'substantive theory'	(a) Use of a modified grounded theory approach

Fig. 3.1.: Stages in research

[34] See, for example Kuzel (1992) or Miles and Crush (1993) for sampling.
[35] Glaser and Strauss (1967), Pidgeon and Henwood (1997), Strauss (1987), Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1994).
[36] Miller and Crabtree (1992).

3.4.1. Methods

3.4.1.1. Correspondence

Correspondence was used by Letherby and Zdrodowsky (1995) to gather 'rich' data about the consequences of weight problems in women and women's experience of childlessness. In the research described by the authors, the notion of participatory research was a key concern, thus allowing women some freedom of format in their responses to the research.

In order to familiarise myself with the study area and the respondents prior to the fieldwork, I chose to adopt the technique of 'correspondence'. At a later stage, key informant interviews were carried out to supplement generated data related to post-unification changes for women. I asked newspapers throughout Mecklenburg-Westpommerania to place a request in their 'letter-to-the-editor' section (see figure 3.2.) to encourage women to write about their experiences. Since the exact study location had not yet been defined, no geographic restrictions were put onto the choice of newspapers. Of the national newspapers included in the initial request, only the 'Neues Deutschland', a former SED paper, were willing to place the letter free of charge.

Fig. 3.2.: Advertisement in the 'Schweriner Volkszeitung'.

Correspondence was consequently initiated by the respondents themselves beginning in October 1996. Forty women expressed interest in participating in the study and I obtained 140 letters with one to twelve pages each in total. Figure 3.3. provides an overview of women's demographic background.

Name[37]	Age group	Marital status	Children	Qualification	Employment status (Oct. 1996)
036	?	?	?	Agro-pedagogic	*ABM*
037	25-34	married	2	Facharbeiter: zoo-technician	*ABM*
062	?	?	?	?	?
063	35-49	married	4	Dipl. social economy	?
064	35-49	married	2	Educator	Unemployed
065	50-64	married	4	?	Owns pub/ small shop
066	35-49	single	9	Dipl. agro-economist	Unemployed
067	35-49	married	1	Bank employee	Bank employee
068	50-64	married	?	LPG member	Early retired
069	35-49	married	1	PhD agro-engineer	Unemployed
070	35-49	married	?	?	Unemployed
071	25-34	married	2	Teacher	Unemployed
072	25-34	married	none	no qualification	Unemployed
073	?	?	?	?	?
074	25-34	married	1	Dipl. politics	Unemployed
075	35-49	married	3	?	?
076	35-49	married	2	Dipl. Agro-engineer	Social worker
077	50-64	married	?	Teacher	*ABM*
080	35-49	married	2	Teacher	Teacher
081	24-34	?	?	Teacher	Teacher
082	35-49	single	1	University degree	Unemployed
083	25-34	married	2	PhD agro-engineer	Advisor pig breeding
084	?	?	?	?	?
085	50-64	?	?	PhD	Pensioner

Fig. 3.3.: Demographic background of correspondents

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[37] No specific request was made to discuss any of these categories. All information was volunteered by the respondents.

086	50-64	married	3	1. Polytechnic: educator; 2. Social worker; 3. Facharbeiter launderette	*ABM*
087	35-49	married	?	Dipl. economist	Unemployed
088	35-49	single	?	None[38]	Adult education
089	?	?	?	?	?
090	65+	?	?	University degree	Pensioner
091	25-34	married	1	None	Student
092	?	?	?	?	?
093	?	?	?	LPG division manager	Driver at chemical plant
094	35-49	single	1	Teacher	Teacher
095	65+	?	?	Teacher	Pensioner
096	35-49	married	3	Polytechnic: veterinary medicine	Youth worker
097	35-49	married	2	Teacher	Motel receptionist
098	65+	married	?	Farm woman	Pensioner
099	?	married	yes	Dipl. pedagogic	Social worker
100	?	?	?	?	?

Fig. 3.3.: cont.

Upon first contact, I sent each woman a topic guide with a range of themes for their general orientation (see figure 3.4.). It was made clear to the women that they should respond only to as many themes as they wished and choose their own format and writing style. Furthermore, they were assured confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any time during the study. The correspondence was officially 'ended' by respondent validation in April and May 1997, using two short reports which summarised the contents of all letters ordered by themes. After the respondent validation some women remained in contact and provided more information about specific issues (e.g. collectives and quality of life) which were generated through initial analysis of interview data, or merely sent personal letters.

Yourself:

Age, employment, voluntary engagement, family and friends, hobbies, etc.

Unification:

Your views of West Germany, East Germany, the New Germany

Your views of unification

Experiences since unification

Changes in your daily life, hopes and fears

Your views of contemporary developments in your environment generally: politics, landscape, village, region, labour market, neighbourhood, family, etc.

personal experiences with developments like the above

Support you obtained after unification: friends, relatives, groups, doctors, religion, political instruments, self, etc.

Changes:

How would you characterise the changes you have experienced since unification?

What may happen to you in the future?

Do you feel anyone is interested in the changes affecting your community?

Would you like to become an active part of changes in your community?

Do you feel informed about the opportunities for you to participate in the changes taking place in your environment?

Fig. 3.4.: Topic guide for correspondents

I had hoped that a possible benefit of correspondence for the women themselves could be empowerment. Skeggs (1994) noted in her research, that the women she researched felt very pleased that somebody was interested in their lives, even though some were doubtful whether their accounts would 'fit' the project. These trends have replicated in this research, as illustrated by the following quotes:

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[38] This woman had been imprisoned due to 'controversial political views' as a youngster in the GDR and was prevented

"How did you get your topic? I read your request. It is hopeful to see that there is someone who is interested in our region." (068)

"Is it really true that you are writing about women since unification in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania? I cannot believe it. There is so much rubbish published in the newspaper without a guarantee that it is serious, and I therefore ask you to confirm the request." (082)

"As you are probably looking for women who were traumatised by unification, I may not fit into your concept." (077)

Qualitative research can also become an opportunity to reflect upon the causes and effects of events. This was described by other authors such as Goss and Leinbach (1996), Johnson (1996) and Orr (1992), for instance. Some women in my research thanked me for asking sometimes difficult questions which helped them revisit past events. One woman had, at first, criticised the length and depth of my questions but then wrote to me twice to say that it had been beneficial to her. Regarding power relations in respondent-researcher interaction, it seemed that correspondence offered an appropriate tool for reducing a possible power imbalance.

The research can also become a process of interaction, "influenced not only by the [research] objectives but also by the characteristics of the participants" (Eyles, 1993: 52). In my own interaction with correspondents this meant adapting to the women's style of writing and responding to their request. For instance, some women preferred to call me 'Bettina', others 'Mrs. Iganski' and, I addressed them accordingly, either informally or formally. Another example is the repeated request by the respondents to learn more about me as an 'ordinary' person because they themselves were also revealing personal information to me. I responded by sending all women a summary of my family history and educational background. Many women reacted positively and began writing in a somewhat less formal manner.

Only one woman was more critical or perhaps disappointed. After my second visit to Mecklenburg-Westpommerania, I received a letter from her in which she said, she thought I should have visited her, having been in the region twice. Because I

had not 'bothered' to do that, she decided not to write to me any more. In my response I apologised and explained to her the restraints of field work. I also thanked her for her time and information, and her honesty letting me know why she did not continue her correspondence.

Participants' "input [was obtained] at various stages in the research" (McLafferty, 1995: 440), whereby women determined the frequency and duration of the correspondence themselves. Furthermore, they had time to reflect upon their impressions[39], withdraw from the study if they preferred this and, most of all, they had a positive research experience which enabled "the members of the society being studied [to] [...] become teachers" (Miles and Crush, 1993: 97). In theory, the fact that they were fully informed about individual stages in which they participated (e.g. respondent validation) could have contributed to raising their self-esteem and gaining a sense of self-confidence. The research method opened a way to "generate women-centred knowledge [and] allow[ed] discovery of what it is to be woman in a particular place and time, and what interests and concerns [women] have" (Dyck, 1993: 56). Moreover, it permitted "alternative voices to be heard" (Miles and Crush, 1993: 96).

After having completed the research, I cannot be sure how far correspondence contributed to reducing power imbalance from the perspective of the participants, or in how far the research empowered women. However, various women wrote to me during the research, or some weeks later, to say that they did enjoy the correspondence. A number of women also welcomed the opportunity to write freely about a history which they often felt they had to deny in the new public sphere[40].

3.4.1.2. Key informants

In choosing suitable respondents for this category I attempted to contact key informants who were in a position as to give information either on the field site in general, and/or restructuring and women's issues in particular. These respondents should, at least to some extent, be able to provide information from a

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[39] See also England (1994), Miller and Glassner (1997) or Oakley (1981) who described the procedure of self-reflexivity of respondents in the context of interviewing.

variety of perspectives, including lay, professional and non-governmental (see also Gildchrist, 1992).

With regard to the merits of interviewing key informants, Spradley (in Plummer, 1983) stated that

> "a good key informant should be thoroughly enculturalised (hence fully aware, deeply involved and informed in their particular cultural world), currently involved (their account is hence not simply a reinterpretation of past experience but a statement of current practices) and non-analytic..."(p.89)

The ability of key informants to draw together knowledge from various settings within a wider frame was also stressed by McClintock, *et al.* (1983). A key feature of using key informants in research was described by Blumer in *The Polish Peasant* (in Plummer, 1983):

> "A half dozen individuals with such knowledge constitute a far better 'representative sample' than a thousand individuals who may be involved in the action that is being formed but who are not knowledgeable about that formation." (p.101)

Although I initially selected respondents for that purpose, my analysis revealed that key informants and local women often had different experiences and perspectives on issues I attempted to understand (see section 3.4.3.1.). Due to either the professional background, the current involvement or 'enculturalisation' of key informants, they were often removed from the local level which composed the social world of the women respondents. Hence, even key informants at the district level such as those in NGOs or the council were often not familiar with real and everyday concerns of women. Instead, the accounts of key informants were more useful for an understanding of the context of wider developments at the district or regional level. It must be noted, therefore, that the local women were the 'experts' in my research. All key informants were approached by means of a written request that included a description of the research background and a statement of confidentiality. Interview dates and locations were subsequently confirmed by telephone. None of the key informants were unavailable for the

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[40] Other commentators indicated also that 'revisiting the past' had largely been neglected by many East German citizens which lead to a 'congestion' of feelings they have not yet been able to cope with (see, for instance, Maatz, 1990).

interview although three informants preferred not to have the interview tape recorded.

Figure 3.5.a. to 3.5.d. summarise which key informants were consulted for the purpose of this research. The figures also indicate the informant function and themes explored in the interviews. For the purpose of confidentiality, no names are given. The initial list of respondents was augmented through snowball sampling as the informants put forth additional contacts and sources. With regard to the questions asked (see figures 3.5a.- d.), I prepared initial topic guides to structure the interviews by 'informant function' but encouraged flexibility to incorporate specific informant characteristics as well. Hence, all mayors, for instance, were asked how they had become mayors, how the agriculture developed, what the demographic structure of their village is, as well as specific observations about the integration of women in public life. Nonetheless, the mayors also shaped the interview agenda by their own foci on specific issues evident in their village. In a similar way, the topic guides for other groups of informants were adapted to their specific function or knowledge.

Key Informant	Informant function
Informants at different administrative levels (community, region Uecker Randow, region Ostvorpommern, Bundesland) such as local planners, carriers for short-term employment measures, 'Arbeitsamt', 'Sozialamt', Ministerium für Landwirtschaft (MV), Ministerium für Bau (MV) *(29 interview partners)*	Knowledge about current developments in establishing the new regional planning initiatives and the focus on social integration. Knowledge about Local Agenda 21 in particular

Themes covered in the interviews
- Instruments for the revitalisation of rural communities and success/ problems of their application, more specifically: aims, experiences, local participation, social impact, women's integration

Fig. 3.5.a.: Key informants and interview themes

Key Informant	Informant function
Representative for women's issues of the political parties: CDU, Grüne/Bündnis 90, PDS, SPD *(5 interview partners)*	Knowledge about wider political frame and democratisation efforts within the wider study area
Equal Opportunities Officer in Uecker- Randow and M-W *(4 interview partners)*	Persons who mediated between representatives in higher administrative and/or political posts as well as representatives from local groups
Representatives from churches and regional and local interest groups such as the 'Arbeiter Wohlfahrt (AWO)', 'Arbeitslosenverband', 'Blaues Kreuz', 'Landfrauenverband', 'Landjugendverband, 'ECOVAST', 'Bauernverband', 'Volkssolidarität', 'Pommerania' *(25 interview partners)*	Knowledge about common problems on different levels (local- regional, past- present), experience in contacting and networking with local people

Themes covered in the interviews

- Role/ duties in organisation

- Information about region Uecker Randow/ LPGs

- Women's situation prior to unification: role of women, integration

- Women's situation since unification: employment, political engagement, participation in social life, opportunities for women, and role of women, integration

- Instruments for the revitalisation of rural communities and success/ problems of their application

Fig. 3.5.b.: Key informants and interview themes

Key Informant	Informant function
Mayors of study villages *(6 interview partners)*	Knowledge about village structure, local resources and implementation of planning objectives
Former (GDR) mayors of study villages *(6 interview partners)*	Knowledge about past and/ or current social context of the villages
Themes covered in the interviews - How did you become mayor - Structure of community - Development of community before unification (LPGs) and since the *Wende*: community services, events, competitions, women's integration - The event of unification	

Fig. 3.5.c.: Key informants and interview themes

Key Informant	Informant function
Other Researchers whose work centres on women in East Germany or Eastern Europe, or the rural context *(8 interview partners)*	Knowledge about studies relating to the issues in question

Fig. 3.5.d.: Key informants and interview themes

3.4.1.3. Focus Groups

Although other approaches to focus groups are known that incorporate a more structured and positivist format (i.e. in market research as depicted in Blum, 1986 or Greenbaum, 1988), the proposed technique of this research is related to experimental focus groups as described by Cook and Crang (1995), Garvin (1995), Goss and Leinbach (1996), and Longhurst (1996) in human geography research, and by Johnson (1996), Morgan (1993) and Orr (1992) in other social research. Although Morgan (1993) encouraged the academic discussion around focus group techniques and purposes, the collection of articles in *Area* (1996) introduced for the first time that rules were 'traded' against both experimentalism and experientialism as many authors themselves had only little experience in conducting focus groups. The interview format aimed to achieve the following:

(1) the establishment of an equal and non-threatening researcher- participant relationship (see also Burgess, 1996, or Garvin, 1995);

(2) adequate interaction and discussion between participants;

(3) the empowerment of participants through the acquisition of 'new' knowledge about their own situation;

(4) the strategic networking between the participants.

Johnson (1996) also reinforced these aims by stressing that, in addition to generating data, the focus group contributes to "pooling participants knowledge" (p.532), raising consciousness and redefining "private trouble" of individual participants as "public issues" (p.534). Orr (1992) supported this view by emphasising that needs of participants could be identified by means of group discussion and change of the individual's circumstances sought accordingly.

The focus group participants were recruited with the assistance of the mayors of each study village. The mayors approached a number of women with different educational backgrounds and current employment situations. Each mayor made available a list of names of women whom I sent an invitation with a description of the research and a statement of confidentiality. The venue (a pub or former meeting house) was organised by the mayors. Only in Wüste, the group was composed of members of the local 'Landfrauenverband' and assembled by the deputy mayor. The focus groups consisted of 2-10 women (see figure 3.6.).

Name	Age group	Marital status	Children	Qualification[41]	Employment status
Pilot group					
Bertha	35-49	married	2	Gardener	*ABM*
Claudia	25-34	co-habiting	2	Pedagogic	Manager
Gretha	25-34	married	3	1. Facharbeiter zoo-technician 2. Domestic economy	Unemployed
Julia	25-34	single	none	Nurse	Nurse
Linda	50-64	married	2	Kindergarten teacher	*ABM*
Lisa	35-49	married	2	Facharbeiter agro-technician LPG	*ABM*
Simone	35-49	married	2	Educator	*ABM*
Stefanie	35-49	single	2	Homeworker	Musical education
Charlottenburg					
Brigitte	50-64	single	none	Cleaner	Unemployed
Maria	50-64	married	4	Butcher	Unemployed
Herta	50-64	married	1	Accountant	Pensioner
Annet	35-49	married	2	Facharbeiter secretary	Secretary
Heidrun	35-49	married	2	Facharbeiter sales assistant	Sales assistant
Martha	50-64	single	2	Cook	Pensioner
Marlies	50-64	married	3	Kindergarten teacher	Unemployed
Hellern					
Elisabeth	50-64	married	4	Accountant	Accountant (part-time)
Gesa	35-49	married	2	Facharbeiter agro-business	Animal care
Mira	50-64	married	2	State examined farmer	Unemployed

Fig. 3.6.: Focus group respondents

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[41] As specified by respondents

Karlshorst					
Marianne	35-49	married	2	Waiter	*ABM*
Ute	50-64	married	3	1. Farmer 2. University: veterinary medicine	Unemployed
Schinkel					
Hedwig	50-64	single	none	Facharbeiter sales assistant	*ABM*
Liesel	50-64	married	5	Facharbeiter agriculture	Pensioner
Margarethe	50-64	married	3	Facharbeiter agro-technician	Unemployed
Olga	35-49	married	3	Facharbeiter textile worker	*ABM*
Wilmersdorf					
Hanna	35-49	married	2	Facharbeiter carpenter	Unemployed
Karla	50-64	married	3	Meister	Pensioner
Monika	35-49	married	2	Facharbieter postal worker	*ABM*
Susanne	35-49	single	1	Facharbeiter zoo-technician	*ABM*
Veronika	65+	single	2		Pensioner
Wüste					
Annegret	35-49	married	2	Facharbeiter	Civil servant
Birgit	35-49	married	2	Facharbeiter sales assistant	*ABM*
Doris	35-49	married	2	Polytechnic: economist	Accountant
Renate	50-64	married	3	Kindergarten teacher	Unemployed

Fig. 3.6.: cont.

The focus group meetings were divided into two parts. During the first, participants were given the opportunity to approach me as a researcher and establish confidence in the research process. Initially, I conducted a meeting explaining the research (with refreshments), followed by an excursion through the village. Issues such as confidentiality and the right to withdraw were outlined (see also Appendix II). Furthermore, the women were given a set of materials with some voluntary tasks for their preparation (see 3.4.2. for reflections). The excursion was directed by the participants themselves in order for the women to

show me their village and places which were significant to them in the GDR and since unification. Whilst the excursion offered space for questions about the project and me as the researcher, it also prepared the participants for the workshop in which their village was the focus of discussion. Photos were taken during the excursion which served as a 'warm up' in the second meeting (see Appendix III).

The second meeting took place approximately one week after the first. Women could consider their participation in the research on the basis of their experience in the first meeting. In some groups, the number of participants was reduced because some women had to work and others believed they were too old to be part of a research project.

The format of the subsequent focus group interviews was flexible. An outline of themes covered in the interviews is summarised in figure 3.7. which includes themes that emerged from the interviews themselves as well. It must be noted that some groups discussed certain themes more than on others and therefore themes were not normally dealt with in equal depth. In general, comparisons between the past and the present dominated and memories of the group context experienced in the GDR.

Themes for the focus group interviews

- experiences in the LPG/ working collective
- integration into community life: work, social life, politics
- motivation to comply with demands of multiple burden as women
- level of control experienced
- preparations for the *Wende*
- the event of unification
- unemployment/ employment/ *ABM*
- everyday problems (e.g. the village, East-West divide)
- experiences with bureaucracy (e.g. administration, politics, voluntary work)
- experiences with privatisation and restitution of property
- the role of women 'then' and 'now'

Fig. 3.7.: Topic guide for focus groups

3.4.2. Group work and reflexivity

Before the first focus group interview, I anticipated changing the strict format (focus) of the interviews with local women that I had initially prepared. In part this change was initiated through experiences in the field. For example, during the fieldwork, I rented a room with a family in a small village. In this family, the husband worked in Hamburg and came home only at the weekends. The mother of four was a housewife and unemployed since unification. She was, however, also the mayor of the village.

On many occasions in the mornings or evenings, conversations took place with her or the children. One issue which emerged from my stay was that I initially felt I needed to prove myself as an outsider. I was a young, Western, academic woman in an Eastern setting where I would be interacting predominantly with middle aged or elderly farmwomen. On many occasions, I believed I was tested by certain questions or remarks of the mother. However, within a few days, the relationship between the family and myself had become very friendly and communicative. I learnt that I needed to allow my respondents time to test me as an outsider and for them to feel confident enough to share certain elements of their lives with me. I also recognised the need to proceed with the interview according to the participants' own priorities with few restrictions and little formality. I was, therefore, keen to create a comfortable atmosphere to encourage this kind of confidence in me as a researcher and an outsider.

As noted above, the research comprised two meetings and began with an excursion through the village. I encouraged the use of a camera to capture places of interest or personal significance to the women such as the pub, the shop, an LPG open air concert venue, or a bench on which morning meetings were conducted (see figures 3.8.a- 3.8.d). In three villages, the women also took photographs themselves. This first meeting served to introduce myself and the research to my respondents. I took coffee and cakes and gave each woman a folder with background material and a pen to keep. The folder contained a copy of my student registration and address of my university, summaries of the correspondents' accounts, some newspaper articles illustrating the correspondents' accounts (e.g. on unemployment, violence, birth-rates, right-wing

extremism and political actors), a list of key issues to encourage women's own memories, some material on Local Agenda 21, a brief demographic questionnaire (requesting: age, marital status, number and age of children, qualification, current employment and opinion on the group meetings- see Appendix II), a consent form and blank pages for their own notes.

I suggested to the women that they read some or all of the material in the folder before the next meeting and complete it with their own thoughts. In addition, I put together a set of information booklets on a variety of themes which they could then order from me (free-of-charge). I also offered to contact the equal opportunities officer of the district to ask if she was prepared to give a talk on her work or specific themes in the villages, or to invite women personally to events that may interest them in Achmer. In order to alleviate the transport problem for women, I offered to find out from local companies which options for transportation there were other than 'regular'[42] buses from and to the villages. I believed that these inquiries would be a way of 'giving back' to the respondents and helping them access sources which they may not otherwise be able to. However, only women in Hellern and Schinkel requested information.

Fig. 3.8a: The local pub in Wilmersdorf

[42] In the studied villages, there were two buses in addition to the school buses.

Fig. 3.8b: The local shop in Schinkel

Fig. 3.8c: The open air theatre in Wüste

Fig. 3.8.d: A bench for collective meetings in Schinkel

The response to the introductory meetings was varied. In Charlottenburg, for example, the women were very lively and laughed a lot throughout both meetings. At the first meeting, I was given flowers by one woman who also brought me chocolates for the second meeting. My own planning for the second meeting was overruled by the women who decided they would bring rolls with cheese and cold meat and wine instead of my cake. The excursion at the first meeting was very different to those in other villages in that the women suggested to take a number of groups photos of themselves and with me.

In Wüste, I was offered a 'guided tour' after the meeting by one of the women who lived in the neighbour village. She was keen to show me where most of the LPG events took place in the GDR such as the sports ground, the culture house and the former MTS. After the tour she invited me into her house to give me a large bag of home-grown strawberries.

Karlshorst was altogether a different case. There had been some confusion over the first meeting which resulted in the presence of only two women. The problem

was, according to one of the remaining participants, that two other women expected to be reminded by the mayor again, even after having been invited by the mayor and, in a written form, by me. Hence, I discussed the best possible approach to the interview with the two remaining participants, who preferred to conduct the interview during the first meeting rather than to find a new date.

Attendance at the second meeting was slightly lower than at the first in all of the villages. In Charlottenburg, Schinkel, Wilmersdorf and Wüste one respondent was missing because of clashes with other obligations. In Hellern, two respondents were absent for the same reason. The atmosphere during the interviews was good and relaxed. The women laughed and made 'confessions' which they claimed not to have made in another context. One 'confession' was, for instance, that they still supported the PDS (see also chapter seven). Another 'confesion' concerned the way in which women were affected by negative experiences with Western relatives (see also chapter five). Only in Wilmersdorf did the interview end on a sad, disillusioned note as the women could not foresee any improvements in their future lives at all.

In Charlottenburg, Hellern and Wüste, women told me that they had found the research meetings enjoyable. In Charlottenburg and Hellern, I drove two women to and from their homes as they had no means of transportation. On both occasions the women were very curious about my personal background and private life. I did answer their questions as a means of establishing confidence and returning some of what they had granted me, i.e. an insight into their private lives. Appendix II illustrates two examples of women's responses to the interview in the final section of a short questionnaire women filled out.

After the interviews I suggested to the mayors to meet for summarised feedback on the meetings (I did, however, not discuss individual villages for reasons of confidentiality) but only the mayor of Schinkel asked me to report back. With regard to confidentiality, most respondents were indifferent about the use of the photos taken during the excursions in my final thesis but they did prefer not to be mentioned by name. I promised, therefore, to use pseudonyms for both their names and those of the villages. This was also in the interest of key informants who were prepared to speak to me only when guaranteed confidentiality.

3.4.3. Validity and reliability

A significant concern in this research was to ensure validity and reliability. Plummer (1983), for instance, defined reliability and validity as follows:

> "Reliability is primarily concerned with technique and consistency- with ensuring that if the study was conducted by someone else, similar findings would be obtained; while validity is concerned with making sure that the technique is actually studying what it is supposed to." (p.101)

He stated, however, that "validity should come before reliability, [because] there is no point in being precise about nothing!" (p.102). In their chapter on the credibility of grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss (1967) "raised doubts about the applicability of these canons of rigor as proper criteria for judging the credibility of theory based on flexible research" (p.224). Instead of judging research by positivist standards, they suggested that "criteria [should]... be based ... on the detailed elements of the actual strategies used for collecting, coding, analysing and presenting data... and on the way people read the theory" (p.224). Tools in obtaining such results in this research were, for instance, the use of 'triangulation' and 'theoretical memoing' (see below). Peräkylä (1997) stated that tape recordings and transcripts, amongst other factors, also contribute to providing reliability in research. With regard to the contextualisation of codes and categories, the computer programme NUD.IST provides a good mechanism for other researchers to 'check' on results achieved by retrieving text units per code and reviewing these within the context they were said. Other research can therefore follow the research procedure and the principal researcher's explanations whilst making their own interpretations from the transcribed data and its analysis (see section 3.6.1).

3.4.3.1. Triangulation

Miles and Huberman (1984) define triangulation as making use of data from a third source in order to measure (dis-)agreement. In an investigation of successful school practice, Miles and Huberman (1984) assembled a range of sources of evidence in order to ascertain their own findings. Different sources (e.g. pupils, teachers and documents) were utilised as well as different methods of investigation (e.g. interviews, observation, document-analysis, statistics).

Walker (1985) described the concept of triangulation, as developed by Denzin, as multi-method or multi-theory approach. This means that triangulation is possible between multiple data sources, or informant relating to the same phenomenon or different methods, such as described in the example above. Further examples of such a multi-method approach can be found in the works by Brewer and Hunter (1989), Burgess *et al.* (1988), Gill (1990) or Morgan (1993).

Crabtree and Miller (1992) reiterated the importance of "member checks" of the researcher's interpretation at subsequent steps of the inquiry. This would consequently imply respondent validation. Ideally, the researcher may arrive at an interpretation "that coheres with all of the divergent data sources" (Crabtree and Miller, 1992). However, even opposing statements may aid the process of "constant comparative analysis" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) by enhancing and giving greater depth to the exploration of categories and concepts. In effect, agreement of data from different sets imply validity whereas invalidity is inferred from disagreement.

The research for this thesis combined the use of correspondence with focus groups, key informant interviews, statistics and literature/ official documentation. Thus, a multi-vocal approach was chosen by hearing various people with different perspectives, operating on different levels (see McDowell, 1996) in conjunction with a multi-method approach. I intended to seek the input of women respondents at different stages of the research, i.e. in the form of respondent validation (see, for example Leininger, 1994, or MacPherson and Williamson, 1992). In spite of good intentions, it was only feasible to carry out respondent validation in the case of correspondence where I did so with the help of summaries. To summarise the chapters based on field data (chapters four, five, six and seven) would have amounted to an impossible task of translation, at least in the context of this thesis. I did, however, also offer the summaries obtained from the correspondence for validation by the women in the focus groups as a form of triangulation. In addition, one of the key informants reviewed a number of conference papers I wrote. Overall, I did not find it adequate to triangulate the women's accounts with those of key actors. Instead, I regarded both as different perspectives on one subject rather than invalidating one account for the benefit of another. As indicated above, it was inevitable that the women would have other views on events than

those of key informants who were predominantly male, always employed and sometimes Western.

3.4.3.2. Memos

Memoing is an integral part of grounded theory as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967), Strauss (1987) and Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1994) (see also section 3.5.1.). The essence of this tool is to fix theoretical ideas at different stages in the research. Thus, the rationale for decision making (i.e. theoretical sampling, or strategy for analysis) are documented and sorted regularly. Memos can take different forms according to their specific relation to the type of data or level of abstraction they refer to.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) distinguish three kinds of memos which may be supported by diagrams. Thus, conceptual labels, paradigmatic issues and analytic process are recorded in 'code notes'. Memos illuminating issues of choice coding and generation of category are named 'theoretical notes'. These memos contain considerations about properties, dimensions and relationships of and between codes, i.e. similarities and differences that are indicated by the data. Aside from these conceptual memos, 'operational notes' offer space for personal notes, i.e. on research strategies. Decisions on theoretical sampling, questions emerging from the analysis or further sources are amongst those issues recorded here. In order to assist the analytic process and to clarify the development of categories and the relationships between them as well as evaluating preliminary conceptual links, Strauss and Corbin (1990) proposed the use of 'logic and integrative diagrams' (see also Miles and Huberman, 1984).

In effect, all analytic and decision-making processes of the research are sequentially recorded within all coding stages, i.e. open, axial and selective coding (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), gradually linking previously segmented data to concepts whilst verifying or disputing initial hypotheses. As a result, other researchers can reach similar or identical results as the principal researcher by following the rationale of decisions and interpretations through memos. Gildchrist (1992) quotes Sanjek when linking this process to validity by stating:

"Valid-rich ethnography must make explicit as many ... theoretical decisions...
as possible by reporting when and why judgements of significance are made"
(p.87)

In this research, memoing was an integrative part of the computer-assisted
analysis of data (see also section 3.6.). In a similar fashion as Singh (1996) I used
initial 'broad' coding as memos which formed the basis of a more detailed coding
and indexing procedure as well as text searches (much like cross-tabulation in
quantitative analysis but using words instead of counts).

3.5. Data analysis: theoretical framework

Few publications are explicit about qualitative data analysis. However, Bryman
and Burgess (1994), Dey (1993), Glaser and Strauss (1967), Miles and Huberman
(1984) or Singh (1996) provide detailed descriptions of data categorisation and
analysis[43]. In this research, I distinguished three analytical aims: (1) identification
of key themes; (2) description of themes in their local context and; (3) explanation
of relationships between themes to generate a grounded theory (adapted from
Crabtree and Miller, 1992).

3.5.1. Grounded theory

Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed their grounded theory approach in the
1960s. A number of assumptions about the nature of qualitative data and its
analysis led the two researchers to establish a rigorous yet flexible method for
analysis and theory generation. Glaser and Strauss (1967) assumed, for instance,
that existing analytic methods were rudimentary and neglected the complexity of
studied phenomena. Theories should be firmly grounded in data itself. Data
collection was ongoing for it was entirely based on previous coding and memoing
and thus generating questions about the data. Rather than determined by
preconceived decisions about specific features of a study unit, data collection in
'grounded theory' is essentially directed by a theory which is generated from
collected data. A key feature of the 'discovery' of theory is that it "accounts for a
pattern of behaviour which is relevant and problematic for those involved"
(Strauss, 1987: 34).

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[43] Other publications which describe the entire research process, from research paradigm, research design
and data collection to data analysis and publishing are, for example, Crabtree and Miller (1992), or
Marshall and Rossman (1989).

During the analysis data is processed in three subsequent stages: open, axial and selective coding. The coding process aims at conceptualising data. This is achieved by breaking down data into distinct parts which are then examined and compared for difference and resemblance. Relationships between categories, i.e. the heading under which concept labels referring to the same phenomenon are grouped, are established through their properties and dimensions. Properties are essentially different descriptive characteristics of a category, whereas dimensions refer to the extent to which properties are present, for instance high/low (*dimension*) intensity (*property*) of colour (*category*) (see also section 3.6.1.).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) encouraged researchers to enhance their 'theoretical sensitivity' in order to develop flexible and critical thinking, reduction of automated assumptions and 'taking-for-granted' of data as well as increasing depth of exploration. The depth of focus is further increased by data gathering as suggested by the generated categories themselves[44]. The purpose of cumulative sampling of people, documents and sites closely related to eliciting variations and similarities in data is to achieve density and saturation of categories.

The final stage towards saturation is by selective coding which integrates categories along their dimensions with the purpose of theory formation and validation. Saturation is achieved, when no additional data emerges from categories, the categories themselves are developed in a dense manner and relationships between categories are well-established. This procedure is very labour and resource intensive. Strauss and Corbin (1994) themselves and Pidgeon and Henwood (1997) suggested a process adapted to the researchers specific background and preference for methods and methodology, or the availability of resource and the level of the project undertaken.

3.5.1.1. Modified grounded theory: Editing analysis

The analysis style of this research is closely related to what Miller and Crabtree (1992) call 'Editing Analysis Style'. In this approach, the researcher functions as the editor of her (research-) text in which units are identified in order to develop categories. Unlike 'template' approach, no pre-existing relationships or coding

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[44] As mentioned above, in this research objective two was generated through categorising and thus depth of focus increased.

matrices are used for the analysis of data. Hence, data in this research were reduced and structured by the formation of codes and subsequent categories. These were not, as in content analysis, quantified and thus did not gain importance by their number of *counts*. Instead, connections and/or differences were determined through the *interpretation* of data itself as a text. Initial hypotheses were verified and possibly altered during the process of interchange between data collection and analysis. This approach is conceptually related to grounded theory in which theoretical sampling and memoing are essential elements of the analysis. However, the extent of detail is somewhat less as, for instance, categories are not described one by one using an exhaustive list of properties and dimensions.

3.6. Computer analysis

The use of a computer in reducing and ordering data, as well as coding and building categories has been supported in writings by Lofland and Lofland (1995) and Hammersley and Atkinson (1992). Literature such as Tesch (1990) gives a full overview over the use of computer-assisted packages in qualitative analysis.

In this research the preliminary analysis of correspondence and key informant interviews was done exclusively on paper due to incompetence in using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis. However, the amount of data, categories and memos generated became difficult to manage and I felt there was a risk of losing some interpretations in the process or neglecting newly emerging patterns. Often too many codes were generated in a line-by-line analysis to maintain clarity on the transcript. Thus, in order to edit and analyse focus group interview transcripts, data were fed into the computer-assisted package 'NUD.IST Version 4.0[45]' (see, for instance, Richards and Richards, 1994). The key benefits of using NUD.IST for me were that the system allowed me (1) to code a section numerous times; (2) to recode selectively without reading all transcripts in full; (3) to order categories logically into a hierarchical index system; (4) to retrieve text units in the context of the interview (rather than detached from it on index cards); (5) to add theoretical memos at codes (nodes) and; (6) to ask questions and build a story line (see also User Guide QSR NUD.IST, 1997). The most important function of the programme is to facilitate the qualitative theory-generating process as was described above.

Although the programme allows for quantification of data as well, I did not make use of this option as it seemed of no consequence to the analysis of my data.

3.6.1. 'NUD.IST' in practice

The data sets for this research were, as discussed above, full transcripts from correspondence, key informant interviews, focus groups and research notes. The first stage was the coding stage, whereby coding was carried out line by line. In total, 205 'free nodes' (i.e. codes) were generated. In order to facilitate data management and organisation, and to conduct a constant comparison analysis of data obtained from different respondents, all nodes were then organised into a hierarchical index tree. From a 'tree root', nodes were organised by five 'headings', or parent nodes: 'brd', 'ddr', 'rolle der frau'[46], 'vorauss-engagement'[47] and 'type of data'. Within each of these parent nodes, there were several child nodes representing sub-categories. For instance, sub categories for 'type of data' were: key informants (4), correspondence (3), focus groups (7), cases (6), memos and data characteristics (2). The numbers in brackets indicate the amount of 'child nodes' within each sub-category. Figure 3.9. provides an example of how data was organised representing a hierarchy of nodes in the form of a 'tree branch' for the node 'ddr'.

A convenient feature of using the computer programme is also, as mentioned above, that codes can be introduced at any time without having to read all printed transcripts, or coding each text unit individually. For instance, I wished to differentiate between the experiences of women who were employed, unemployed, in *ABM* or pensioners as well as between different age groups. To achieve this, I retrieved all text units that were marked as subheading '*130' (respondent Veronika) in a text search. The computer allocated a separate node

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[45] NUD.IST= Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Search and Theorising
[46] the role of women
[47] pre-conditions for participation

```
(1)          ddr
   (1 2)              ddr/ soziale fuersorge ddr
   (1 3)              ddr/ gemeinde ddr
       (1 3 1)            ddr/ gemeinde ddr/ ddr gemeindereps
       (1 3 2)            ddr/ gemeinde ddr/ dorf partei
   (1 4)              ddr/ ausbildung ddr
       (1 4 1)            ddr/ ausbildung ddr/ schule ddr
       (1 4 2)            ddr/ ausbildung ddr/ studium ddr
       (1 4 3)            ddr/ ausbildung ddr/ ddr fernstudium
   (1 5)              ddr/ lpg
       (1 5 1)            ddr/ lpg/ lpg arbeit
       (1 5 2)            ddr/ lpg/ lpg wettbewerb
       (1 5 3)            ddr/ lpg/ soziale einrichtungen
           (1 5 3 1)          ddr/ lpg/ soziale einrichtungen/ gaststaetten
           (1 5 3 2)          ddr/ lpg/ soziale einrichtungen/ feuerwehr
           (1 5 3 3)          ddr/ lpg/ soziale einrichtungen/ reinigung
           (1 5 3 4)          ddr/ lpg/ soziale einrichtungen/ kinderbetreuung
           (1 5 3 5)          ddr/ lpg/ soziale einrichtungen/ konsum
           (1 5 3 6)          ddr/ lpg/ soziale einrichtungen/ post
           (1 5 3 7)          ddr/ lpg/ soziale einrichtungen/ kino
           (1 5 3 8)          ddr/ lpg/ soziale einrichtungen/ buecherei
           (1 5 3 9)          ddr/ lpg/ soziale einrichtungen/ bushalte
           (1 5 3 10)         ddr/ lpg/ soziale einrichtungen/ dfd
           (1 5 3 11)         ddr/ lpg/ soziale einrichtungen/ ferien
           (1 5 3 12)         ddr/ lpg/ soziale einrichtungen/ wohnen
           (1 5 3 13)         ddr/ lpg/ soziale einrichtungen/ friseur
           (1 5 3 14)         ddr/ lpg/ soziale einrichtungen/ kulturhaus
           (1 5 3 15)         ddr/ lpg/ soziale einrichtungen/ krankenkasse
       (1 5 4)            ddr/ lpg/ lpg-entwicklung
       (1 5 5)            ddr/ lpg/ kultur
       (1 5 6)            ddr/ lpg/ lpg-bau
       (1 5 7)            ddr/ lpg/ lpg kueche
       (1 5 8)            ddr/ lpg/ eigenproduktion
       (1 5 9)            ddr/ lpg/ zuneigung
       (1 5 10)              ddr/ lpg/ arzt lpg
       (1 5 10)              ddr/ lpg/ mobilitaet-lpg
       (1 5 11)              ddr/ lpg/ kollektiv
       (1 5 12)              ddr/ lpg/ lpg wirtschaft
       (1 5 13)              ddr/ lpg/ lpg leitung
   (1 6)              ddr/ ddr-politik
       (1 6 1)            ddr/ ddr-politik/ sozialismus
       (1 6 2)            ddr/ ddr-politik/ ddr-wirtschaft
       (1 6 3)            ddr/ ddr-politik/ arbeit-ddr
           (1 6 3 1)          ddr/ ddr-politik/ arbeit-ddr/ knastologe
       (1 6 4)            ddr/ ddr-politik/ frauenpolitik
       (1 6 5)            ddr/ ddr-politik/ kultur ddr
       (1 6 6)            ddr/ ddr-politik/ sicherheit ddr
   (1 7)              ddr/ ddr beziehungen
       (1 7 1)            ddr/ ddr beziehungen/ kontrolle ddr
   (1 7 2)            ddr/ ddr beziehungen/ nachbarschaft
   (1 7 3)            ddr/ ddr beziehungen/ gemeinschaft
   (1 7 4)            ddr/ ddr beziehungen/ solidaritaet
```

Fig. 3.9.: Example of 'tree branch'

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to identify the results of this search. I could then code everything Veronika had said as '65+' for her age and 'pensioner' for her occupation without changing any previous coding for the same text units. This feature was a significant time saving device as well as a guarantee that I would not overlook any information obtained from Veronika as I might have done using printed transcripts.

Once the data is coded, it can be compared node by node, case by case, or document by document. For instance, the nodes 'brd/soziale fuersorge' and 'ddr/soziale fuersorge' can be compared by entering a command to show only data coded for these nodes in two separate reports. The computer output lists the document heading from which data were retrieved as well as line numbers for each text unit. In addition, coding stripes can be requested to indicate which other codes were used for the retrieved text units. The output then assists data analysis in the context of the interview as a whole rather than in separated segments as is often the case when using paper index cards for codes and categories. In addition, the relative weight of individual and combined issues discussed by the informant can be detected relatively easily by the length of coded lines in the text.

In this way, one could, for example, investigate if certain groups of respondents (such as planners or mayors), people of a certain age group, or people of a certain employment status mentioned specific issues more than others, or only in combination with topics. This investigation can be conducted for both entire categories or their dimensions (see section 3.5.1.). Furthermore, the analysis can be refined by focusing on the dimensions of categories to determine, for instance, if informants were more positive about social welfare either in the 'New Germany' or GDR. Figure 3.10. represents an example of a retrieved document from a key informant interview with coding stripes A to M whereby the letters represent requested nodes. The same could be done to compare similarities and differences of phenomena between the six study villages (cases).

In a similar way, the programme can 'cross-tab' codes. For instance, if one wishes to explore a relationship between certain phenomena such as that between employment and the experience of social integration for women (as in nodes: 'brd/ politik/ arbeitspolitik heute/ frau arbeit' and 'vorauss-engagement/ chancen/ integration'), one could extract only those text units that are codes for both nodes

in one report. In addition, one could add coding stripes, as in the example above, to investigate if there are different attitudes between different groups of people.

Margin coding keys for selected nodes in document intklock:
A:... /ddr/lpg/lpg kultur   B:.../ddr/lpg/lpg arbeit
C:... /ddr/lpg   D:... /vorauss-engagement/partizipation
E:... /partizipation/soft skills/zusammenhalt   F: ... /partizipation/soft skills/motivation
G:... /partizipation/soft skills   H:... /brd/politik/arbeitspolitik heute
I:... /brd/entwicklung-gemeinde   J:... /arbeitspolitik heute/frau arbeit
K:... /frau arbeit/arbeit-diskriminierung   L:... /rolle der frau
M:... /soziale fuersorge brd/kinderbetreuung brd

+++ ON-LINE DOCUMENT: 001
+++ Document Header:
*001, 033
*key informants
*background

+++ Retrieval for this document: 516 units out of 516, = 100%
++ Text units 1-516:
[...]

Da kann man von Gleichberechtigung reden, wie man will, aber	62	H J K
gerade in solchen Zeiten, wo es eben finanziell und wirtschaftlich eng	63	H J K
und knapp wird, sind die Frauen immer die ersten, die drunter leiden	64	H J K
muessen. Und wenn's drum geht, wen stellen wir ein, dann stellen sie	65	H J K
einen Mann ein, keine Frau. Und schon gar keine Frau ueber 50 oder 40,	66	H J K
da ist die Sache schon gelaufen. Die werden gefragt, 'sie sind 40, was	67	H J K
wollen sie denn noch?' Das ist natuerlich eine Situation mit der unsere	68 A B C	H J K
Frauen jetzt speziell sehr schlecht klarkommen, wir waren's gewoehnt zu	69 A B C	H J K
arbeiten. Es haben ja ueber 90 Prozent der Frauen vollbeschaeftigt	70 A B C	H J K
gearbeitet. Die waren irgendwie intergriert in 'nem Betrieb, da wurde	71 A B C	
auch sehr viel gemacht, was das gesellschaftliche Leben betrifft. Die	72 A C	
LPGen haben von der Kindstaufe bis zur Beerdigung alles gemacht im	73 A C	
Betrieb.	74 A C	
Nun haben wir also versucht den Frauen wieder irgendwo ne Richtung zu	75	D F H
geben, sie ein bisschen zu motivieren. Versucht sie aus dieser	76	D F H
Isolierung rauszuholen, durch Veranstaltungen, *ABM*, durch kulturelles	77	D F H
Leben in den Orten das Zusammengehoerigkeitsgefuehl zu staerken. Aber	78	D F H
das gestaltet sich auch als sehr schwierig. Und von den Frauen, ich	79	D F H
denke mal ziehen sich sehr viele sehr stark zurueck. Ich denke auch sie	80	D F H
schrauben ihre Ansprueche zurueck. Gerade auf dem Land kann man das	81	D F G H
sehen, sie machen Konsumverzicht. Dann kommt fehlende Mobilitaet dazu,	82	D G
dann kommt dazu die Struktur im laendlichen Raum, Infrastruktur,	83	D G
Kinderbetreuung, Nahverkehr, Verkaufseinrichtungen oder was auch immer,	84	D G
das ist alles weg. Als Frau, wenn Sie keinen Kindergartenplatz	85	D G H J K
nachweisen koennen, Krippenplatz brauchen wir nicht drueber reden, das	86	H J K M
gibt's schon lange nicht mehr, dann sind sie nicht vermittelbar beim	87	H J K M
Arbeitsamt.		

[...]

Fig. 3.10.: Example of coding stripes

As discussed above, the procedure of coding and index searching would ideally be carried out at different stages of the research, i.e. between interviews. This would enable the researcher to generate further questions or topics that need more information. Hence, theoretical sampling would be based on such intermediate analysis.

Due to time and budget constraints, I could only comply with this procedure in a limited way. I did begin the coding procedure between the correspondence and key informant interviews, as well as between the first phase of key informant interviews and the last stage of fieldwork (with focus groups and key informants). But I did not, as mentioned above, transcribe and code interviews whilst in the field. Therefore, when key informant interviews in the first main phase of data collection suggested that 'working collectives' played a major role in the formation of norms and meanings in the lives of women before unification, the correspondence was coded again in order to investigate and compare recollections of the collectives. At this time, information was scrutinised specifically for the social context of the LPG and indications of the working collective. On other occasions I could not, however, return to the field for further data collection in order to explore the different perceptions of mayors and village women on social exclusion (see chapter five), to investigate the diversity of experiences of higher educated correspondents and village women, or to gain a greater understanding of the impact of age on current experiences, for example. In these instances, categories remained 'unsaturated'.

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the process of data collection and analysis. Beginning with methodological considerations, i.e. feminist influence and use of grounded theory, the chapter illustrated both the flexibility and rigour of this research. First, whilst adhering to research procedures acknowledged within qualitative methodologies, a key concern was to demonstrate the role of the researcher and participants throughout the research. The choice of methods which enabled participants to 'talk back' was significant to the overall design of the study. Furthermore, the illustration of reflexivity in this study indicated divergence from the original research plan due to issues emerging from data analysis or specific requirements of the fieldwork itself. Secondly, the chapter described the

integration of a computer-based data analysis technique uncommon in geographical research, i.e. the use of NUD.IST. Although key categories emerged from the analysis which formed the story line of the remaining chapters, it was also evident that the data was far too complex and, despite intensive data collection, not abundant enough to achieve saturation of all categories that were generated.

COMRADES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. THE DEVELOPMENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATIVE (LPG), AND WOMEN'S PLACE WITHIN THE LPG

4.1. Introduction

It has already been noted that women were said to be the group most affected after unification. Chapters five to seven discuss the complexity of post-unification issues dealt with by rural women. But in order to comprehend the impact of unification on women in rural areas it is also necessary to understand the composition of their previous living environment, the LPGs. As noted in chapter one, Mecklenburg-Westpommerania has been marked by its large scale agricultural structures. For one out of five employees agriculture meant one's livelihood until unification. In some districts this figure was considerably higher. Agriculture was, however, more than a job to many of those employees. It was an agri-CULTURE which provided a framework for functions such as the workplace, recreation, social services and education. All of these functions were commonly integrated into the organisation of the agricultural co-operative, the LPG. Through the implementation of *Frauenpolitik*[48] as a means of positive discrimination, it can be argued that women more than men had come to rely upon the organisation within the LPG for the structure of their every day lives.

In light of this knowledge, it is perhaps not surprising that statistics indicated that women as a group appeared to have had greater reservations towards unification than men. For instance, surveys revealed that in August 1990, 51% of women opposed unification compared with 35% of men (Schlegel, 1993). It is interesting to note in this context that a survey in 1983 showed that more women (56%) than men (45%) felt "proud to be GDR citizen" and, shortly after unification, more women (51%) than men (37%) agreed with the statement that they felt "more like a GDR citizen" still. In 1992, Schlegel (1993) showed that only a minority of 43% of women as opposed to 64% of men strongly agreed with the statement that they

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[48] *Frauenpolitik* ('women politics') comprises a set of policies specifically directed toward the full integration of women into the work process. It therefore includes measures to alleviate women's burden resulting from household duties as well. There is no adequate term in the English literature and therefore *Frauenpolitik* will be used throughout this thesis.

felt "happy about unification". These data are based on national survey figures (i.e. GDR wide) and do not reflect differences between the attitudes of rural and urban women. Preliminary fieldwork for this thesis in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania in 1996 suggested that, in this region, which was said to be more 'red' than the rest of the GDR, women's attitudes were more likely to be negative about unification than the above statistics indicate.

This chapter seeks to describe the events leading to the consolidation of agricultural co-operatives as a framework for women's everyday experiences. The discussion encompasses developments the GDR as a whole and also focuses on the six study villages. In the first section, changes in the countryside since the 1930s are delineated, focusing on the process of agricultural restructuring from the end of the Second World War until unification with a view to the impact on the communities and their residents in the studied area. Women's integration into the LPGs by means of the implication of *Frauenpolitik* as well as 'socialist services' such as child care, health care and education is also discussed in the chapter.

4.2. Changes in the countryside prior to unification

Self-sufficient agricultural production was a significant element of the uniformly and politically planned economy with the specific function of developing national resources for a stable supply of the GDR population with foodstuff, and for industries with agricultural raw materials. One commentator, Krambach (1988), suggested that the role of agriculture in the planned economy was one of the basic economic principles of GDR socialism. Both agricultural output and the supply of agricultural produce to the population were heavily subsidised by the State, as will be discussed below. The development of agriculture in this way was based on the co-operative use of arable land and organised through the agricultural co-operative (LPG). The LPG provided a framework for the establishment of socialist ideologies, and thus the confirmation of political norms and meanings in the countryside (Reichelt, 1992). The LPG was also a means to develop mechanisms which would raise the status of co-operative farmers to that of industrial workers (Herrenknecht, 1995; Krambach, 1988). Within the overall enterprise of the LPG, farmers were divided into working collectives, which were small, task-oriented groups of workers. The working collective was the smallest but perhaps the most significant unit in which ideological developments took

place. It not only embraced the labour process, but it also extended its activities into the private sphere of its workers. In effect, the collective became the 'fundamental unit of society' (Gleserman in Jetzschman, 1988). It is important to note that the literature offers little information on the function of the collective and, more significantly, its meaning to female workers.

Elsewhere it has been suggested that the organisation of agricultural production developed through three to five phases (see, for instance, Grube and Rost, 1995). The phases described in this chapter correspond to the way in which the respondents for this research conceptualised the changes themselves: (1) the consolidation and collectivisation of land until the 1960s; (2) the extension of LPGs until the 1970s and; (3) specialisation or 'industrialisation' throughout the 1980s.

4.2.1. The consolidation and collectivisation of land until the 1960s
4.2.1.1. The rationale for the socialist collectivisation of land

The historic development of agriculture in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania encompasses a long period of feudal land ownership. Until the 1930s, extensive areas of land were held and administered by squires employing peasant labour, with only a small proportion of land and villages occupied by individual farmers. In general, soil quality was poor, and large plots of arable land were necessary to yield satisfying harvests, therefore small individual farmers struggled to maintain their independence. This situation did, however, differ from other areas in East Germany, such as Thuringia, where there was a tradition of dividing land equally between the heirs of landowners (Reichelt, 1992) and consequently smaller parcels of land were farmed there. As will be discussed below, the large scale 'agricultural legacy' in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania presented a disadvantage to the restructuring of rural areas after unification when Western principles, which promoted small family farms and discriminated against large farms, were put into practice.

The misuse of land ownership for ideological, i.e. fascist purposes in the pre-second-world-war period led the post-war government to consider land reforms throughout Germany. In Hessen (West Germany), for instance, it was believed that a democratic order could be achieved by reducing large scale ownership

structures and thus reducing threats of re-emerging fascism. In East Germany, land reforms took place within a communist framework and thus took a more rigorous and comprehensive form than in the West (Reichelt, 1992).

During the Soviet occupation a process of expropriation was initiated in 1945 which was predominantly directed at the gentry, large farmers owning over 100 ha of arable land and landowners with Nazi-background, although some were alleged to be Nazi supporters by the State for political convenience. Land was confiscated without compensation and turned into a State 'fund'. From this fund, the land was redistributed to new farmers, peasants and war refugees from the East (Grube and Rost, 1995; Krenz, 1996) (see figure 4.1). This process of redistribution, termed the 'proper solution', was called by the State 'gentry's land in farmers' hand' (*Junkerland in Bauernhand*) (Reichelt, 1992). The result of this process was that two-thirds of land from the State fund was distributed to applicants in approximately 8-10ha parcels and one-third of this land remained State owned 'people's property' (Grube and Rost, 1995; Vogeler, 1996).

Era	Final number of farms
Estates and farms: 1945	11,697 estates and farms confiscated by Soviets 57,797 farms not confiscated by Soviets
Soviet land reform: 1945-1949	474,900 new farms 85,189 expanded farms 57,797 previously existing farms
GDR collectivisation: 1950-1989	3,969 agricultural co-operatives (LPGs) 479 state owned agricultural co-operatives (VEGs)

Fig. 4.1.: The consolidation and collectivisation of land: 1945- 1989
(adapted from Vogeler, 1996)

4.2.1.2. Administrative preparation in the district of Neubrandenburg

Four of the study villages, Wüste, Schinkel, Karlshorst and Charlottenburg, were formerly administered by feudal landowners who leased land parcels to small farmers or employed temporary workers to farm their land until they went bankrupt

in the early 1930s (012,102). These villages were subsequently resettled with immigrants from Hitherpommerania, East Prussia and Sudetenland (Krenz, 1996). In contrast, the villages of Wilmersdorf and Hellern had always been occupied by individual farmers. In these villages immigrants from the East were employed as farm workers rather than obtaining land of their own. After the second world war, more settlers arrived as refugees from the East amounting to 900,000 migrants and accounting for ¾ of the population in rural areas (Krenz, 1996). As a result of the Soviet land reform in the GDR, these settlers were eligible to obtain their own land with which they would later join the LPG.

Due to the extent of rural areas in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania (see chapter one), the process of agricultural collectivisation encompassed almost the entire area of Mecklenburg-Westpommerania. In order for the State to control the countryside more efficiently it became necessary to congregate small villages into larger administrative units. Consequently, in the early 1950s the entire district of Neubrandenburg underwent administrative reform. Some of the gentry villages were ageing or dying and were thus demolished, and others became associated with larger neighbour villages to form one community (012). However, the rural population was not always acquiescent to this process. For instance, one respondent in the research fieldwork said:

> "We heard about the demolition of many small villages only through the grapevine ... and thought we *have* to do something in order to rescue our own village. Therefore, the local council quickly gathered and decided to build a big hall [for cultural events] as soon as possible." (012)

In 1952, it became compulsory for new farmers to join a co-operative. Although there were three types of co-operatives initially (LPG I, LPG II and LPG III), by 1961 all co-operatives became LPG IIIs. A farmer who belonged to a LPG I contributed to the co-operative with arable land only. In a LPG II, s/he endowed farming equipment as well as land. In the most advanced and politically desired form of co-operative, the LPG III, a farmer was obliged to offer farm buildings, technical components and livestock to the collective ownership in the LPG (Krenz, 1996; Vogeler, 1996; Thöne, 1993). Even those with no land, such as the farm workers in Wilmersdorf and Hellern, could join the LPG contributing labour power only. The only disadvantage for the farmworkers relative to the individual farmers

was that they were not eligible for an end-of-year payment of 450 Marks paid to all farmers who had owned land and brought it into the co-operative. Each farmer would receive 45 Marks per 10 hectares up to 100 hectares (119). New farmers were subsidised by the State which provided tax reductions, debt relief, reductions in the produce tariff collected by the State and lower charges for the use of farming equipment (Reichelt, 1992). Equipment could be obtained from the widely distributed 'MTS' (machine loan stations) or the 'VdgB' (committee for the mutual support of farmers) (Grube and Rost, 1995; Krenz, 1996). Large farmers were initially denied LPG membership but in 1954 they too were accepted. The SED included them under the pretext of re-educating them in line with socialist principles but primarily with the aim of extinguishing the 'exploitative class' in rural areas. The expertise that these large scale farmers could offer was ignored. A sign of extinction of private farming was the eradication of former property borders (i.e. fences or hedges) as a consequence of land consolidation. Furthermore, in the land registration documents the property of new farmers was commonly designated 'people's property' rather than naming the owners in person.

The objective of the so-called 'socialisation' of land was to achieve the "victory of socialist means of production" by 1961 (Krenz, 1996). The preconditions for the integration of agriculture into a planned economy were thus established by concentrating the means of agricultural production. Hence, the political, economic and ideological authority of the SED could be secured in the countryside (Reichelt, 1992). At a later stage in LPG development, as will be shown below, a focus on the development of human resources further strengthened this authority.

Hence, in addition to the enlargement of villages, the district of Neubrandenburg began its collectivisation of farmland in the 1950s. Due to the feudal history of the region, there were numerous farmers who owned extensive farmland. Their choice in the course of this process was to surrender, flee or be imprisoned. The mayor of Wüste describes the terror of that period:

"The large farmers were obstacles to the process [of collectivisation]. If they did well, they would say 'Why should we join the LPG? We're doing fine by ourselves'. So they were pressured, they had to comply with certain conditions. They had to deliver eggs, meat, horsetail-hairs. Yes horses had to have their tails cut, so-and-so-many kilos, I only learnt this afterwards. If they couldn't deliver, they were called to account. An acquaintance who had 80

hectares could not keep chickens and he had to deliver 10,000 eggs but he couldn't. He'd specialised in dairy production and they came and took eight or nine pregnant cows from his animal sheds. 'What am I to do?' he cried. And he packed his suitcase. The next year, he couldn't comply again and they came. Blanket under his arm, to the nick. Yes, that happened frequently and that's why they all fled." (012)

Another account was provided by a former co-operative leader in the region, who used to be associated with the village of Hellern.

"It wasn't the case that we all jumped and shouted 'hurrah, off into the LPG'. Not at all, that was later. But this was a result of the Second World War, whereby we became the Soviet occupied zone and their economic framework was transferred to us ... It took eight days [in 1960] for the whole region to become fully co-operative. There was a Party representative and everybody was dealt with individually." (019)

By 1952, 35% of the 'old' farmers and 10% of the 'old' settlers had consequently given up their farms (Krenz, 1996). The rate of increase in the area of land held by LPGs was considerable, as figures for the district of Neubrandenburg show. From 1951-55 a total of 583 LPGs were established, cultivating 184,000 ha and thus 22% of arable land in the region. Of those co-operatives, only 7% were still LPGs of type I. By 1959 LPG-held land extended to approximately 326,000 ha covering 48.4% of arable land (see also figure 4.2.). In order to increase the number of members of LPGs in this scarcely populated area, the 'Central Committee' called for a move of industrial workers to rural areas. As a result, many workers settled in the North leading to a 100% increase in LPG membership between 1957 and 1959 in the district of Neubrandenburg (Krenz, 1996).

Year	Amount of LPGs	Area (in hectares)	% of arable land
1952	183	14,000	2%
1955	583	183,396	22%
1960	1,566	570,077	87.2%
1965	1,251	little increase of total land, instead expansion of individual LPGs	
1970	807		
1975	479		
1980	356		

Fig. 4.2.: Expansion of LPGs from 1952 onward (sources: Krenz, 1996; Statistisches Jahrbuch der DDR, 1966; 1976; 1986)

4.2.1.3. The 'socialist spring in the countryside' and the consolidation of collective farm structures

A final stage in the formation of LPGs was the campaign 'Socialist Spring In The Countryside' launched by the former SED-newspaper 'Freie Erde' (Krenz, 1996). A key message of the campaign was that the entry of farmers into the LPGs was a significant contribution to the maintenance of peace. At the same time, indecisive farmers were pressured by local political leadership to join the co-operatives. Finally, on the 25th of April 1960, the People's Chamber of the GDR confirmed that the greatest revolutionary turnover in the history of German farmers had been achieved within only eight years (Reichelt, 1992). The implication was that there had been a complete transition to co-operatively held land. In the face of severe pressures to join the LPGs, it was not always possible for those who opposed the regime to flee, as the former mayor of Wüste explains:

"Many were taken to Bauzen[49], how many, one still doesn't know, but they were put to the wall, so to speak. Certain people got the death sentence but we *had* to go on living. We had to go on living under these political and economic pressures. 1961 I think we had forced collectivisation here. Those who didn't want to had to, one way or another. [The Party] found something. Those who didn't want to were accused of some economic crime. Many fled. And I wanted to escape as well, but I couldn't. I just couldn't make it. I loved my native country too much. This is often misunderstood today. 'Why did you stay? You could've escaped, if you thought differently'. But it is not so easy, you cannot leave house and home behind." (125)

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[49] Bauzen was a prison in the GDR.

Numerous individuals, however, unable to cope with the pressures did leave their home and their land. Those left behind with the responsibility for running the farms could not always cope because they lacked the necessary skills and expertise.

"In Bramsche there were seven farmers and they all fled. All who remained there were employees and they didn't get their act together and then everything went downhill. But here [in Wüste], we had a feudal landlord until 1932, or around that time, and then it was resettled. Each settler obtained ten or up to 30 hectares of land. These people stayed and were full of spirit to work hard and they were very dedicated. That is why I think we [the LPG animal production] did so well." (012)

A number of laws and directives, implemented between 1956 and 1958, essentially removed communal authority from the LPGs and transferred it to State control. The State influenced LPG planning by means of strict guidelines, approval and control of plans, and the appointment of key personnel. Depending on the type of LPG, the co-operative was issued either an 'animal stock plan' or a 'plant cultivation plan' by 1957. The cultivation plan would, for example, contain guidelines about the type of crops to cultivate, which techniques to apply, and the desirable yields according to 'scientific findings' rather than regional characteristics (Krenz, 1996; Vogeler, 1996). It became a characteristic of SED politics to pursue over-ambitious plans for agricultural output that were based more on wishful thinking than agricultural expertise (see, for example Krenz, 1996; Reichelt, 1992).

Before turning to the second phase in the consolidation of agriculture, the following statistics serve to illustrate the state of agriculture at the end of the 1960s. In the region of Neubrandenburg, there were 1,566 LPGs which managed 85.2% of the total arable land (Krenz, 1996; see also figure 4.3. below). Approximately 60% of LPGs were still of type I and II. However, by 1968 all farmers had been integrated into LPGs of type III along with various production enterprises, trade and construction businesses which provided services to the LPGs and the villages (Grube and Rost, 1995). The statistical yearbook of the GDR indicated that, in 1966, 42.4% of all employees in Neubrandenburg were occupied in agriculture (i.e. farming, forestry and fisheries), the highest figure

throughout the GDR. Out of these 105,462 employees, 37.15% were women. There were 83,907 LPG members and the proportion of female members was 41.8% (Statistisches Jahrbuch der DDR, 1966). These figures suggest that nearly 75% of male agricultural employees were LPG members compared with 88% of female workers. But the data do not specify the occupations of female members and are likely to include women who were working in the administrative or service sector.

4.2.2. The enlargement of LPGs until the 1970s

4.2.2.1. The 'socialist village'

After key preparations for socialist rural development had been completed through the establishment of the LPGs, a model for fully 'co-operative' or 'socialist' villages was developed (Herrenknecht, 1995) in order to focus on the development of the workers' 'socialist identities'. Socio-economic differences were to be reduced and human resources developed through training and qualification. The equalisation of property and income were key objectives. Furthermore, new agricultural professions were created in the phase of agricultural specialisation such as 'agro-technician', 'agro-chemist' or 'zoo-technician'. Although initiated in the previous phase, this occupational specialisation on certain sectors within the farming process led to the absolute abandonment of traditional farming skills. Last but not least, the village was to provide a space for 'social careers' on the basis of participation in voluntary or club activities (Herrenknecht, 1995). However, as will be discussed below, voluntary activities were another political tool to control people's development into socialist citizens and therefore such activities were often forced upon the workers in 'exchange' for preferment.

In effect, the LPG was equivalent to the village in terms of its boundaries and authority relations. The LPG was commonly regarded as the political, economic, cultural and communal centre, and agriculture was the principal force for innovations in the village. Hence, all changes in LPG structures impacted on the development in the villages as well. Directed by the LPGs and controlled by the State, all villages developed similar characteristics. The LPGs operated within firm 5-year plans to increase production and self-sufficiency of the GDR. Targets for developments in the villages were regulated by means of yearly plans such as

social, cultural and women's furtherance plans[50], all of which were subsumed to the LPG plans. The LPG was, furthermore, responsible for the maintenance of the built structure, road repairs and housing stock (Beer and Müller, 1993; DeSoto and Panzig, 1994; Vogeler, 1996), although not always without problems as the mayor of Wüste indicated:

"I remember going to the Water Board, because we needed a well. That was 1986. They said, well, we need an assessment and so on. I asked when they could [do that], 92 or 93 it could be done, [they needed] permits and so on. So I said, right, forget it, we'll do it on our own... But the whole village needed new pipes... they hadn't been done since 1945... and were all damaged. We needed pipes, but where could one get pipes! We advertised it in the paper. There was this business in Saxony, they had so many meters of pipes and wanted to trade them against bricks. We had large bricks and [the business] needed them to build a holiday camp at the Baltic Sea. So we traded." (012)

On another occasion:

"The roads were done by the LPG... but the asphalt [road] here always had huge pot holes and you could only drive *really* slowly. We said we needed to fix it and we had-you won't believe it- black ashes, we put black ashes in the holes... oh-oh... if there were two cars, the last one couldn't see the first one. And the cars weren't as solid then, so one couldn't see the person in the back seat. It was so black inside!" (012)

In general, it was recognised that services needed to be supplied to the villagers in order to prevent out-migration and strengthen the labour force (Autorenkollektiv, 1984). The 'agricultural debate'- as part of the GDR political agenda in the 1970s- had a significant impact on the establishment and consolidation of a range of social services, such as nurseries, after-school care, canteens, laundries and mending services (Einhorn, 1993a), which are described in greater detail below. The 'debate' ensured, throughout the 1970s, a continuous focus on the maintenance of labour power, i.e. the villagers, to increase agricultural productivity.

The political concern to develop the 'socialist village' was reflected in the SED Party programme which aimed to reduce inequalities between urban and rural areas, i.e. between the industrial working class and co-operative farmers. Furthermore, the SED announced that better conditions should be created to

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[50] Women's furtherance plans were an element of the positive discrimination of women and included detailed plans for the achievement of women's qualification, social activities and socio-political education.

achieve the approximation of the standard of living in the village to that of the city. The predominant political focus remained, however, on agricultural output. In order to justify continuous expansion, it was proclaimed during the IXth SED Party convention in 1968, that the population of the GDR should consistently be provided with foodstuffs, and industry with raw materials. What few citizens knew, was that the State aimed to secure a supply of agricultural products to the Soviet Union as well.

4.2.3. The specialisation and industrialisation of LPGs

From 1968 onwards, the LPGs entered a phase of specialisation, intensification and concentration of production. The co-operatives were separated into LPG(T), animal production, and LPG(P), crop production, which expanded substantially (see figure 4.3.). Physical expansion of LPGs was achieved by merging arable land from several villages (Vogeler, 1996). 1,000 to 4,000 animals were kept or 3,000 to 6,000 ha of land cultivated per co-operative (DeSoto and Panzig, 1994; Krenz, 1996). A final integration of LPGs and VEGs took place during the mid 1970s, when agro-industrial co-operative complexes were established. This process resulted in crop production over 32,000 ha in Rostock (Mecklenburg-Westpommerania) or animal production of 93,000 pigs in Hassleben (Brandenburg).

Year	LPG I/II	LPG III	LPG(P)	LPG(T)	KAP
1952	167	16	-	-	-
1960	884	682	-	-	-
1965	590	661	-	-	-
1970	218	589	-	-	-
1975	42	431	6	-	119
1980	9	-	89	258	40

Fig. 4.3.: Specialisation of LPGs in Neubrandenburg (sources: Krenz, 1996; Statistisches Jahrbuch der DDR, 1966; 1976; 1986)

Key informants in the research fieldwork described this process of enlargement and its success or problems in terms of agricultural production in the study

for instance.

villages. The descriptions give an indication of the differences in the scale of agriculture at the local level despite the attempts to equalise regions and agricultural production. In addition, the respondents' accounts implied how important the agricultural sector was to the local economy and thus how significant its loss, as a result of unification, became for the villages. The mayor of Wilmersdorf summarised that "the LPG [had been] the A-Z of the village"[51].

In the 1970s, all of the villages divided arable land into LPG I or LPG III (none of the villages had LPGs of type II) and some KAPs were formed jointly with other villages. After the re-organisation of the KAPs, production was divided into animal production in LPG(T)s and crop production in LPG(P)s. Normally, one LPG(P) was associated with two LPG(T)s and several villages collaborated within these LPGs. Some villages were actual production locations and had one large animal shed, whereas others, for instance, jointly used harvest machines on shared land. The LPG(P)s provided fodder for associated LPG(T)s and, at the same time, produced stocks for the State grain exports. In support of the LPG (P)s, the State provided considerable financial assistance. But the district of Neubrandenburg had poor soil quality and thus production yields were relatively low. Because the LPG(T)s depended on deliveries from associated LPG(P)s, in contrast to the VEGs, many struggled to achieve their planned yields in animal production. Even Wüste, which was remembered by key informants as one of the most successful LPGs in the region encountered problems:

"Only what was harvested in the LPG(P) was available to us. They had to deliver their fixed quota to the State first and whatever was left went into the animal production ... The output per cow was around 4,000 litres, today it is 6,000, but of course we didn't have any fortified animal feed. We could only feed about one third of the concentrate fed today and that is essential to the output. Whatever was left from the cows went into pig production. But we also had a fixed quota for our pigs, we had to deliver so-and-so much. We had to take it [fodder] from the cows and then they didn't produce as much milk!" (012)

Nonetheless, the output of the LPG(T) in Wüste was sufficiently high to accumulate a budget for the modernisation of the animal sheds in the early 1970s without external funds. Key informants familiar with the LPGs in Uecker Randow, confirmed that Wüste was extraordinary in its management and production levels,

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[51] Jones and Wild (1997) similarly speak of the equivalence of workplace with "locality" (p.288).

and its organisation of cultural life in the village. Comments by key informants on all other LPGs were rather reserved, indicating that other villages were less successful.

The key informants revealed that in spite of compliance with State guidelines by the LPGs, different circumstances could lead to differences in agricultural progress made in the villages. As will be discussed below, economic differences were also extended into the social sphere of the villages in that better LPGs generally demonstrated more abundant socio-cultural activities. Socialist patterns established in this context formed the basis for post-unification development. Chapter seven, for example, discusses the significance of such legacies for socio-political activities at the local level. Key informants in the six villages recalled a number of factors that inhibited the attainment of high levels of agricultural output: (1) poor soil quality and low grain production; (2) lack of sufficient income of the LPG to maintain and modernise sheds and equipment; (3) lack of motivation amongst workers and; (4) lack of leadership qualities[52].

4.2.4. The image of rural life

Irrespective of local problems, at the national level the State promoted a positive image of rural life and agriculture. There was an apparent constant growth in agricultural output, based largely on inflated data. Some respondents admitted that harvest results, for example, were manipulated to make the figures appear more competitive in the overall contest between the LPGs, or when truthful results were returned in order to be 'corrected'.

The goal of raising the status of co-operative farmers to that of industrial workers had also seemingly been achieved. The State thus claimed that, by the 1980s, farmers had attained an exemplary status in society as they had full social security, social equality and an above average income. A sense of community and solidarity were characteristic values that were established amongst the co-operative farmers (Watzek, 1997). The recognition that "relations of comradely, co-operative work and mutual help... [obtained] an entirely new foundation through the collective work process and [had begun] to penetrate other spheres of

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[52] In Wilmersdorf, for example, it was contended that the LPG leader suffered from frequent "alcohol intoxication" (141).

village life" (Krambach, 1985: 153) led the Central Committee of the SED in 1984 to formulate village policies to consolidate these 'socialist characteristics'. The XIIth Farmers' Congress had already asserted that the village ought to be seen as more than simply a place to work and live as a way of preventing migration to urban areas. It was estimated that, in the early 1980s, 20- 30% of young people in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania left the countryside. This seemed to indicate that their needs had not been satisfied by higher qualifications, employment and income alone. Hence, there was a growing political concern to "establish socialist values in people's everyday thinking, feeling and acting" (Krambach, 1984: 213) through improvements within the socio-cultural sphere of the workers. Consequently, socialist and farming traditions, such as seasonal celebrations, were revived and reinforced. In addition, the Central Committee stipulated that village clubs should be established (Krambach, 1984). The village club included representatives from all social organisations, businesses, LPGs and communal institutions, although the LPG remained responsible for the organisation and funding of events by means of their yearly plans. As a consequence of the political impetus the number of culture and club houses increased from 1041 to 1522 throughout the GDR between 1976 and 1986. In the district of Neubrandenburg the number of clubs more than doubled during that period from 25 to 58 clubs.

It was pointed out above that the official representation of agriculture by the State was as a modern and efficient enterprise in which farmers were considered to have obtained a considerable status in society. However, the fieldwork revealed that not all agricultural enterprises benefited from modernisation. It was frequently the case that an LPG obtained a tractor, for example, which then had to be taken apart in order to utilise spare parts for the repair of other tractors.

In addition, statistics indicate inequity in the provision of services in rural and urban areas (Ostwald, 1990) and thus the aim of advancing living conditions in rural areas had not been achieved as planned. The research findings do not indicate, however, that there was widespread unrest and dissatisfaction in rural areas as a result of this inequality. Looking back, women in particular appear to have been more content with their lives in the GDR than today. Regional

disparities have, in fact, increased as a consequence of the closure of the majority of local services in rural areas since unification.

In the discussion above on women's identification with the socialist State, it was evident that more women than men perceived themselves as GDR citizens. Schlegel (1993) suggested that the implementation of *Frauenpolitik* accounted for women's overall satisfaction. Although Schlegel did not make a distinction between urban and rural areas, her view was supported by Merl's observations earlier, in 1991, which focused specifically on the rural context. The findings of the research for this thesis complement these earlier findings and, additionally, indicate that women's contentment was not associated with agricultural developments in the village but instead was due to the level of social benefits they enjoyed. This will be illustrated in a discussion below about the nature and effect of *Frauenpolitik* on women in LPGs including a range of socialist services available to women.

4.3. The integration of women in LPGs

Much of the earlier literature written by both feminist and non-feminist scholars argued that *Frauenpolitik* did not lead to the emancipation of women because although women enjoyed increased participation in the workplace, they still bore the burden of domestic responsibilities. Women respondents in the fieldwork discussed the practical consequences of *Frauenpolitik* upon their everyday lives. It was generally felt that women were required to demonstrate that they were as good as men[53] by fulfilling the three roles of mother, worker and political participant. *Frauenpolitik* was regarded by the respondents as not only a means of integration into the workplace but also as a means of alleviating women's domestic burden. Most respondents mentioned the benefits of *Frauenpolitik* with regards to employment or the family. However, there was also considerable criticism about the maintenance of inequalities in women's incomes, the lack of choice between work and motherhood and the negligible role of men in the household. Some respondents noted that women's political role was not addressed sufficiently. Issues raised included the lack of true emancipation by the State other than 'on paper', the inefficiency of women's quotas for higher positions

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[53] This often referred to in the literature and by the respondents themselves as "ihren Mann stehen" (see, for instance, Klenner. (1990).

and politics due to women's lack of interest or lack of qualifications and, related to the latter point, women's inability to manage stress due to their bearing of multiple burdens. This section will outline the socialist ideology underlying political developments and three stages in *Frauenpolitik*. Key 'socialist services' which have become meaningful to women in their everyday rural lives will also be described. The issue of employment will be explored in greater depth in chapter six.

4.3.1. A socialist ideology- The emancipation of women

Friedrich Engels' work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* has been widely quoted as the foundation of theorising the 'Women Question' in the GDR era (Landes, 1989). The socialist definition for women's emancipation in the GDR has been entirely drafted on the basis of Engels' work and of selective readings of August Bebel and Clara Zetkin. According to these writings, the only way to liberate women from economic dependency and male domination was by means of large scale participation in the production process (Penrose, 1990). The Marxist rescue of women was subsumed within the liberation of society as a whole.

In essence, capitalist oppression is viewed by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848 as follows:

> "Capitalism is charged with reducing bourgeois women to instruments of production for the male bourgeoisie, transforming proletarian children into 'simple articles of commerce and instruments of labour', destroying proletarian family life with women driven into prostitution and exploitative working conditions. Sexual oppression is conceived as a derivative of the social division of labour and its products, private property and the capitalist cash nexus." (in: Landes, 1989: 19)

In *Capital* Marx argues that "a new economic foundation for a higher form of relations between the sexes" is created by means of the importance that modern industry ascribes "to women, to young persons, and to children of both sexes" in the production process outside "the domestic sphere" (in: Landes, 1989: 27). It follows that the aim is the emancipation of the entire working class by enabling women to enter the public workforce. Lenin reinforces this statement when he claims that "the proletariat cannot achieve complete liberty until it has won

complete liberty for women" (in: Shaffer, 1981: 8). Despite the responsibility socialism adopts to emancipate women, the 'natural' division of labour is not abandoned. Marx and Engels reiterate the sexual difference, i.e. women as child bearer, and the difference in physical strength in *The German Ideology* and thus accept the occupation of different roles of men and women in society (Haug, 1991; Landes, 1989; Sydie, 1987). Full equality, whereby both men and women carried the same responsibility for all societal duties, i.e. from home carer to political participant, had neither been addressed by Marx and Engels (Corrin, 1992) nor the later socialist theorists Bebel and Zetkin (Penrose, 1990). Moreover, throughout forty years of socialism in the GDR, this issue remained to be neglected.

4.3.2. Frauenpolitik

As will be shown below, the above principles were largely endorsed in women's lives in the LPG where developments almost exclusively aim at women's integration into the labour force. At the same time, women's 'natural role' as mother and caretaker was maintained and 'protected' as they entered the labour market. Male responsibility for the household and his role in the family had not, however, been addressed. Instead, the State regarded it as its task (and therefore the task of society) to assist women with their duties by socialising domestic labour and child care. SED *Frauenpolitik* underwent three subsequent stages which will be considered in turn.

4.3.2.1. Work policies

The first phase of *Frauenpolitik* spanned the period 1946 to 1965. The decimation of the male population during the Second World War necessitated a substantial input from women in the labour force in order to rebuild the economy. The political focus was therefore upon the integration of women into the labour market whilst, at the same time, protecting motherhood. Immediately after the war, two commands by the Soviet Military Administration were ordered for women to develop political and cultural awareness. Furthermore, the principal of equal pay for equal employment was established (Einhorn, 1992). Until the mid 1960s, the Soviet commands were incorporated into the GDR constitution and enhanced with further legislation. These laws included special rights for women including; one household day per week for full-time workers; paid leave to nurse their children;

and the construction of lighter equipment at the workplace adapting to women's physiological differences (Böckmann-Schewe *et al.*, 1995; Winkler, 1975). The intention was not for women to perform the same work as men at all times, though. When there was a shortage of male labour, for example, a new model of harvest machine was introduced and women were to operate 'modern technology'. When male labour was, however, secured, women disappeared from this kind of mechanised work under the pretext that modern technology was hazardous for the fragile female organism (DeSoto and Panzig, 1994). This occurred particularly towards the end of this phase in *Frauenpolitik*, when men returned from exile and war captivity. Although more women had participated in political life, the presence of women in politics gradually decreased as a result of male presence. In spite of women's increased participation in the labour force, the majority of women were still employed in unskilled, low paid work. Thus, after the implementation of work policies the socialist Party required formulation of new goals (Penrose, 1990).

4.3.2.2. Qualifying women

The laws and regulations that were enforced in this phase of *Frauenpolitik* involved measures for further education and job qualifications which were in demand in rural areas when LPGs increasingly began to specialise the production process. The political reasoning behind this process was an 'objective need' to utilise the productive forces of society collectively for the well-being of the entire state. This principle was endorsed in a political document entitled 'Women, Peace and Socialism' from 1961 (McCauley, 1983; Steele, 1977). This document proclaimed that economic problems facing the GDR could only be solved if "every available pair of hands were utilised" (McCauley, 1983: 105). The extension of agricultural structures included an increasing level of mechanisation and administration which demanded the development of skills and further qualification of workers. Manual labour, clerical work and caring professions were particularly dominated by women (Edwards, 1985; see also chapter six). This continuous demand for labour also lead to employment opportunities for elderly women in agriculture, "if they were mobile enough" (019), especially during the harvest period.

It became possible for women to pursue academic studies if they had a comprehensive school degree, an apprenticeship, several years of work

experience and had been active in public (political) 'voluntary' activities. They could obtain further training even at the age of 45 or 50 years (Beer and Müller, 1993). Certain training courses were taken entirely by women. Examples such as the following were given by key informants:

"We tried to incorporate women into all levels of management. We had some women at the intermediate level, for example... they also had the opportunity to qualify. There were courses, especially for women- women classes [Frauensonderklassen], so they could obtain further qualifications." (102)

To some extent, women were placed within medium and higher managerial positions in their co-operatives (Edwards, 1985; Nickel, 1992; Shaffer, 1981). This kind of promotion was, however, only accomplishable if women became SED members (see, for instance, Adler and Kretzschmar, 1993). Nevertheless, in rural areas, where women had historically obtained lower qualifications than both men and women in urban areas, the need for female labour was an important means of further education for women. In the district of Neubrandenburg, one out of five women were employed in the LPG as opposed to one out of 12 nationally (Watzek, 1997). In 1960 only 2% of these women were qualified, but by 1982 87% had obtained at least one 'Facharbeiter' qualification or a university degree (Edwards, 1985). Statistics for 1986 on qualifications within 'socialist agriculture' indicate that the level of female qualifications in the district of Neubrandenburg (89.7%) is slightly above that of the GDR average. The majority of these women obtained a so-called 'Facharbeiter' (76.6% of women) whereas the figures for university and polytechnic degrees as well as 'Meister' are significantly lower with only 1.9%, 6.9% and 2.2% respectively (Statistisches Jahrbuch der DDR, 1986)[54].

The relatively low level of female university graduates in agriculture is, however, no indication of the representation of females in universities in general. A more favourable distribution for women at university level becomes apparent when examining more closely statistics for university and polytechnic students. It is evident that in both the percentage of female students almost doubled between 1966 and 1986. 50.3% of students at universities were female whereas 71.7% of students in polytechnics were female in 1986 (Statistisches Jahrbuch der DDR, 1986). These data indicate that women achieved high qualifications which were

necessary for a position of leadership. However, in the sector of agriculture this potential has been largely neglected. My data suggests that women remained working in labour intensive manual work or as unskilled workers. Two key informants described the division of labour in their LPGs as follows:

> "The 'masters of creation' were mostly tractorists or worked in the technical service point... and women... largely comprised the group of manual workers, or they worked in animal production." (032)

> "The cow sheds, for example ... the caring hand of a woman is far better suited for such work. Women are emotionally better animal carers." (027)

The gender-differentiated patterns of employment are illustrated in greater detail in chapter six.

Another result of the new set of policies at this stage was that much emphasis was placed upon the reinforcement of women's committees in factories and the Democratic Women's Association (DFD) (Clemens, 1990; McCauley, 1983). Decisions that were initiated in the context of these forums included opening hours of local shops and kindergartens according to women's shift work, the contents of 'women's furtherance plans' in LPGs, or the organisation of social events. In an attempt to 'convince' women of the merits of socialism, educational measures were also adopted. A range of discussion groups, for instance, as well as so called 'housewife brigades' were organised. One correspondent in this research described how women's self-esteem, and sense of responsibility and achievement was improved by their participation in such brigades. Those women who were not employed were encouraged to do at least some work in a collective context as well as being integrated into a 'political' collective (McCauley, 1983). This, of course, meant that all women could be included, in one way or another, into 'collective living' (Steele, 1977). A key informant stated:

> "Oh god, [women] were involved in everything (laughs)... everything! First of all, the community representatives, they were in the brigade committee... the interests of women had to be incorporated... all the commissions, the cultural committee, for example, had a female chair, the norm-committee... women were involved in everything... the social services committee, the security committee... There were so many. It was impossible to ignore the presence of women." (019)

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[54] The proportion of women with university and polytechnic degrees was slightly higher in the district of Neubrandenburg than the GDR in average.

An unforeseen consequence of women's full-time integration into work was the decline in birth rates. The State attempted to address this issue in its next stage of *Frauenpolitik*; 'Family Politics'.

4.2.2.3. Family politics

At the beginning of the 1970s, GDR statistics were produced to prove a significant increase in female participation and quality in the labour market. In fact, over 90% of women were in employment or higher education (Einhorn, 1992; Shaffer, 1981; Wiebensohn, 1991). The SED proclaimed that equality of sexes, according to the aforementioned socialist ideology, had been accomplished. Hence a new set of measures was developed to move from 'emancipation' to the encouragement of women to have children. This phase has been termed 'Muttipolitik', or 'mommy politics' (see, for instance, Kolinsky, 1996; Marx-Ferree, 1993). In order to enable women to continue their employment whilst having children, the following benefits were provided for women: Women obtained paid leave for one year after the birth of the first child and 18 months for each further child with guaranteed return to the workplace. Free contraception and abortion was available to women during the first three months of pregnancy. A state birth premium of 1,000 Marks (equivalent to approximately one month of pay) was given to mothers as well as 26 weeks of paid pregnancy and maternal leave. For single mothers additional financial support was available. Mothers with two or more children under sixteen years of age worked a 40-hour week at full pay instead of 43.5 hours and obtained a monthly, paid household day. In addition, a monthly child-support payment was offered of 200 to 350 Marks. A network of child care services from the age of zero enabled women to resume their employment soon after their leave (Dölling, 1991b; Einhorn, 1992; Lane, 1983; Marx-Ferree, 1993). Young couples also obtained generous and low-interest loans, and students and workers received financial support when starting a family as well (Böckmann-Schewe et. al., 1995). In their collection of interviews, Fischer and Lux (1990) quoted a woman respondent:

"Young people... they immediately obtain a loan and can buy everything. And when they get children, they get the loan as a gift, they can 'pay it off' with each child [abkindern], as one says. So they'll get one or two kids, the loan is paid off, and they get divorced." (p. 194)

The personal benefits women obtained as a result of positive discrimination through 'mommy politics' were amongst the most vividly discussed issues in the focus group interviews. Most women remembered the comprehensiveness of childcare and alleviation of household duties. With regard to the monthly 'household days', some women remarked that they commonly used this time for days out in their collectives. The focus group interview in Charlottenburg illustrated this:

> *Herta*: "I remember us going out to Berlin for our 'household day'"
> *Bettina*: "You mean you weren't scrubbing the house?"
> (women laugh)
> *Herta*: "No. We did that in between [other work tasks]."

Overall, it cannot be said that the above three stages of *Frauenpolitik* achieved women's 'emancipation' as defined by many Western feminists. Many East German women, however, regarded themselves as being 'emancipated'. Nonetheless, women were concentrated in certain types of employment, and they were therefore paid less than men and obtained less political power. All of these issues have become significant deterrents in the 'catching up' of women with men after unification. At the same time women themselves took a more pragmatic stance and looked at their more immediate, superficial and short-term comfort (similar to Veen's (1997) reference to 'fair weather democracy') rather than the 'philosophical' value of the large-scale and perhaps long-term empowerment of women. Aside from *Frauenpolitik*, which aimed at enabling women to combine motherhood with employment, women had fond memories of a variety of socialist services available to them at the local level.

4.4. Socialist services in rural areas

In rural areas, the LPG was responsible for the institutionalisation and maintenance of 'socialist services' which was in part due to the need to establish a bond of residents to their village and prevent migration (as discussed above). The kind of 'socialist services' I will refer to are those predominantly discussed in the focus groups: (1) child care; (2) health care and pensions; (3) housing; (4) socio-cultural facilities; (5) collectivisation of living. Although some services were

beneficial to women in particular, social support and social security was largely provided for all residents.

4.4.1. Childcare

Especially since the third phase in *Frauenpolitik*, children were to be regarded as women's purpose in life. In order to maintain reproduction whilst enabling women to fully participate in economic life, an extensive network of child care institutions was devised. First initiatives to establish nurseries and kindergartens were originated by women's committees in the factories and agriculture collectives in the 1950s (Clemens, 1990). The latter were commonly called 'harvest kindergartens' and were available throughout the labour intensive harvest period when 'all hands were needed'. Statistics for 'harvest kindergartens' could be obtained for the 1950s and 1960s but from the mid-1970s onwards, there was no statistical evidence of 'harvest kindergartens'. In 1956 and 1966, for instance, the district of Neubrandenburg had an exceedingly high number of 'harvest kindergartens', approximately twice the amount as the national average. At the same time, ordinary kindergartens were more scarcely distributed (Statistisches Jahrbuch der DDR, 1956; 1966). The proportion of harvest kindergartens to ordinary kindergartens can be explained by the level of rurality in Neubrandenburg. Since women were initially largely seasonal rather than full-time workers, they cared for their children at home when the harvest season was over.

With regards to after school child care a 300% increase of after school groups (Horte) can be noted for the district of Neubrandenburg between 1956 and 1966. Although different authors quote slightly different figures, essentially more than 80% of children attended day-nurseries up to the age of three and over 90% attended kindergarten until they reached school age (Einhorn, 1993a; Lane, 1983; Winkler, 1992; Nickel, 1990a). Even throughout their school years, approximately 80% of all children attended after school facilities (Nave-Herz, 1990). Ostwald (1990) claimed that in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania provisions exceeded the national average but remains ambiguous about the period of reference. Although the figure he quoted (86% of children between 0 and three years in care) is similar to figures obtained during this study (86.8% for Neubrandenburg in 1986), there is a discrepancy to his findings in that this figure is slightly below the national

average (Statistisches Jahrbuch der DDR, 1986). Figure 4.4. is an example of a nursery/ kindergarten in one of the study villages.

In addition to a relatively high distribution of childcare, respondents in this research pointed out that kindergartens were very cheap. This was because the State regarded itself as primary sponsor of child care institutions and contributed 80% of the total expenditures. Thus, parents' payments were minimal and amounted to 0.35 Marks per day for supervision and meals (a hot meal and milk was provided for each child) and between 1.40 to 2.00 Marks for diapers and other care products in nurseries (Maier, 1993; Winkler, 1990). In the research, it was noted that "every village had a kindergarten" (012) and most villages a nursery.

Many women in this research who worked in agriculture took their children before 7am and collected them in the evening. If a nursery was situated in the neighbour village, the LPG also offered transportation to pick up children and bring them home in the evening. If particularly constrained by work demands, some women also took their children to weekly nurseries and only brought them home over the weekends.

Fig. 4.4.: Kindergarten/ nursery in Wüste

Although my respondents had very positive recollections of their own, or their children's time in kindergarten (or as kindergarten teachers) post-unification literature offered a more critical evaluation of these institutions. Key issues included (1) the lack of development of creative individuals; (2) the restricted fulfilment of spontaneous and emotional needs and; (3) the lack of trained personnel and (4) the insufficient parental contribution to financial expenses of the nursery and therefore reinforcement of the view that society should carry the main burden of children's development (Schmidt, 1990).

These issues were addressed by some focus group respondents as well. Although some women noted a general lack of individual initiative as a result of GDR socialisation, they did not directly link this solely to kindergarten education. Instead, the women talked about kindergarten practices today and bemoaned the fact that children could arrive at different times and eat whenever they wanted, wherever they wanted. As mothers, women indicated that this was counterproductive in achieving a feeling of togetherness as a group and that it encouraged children not to be disciplined. This is illustrated by Marlies, for example:

"The kids [can] come to the kindergarten at nine o'clock, half nine or ten. Just as it pleases the parents. I thought 'No'... They don't know what punctuality means. How can you be taught to... be punctual if it starts [in kindergarten]... we knew it, because we had to go to work, therefore the kids went to kindergarten early. It started with a morning song (sings): 'Good morning, I am here, happily awake. The sun shines so brightly and the night's disappeared.' And there was a dance. But the kids who were late, they didn't know that [song] and couldn't join in... that's not nice."

With regards to personnel, respondents pointed out that most kindergarten teachers at least had a 'Facharbeiter'. Nevertheless, the discussions revealed that there were some women who had themselves worked in kindergartens as unskilled part-time or short term personnel. Both issues, individualism and personnel, were also experienced in a conflicting manner by respondents in a study on motherhood by Sourbut (1997). The last issue of Schmidt's criticism is, in part, accepted by women, some of whom claim that, in general, people could have paid more for social services than they did. Linda stated, for example:

"Why couldn't we- I mean we did earn our money, too- why couldn't we pay one Mark for a loaf of bread and one hundred for our rent... we would have been able to cope financially... had we paid hundred marks instead of 34 for a two-bedroom flat."

4.4.2. Health care and pensions

The provision of health services in the GDR was fairly comprehensive. Mostly, surgeries were integrated into policlinics 'owned' by businesses or operating in an ambulant way. In Mecklenburg-Westpommerania, provisions for ambulant services slightly exceeded the national average with 12.9 doctors and 6.3 dentists per 10,000 inhabitants (Ostwald, 1990). These figures reflect, on the one hand, less emphasis on stationary hospitals but, on the other hand, illustrate the availability of local medical services for all small villages which the doctors visited weekly. Hospitals were located in larger cities such as Schwerin, Rostock and Neubrandenburg. Although there was a shortage of personnel and technical equipment throughout the GDR, hospitals had similar levels of available beds as the former FRG: 99 places per 1,000 of which 80% were under State control (Ostwald, 1990). The GDR was successful in keeping infant mortality rates low. Diseases such as polio and diphtheria were eliminated and measles and TBC virtually unknown (see also Appendix IV). Linda commented:

"All those diseases were gone. Never had we feared them. Children were treated from a very young age onwards at their specific vaccination times. It almost functioned automatically... nowadays, this is severely neglected and cannot always be set right at a later point. People don't realise what they can do to their kids if they get diseases like polio or so. It's a real problem."

GDR citizens commonly paid a minute contribution to health care, social security insurance and pensions. The due amount had remained at the level of 1947, i.e. 10% of people's income but no more than a total of 60 Marks (Steele, 1977). Those with an income exceeding 600 Marks could contribute a further 10% on a voluntary basis. All enterprises paid a 12.5% compulsory plus 10% voluntary contribution to the social security insurance. The State added 50% of the total sum (Winkler, 1990).

It needs to emphasised that the mentally ill were severely neglected and the national average suicide rate ranked first in a world wide comparison (Steele, 1977). It is interesting to note, in this context, that suicide rates appeared in the statistics of 1957. However, in the years 1966, 1976 and 1986 there is no statistical category of deaths caused by suicide. This indicates that perhaps the GDR attempted to cover up existing social problems rather than addressing the mental state of depressed citizens. There is no mention by my respondents of either mental health problems or suicide prior to unification. This may be because these incidents were covered up, or did not arise as frequently in a relatively scarcely populated area such as the studied one. Women did note the occurrence of people with alcohol problems in their villages. They did not, however, continue to interpret reasons for this peculiarity. Rather they extended this observation to the present explaining that the number of alcoholics increased dramatically as a result of unemployment and depression after unification.

In a similar fashion to health care, social support revealed a range of contradictory mechanisms. Pensioners, for instance, received insufficient care. Their total income was only 1/3rd of a worker's income amounting to an average of 380 Marks in 1988 (Winkler, 1990; see also Adler and Kretzschmar, 1993). Provisions for nursing homes were inadequate. In 1989, only 92 places per 1000 inhabitants over 75 years of age were available (Ostwald, 1990). Pensioners were, however, allowed to travel West unlike the majority of the remaining

population. Steele (1977) suggested that the State was actually encouraging them to leave the State as they were regarded as an unproductive burden. The 'Volkssolidarität', which still exists today, attempted to organise veteran clubs, meals-on-wheels and home support to integrate elderly people more efficiently. Nonetheless, Steele (1977) continued, the organisation failed to address the lack of social contact amongst elderly people.

The issue of integrating elderly citizens must, perhaps, be regarded as regionally differentiated. My data suggests that in rural areas, where most people worked in LPGs, elderly people were integrated very well. For instance, a considerable number of women claimed to have helped out frequently during harvest periods by collecting stones or sorting potatoes. This finding is substantiated by Jetzschmann (1988) who stated that pensioners remained affiliated to the LPG and cared for through the continuing social context of their former collective. Hence, they were invited to all events organised by the LPG throughout the year. Furthermore, my findings suggest that children, through their Pioneer activities, also provided care for the elderly by entertaining them with visits or helping them with their shopping and other small tasks. It was not unusual for kindergarten children to have a 'non biological' grandmother or grandfather since the elderly were sometimes associated with certain kindergartens as well. Stefanie remembered:

> "Where our primary school was... every child had a 'grandma'... they always sat on her lap and so... of course some [pensioners] were frail but the kids learnt to deal with them and helped the older people, too... and were very proud of it."

The recollections of women respondents suggested that elderly parents often remained within the care of the family. This may particularly have been the case in rural areas, where most family had relatively spacious houses. Aside from this 'informal care', the elderly had a range of communication spaces such as the 'Konsum', the weekly doctor's surgery, the visiting hairdresser and the post office, where particularly women liked to gather for the exchange of news and gossip. In addition, it must be kept in mind that most villages in the studied region had about 200 residents only which made social exclusion under socialism virtually impossible.

Social support and health care was particularly well established and rigorously reinforced for the benefit of mothers. Mothers were obliged to attend a set amount of pre- and post-natal health checks in order to receive the State birth-premium. Women took part in mothers groups where they were offered medical support and advice. When young children reached nursery or kindergarten age, they were, as mentioned above, normally checked by doctors who visited the child care facilities, whereby children also obtained their due vaccinations. Aside from medical care, these check ups provided an informal support network for pregnant women and young mothers. They met there regularly and exchanged experiences about their motherhood as well as other domestic concerns. Claudia described:

> "We used to have mothercare... there were dates and we went voluntarily. The child was weighed and checked to see if everything was okay... if their teeth developed as they should. Because one was unsure as a young mother... didn't really know what to do... Well, there was some pressure to go, too, but that's not the only reason why we went. It was largely because we could meet with other mums there."

4.4.3. Housing

In order to achieve equality of living between the social classes, the centrepiece of SED social policy became 'social services' and 'housing'. Citizens were granted a legal right to affordable housing. Thus, the State intended to supply adequately equipped, small dwellings for every family. In 1973, during the VIIIth SED convention, it was decided that the 'housing question as a social problem' would be solved by 1990. The aim was to increase the amount of housing units by 17% up to a total of 7 million between 1970 and 1989 (Winkler, 1990). Indeed, between 1976 and 1975 400,000 new homes were constructed and 290,000 dwellings modernised. Between 1976 and 1990 an additional 2.8 to 3 million houses were to be constructed or renovated. Housing was heavily subsidised and rents remained at pre-war levels. In 1986, the cost of an average size dwelling of 64sqm was below 1 Mark/sqm (Dennis, 1991; Steele, 1977). There had been sincere attempts to solve the housing problem and to improve basic facilities, such as indoor toilets, baths and showers, kitchens, hot water availability and modern heating systems. By 1989, irrespective of regional disparities, 84% of dwellings in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania had a bath/shower unit, 84% indoor toilets and 52% modern heating systems (Ostwald, 1990).

However, the consequences of neglecting the need for renovating and modernising old building substance were severe. Of all housing units constructed since 1970, only every second meant an actual increase in housing stock. Thus by 1990, 40% of the housing stock had substantial deficiencies, 11% were not suitable for living and 40% revealed moderate damages. This means that not even 10% of houses were in good condition. People in different neighbourhoods were encouraged to make private improvements and participate in 'join in' competitions organised by local authorities (Steele, 1977; Honecker, 1986). In addition to direct State measures, people were encouraged to participate in DIY building to meet the housing demands. Loans of 80,000 Marks were given at an interest rate of 1% for a 40,000 Marks loan and 4% for the remaining amount. Home-builders could choose one of 44 designs and were supplied with bulldozers and cement-mixers by their factories over the weekends. Working drawing plans were offered by the local authorities and in emergency cases electricians and plumbers could be sent. However, all remaining work had to be carried out by the families themselves with the help of neighbours and colleagues (Steele, 1977).

All respondents lived in detached houses such as shown in figures 4.5a and 4.5b. The villages were of similar layout whereby small 'farm houses', mostly remnants from the pre-1930s gentry era, were a dominant feature, although most villages also had one or more apartment blocks (figure 4.6.). The 'farm houses' normally consisted of a ground floor and upper level with a loft. On each floor there were approximately five rooms (including kitchen and/ or bathroom). These houses also had a yard or a garden. The apartment blocks, on the other hand, were built in the 1970s and complied with standard norms. Per inhabitant it was aimed at 15 sqm living space. There was a distribution key assigning 50% of apartments at 53 to 67 sqm space (three rooms), 20% at 39 to 53 sqm (two rooms), 10% at 25 to 32 sqm (one room) and 20% at more than 67sqm (Oechelhäuser, 1992). The key informants in this research explained that these units were property of the village and the mayors were responsible for organising maintenance work, usually with the help of the construction brigade of the LPG. A number of respondents in the villages built their own homes in the 1970s with a grant of 10,000 Marks per person.

Fig. 4.5a: House in Wilmersdorf

Fig. 4.5b: House in Wüste

Fig. 4.6.: Apartment blocks in Wilmersdorf

Those respondents who were planners working in the six villages confirmed the poor state of the built structure of many 'farm houses' immediately after unification. Many houses did not have indoor toilets and had deteriorated roofs and windows. Where questions over property had been solved village renewal funds contributed to considerable improvements to houses in many villages. In terms of the housing situation and personal space, it appears that villages were advantaged over cities where more people lived in apartment blocks than in detached family houses. Unsurprisingly, people in rural areas and inhabitants of 'farm houses' were more content with the standard of living than those in standardised flats (Wittich, 1996).

4.4.4 Socio-cultural facilities

The distribution of facilities such as theatres, cinemas and club- and culture houses in the district of Neubrandenburg appears to have been considerably lower than the national district average. However, Ostwald (1990) presented a comparison between the average of places per 1,000 inhabitants in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania and the GDR. He indicated that there were 2.6 theatre places (3.0 GDR average), 13 cinema places (15 GDR average) and 29 places in club-

and culture houses (36 GDR average). This suggests that, perhaps, institutions were geographically more widely spread but still almost as capable of meeting demands as elsewhere. Regarding the geographic spread, it must be noted that normally, residents would be offered transportation services free-of-charge.

Another comparison worth noting is the access to libraries whereby the district of Neubrandenburg does not appear to be disadvantaged. The Statistical Yearbook distinguishes full-time and voluntary libraries. Both libraries together amount to a number of 999 libraries which is higher than the district average. However, whilst the district average of full-time versus voluntary staff can be divided into two almost even parts, it must be stated that approximately $2/3^{rd}$ of the libraries in Neubrandenburg were staffed by voluntary personnel. Indeed, my respondents noted that in most villages, there was either a mobile library or the library was subsumed to the mayor's office and administrative staff would assume responsibility for library services.

With regards to cultural entertainment, the key informants in the six villages reinforce the view that the pub with its adjacent hall would normally function as cultural centre (see, for example, figure 3.8a above). Depending on the initiative of the LPG leadership and local clubs, the pub could be a venue for film showings, theatre or musical performances, celebrations, information events as well as political or communal meetings. Adler and Kretzschmar (1993) argued that economically more successful LPGs would normally have a more diverse socio-cultural programme. In this research the village of Wüste provided an example of exemplary social activities related to successful LPG management. It was common for most villages throughout the GDR to have a local pub, which was run by the 'Konsum' association. Most pubs, 61.4% in 1988, were state owned (Winkler, 1990). Two key informants illustrated the kind of cultural activities that took place in the local pub:

"We used to have a lot of amateur theatre productions... when we built a hall [to the pub] we had big cultural events, like those you see on tv now. We had this singer here twice who's been in the charts, too." (012)

"The entire cultural life took place in our pub, I'd say... celebrations, cinemas and so forth, that all took place in the pub." (016)

Both local shops and pubs had key functions in maintaining communal networks. Pubs served more men than women but shops were more significant to women. Local shops, the 'Konsums' were available in all villages over 100 inhabitants (see figures 4.7. and 3.8b). Throughout the GDR, 68.7% were State owned (Winkler, 1990). My respondents explained the meaning of the 'Konsum' for their everyday lives. The predominant issue raised was that of communication. Due to regular visits and long waiting periods, the Konsum became one of the many communication points in the village for women. It was noted during the interviews that the products were the same anywhere in the region as were the prices paid for them. Thus, women would normally do their shopping at the local shop as there was no need to hunt for bargains. Some correspondents also described that LPGs assisted women's management of home duties by providing a shopping service. This service implied that women could leave their bags and shopping lists at the 'Konsum' in the mornings and pick up their shopping after work. Another variety was for the 'Konsum' to deliver produce to the fields where women worked so they could purchase certain items during their breaks.

In general, prices for foodstuff remained low, because they were heavily subsidised by the State (Steele, 1977). Since the 1950s the population had not experienced major fluctuations in prices. Statistics illuminate the extent of subsidies of which the consumer benefited. Altogether 12% of the State budget was consumed by subsidies to stabilise food prices (Statistisches Jahrbuch der DDR, 1990). In a comparison between the GDR and the FRG, it transpires that producer prices were considerably higher in the GDR. Sugar beets were 45% above FRG prices, potatoes 20% higher, beef 238% and poultry 347% higher than producer prices in the West (Heinrichsmeyer and Schmidt, 1991).

4.4.5. Collectivisation of living

4.4.5.1. Primary education

Socialist education began at pre-school level. The overall educational aim was to develop 'socialist identities' and thus, children were drawing tanks for the 'Volksarmee' in solidarity with their nation, were familiarised with the friendship association with the Soviet Union and the notion of the 'fatherland' GDR and 'father' Honecker from an early age on (Dodds and Allen-Thompson, 1994). The conversations within the focus group add to this notion. Women recalled singing

socialist children songs and even recited the songs during the interview. In the village kindergartens most songs were related to life as a farmer and the happiness and goodness associated with it. This representation corresponded to the positive image of rural life as promoted by the State (see above). Other songs reinforced the sense of 'togetherness' as a group. However, most memories of the respondents were about 'fun things' such as doing a lot of creative work and spending much time outdoors. The LPGs normally had some sort of formal relationship with kindergartens. In most cases there were written 'treaties' between LPG collectives and kindergarten groups whereby the children would visit the LPG collective and be shown around the location. In turn, collective members would assist the kindergarten with maintenance work or give presentations on farm life. This formal relationship between kindergartens and LPGs extended into the children's school years. Figures 4.7. and 4.8. show excerpts of an early treaty. The example is an indication of the strong links that were established between the community and the work-place as well as a mechanism for political control in socialist education.

Friendship Treaty between the LPG 'Freundschaft' and the primary school of Gorkow (accepted 21.2. 1953) Part B

The LPG 'Freundschaft' pledges to support the primary school as follows:

1.) to hold presentations on problems of agricultural production in order to enhance pupil's understanding of co-operative work

2.) to invite primary school delegates to experience 'internal democracy' within the LPG

3.) to make available historic material in order for the children to develop a deep love for the home country

4.) to invite a delegation to experience the application of new and progressive methods in agriculture

5.) to supply firewood in the winter

6.) to supply materials to conduct necessary renovations

7.) to give financial support for the organisation of the International Children's Day and the birthday of the Pioneer organisation.

Fig. 4.7. Example of a 'friendship treaty': LPG pledge (Source: material obtained from former KAP leader in Gorkow)

Friendship Treaty between the LPG 'Freundschaft' and the primary school of Gorkow (accepted 21.2. 1953) Part B

The primary school also has obligations:

1.) the primary school will maintain a chronicle with text and photos to document the socialist development of the village

2.) the teachers of the primary school pledge to assist and give advice with conducting administrative tasks

3.) teachers will hold a discussion group for the SED-study group of the Stalin biography

4.) the primary school will evaluate the development, success and co-operative work process in class. In so doing, pupils are familiarised with the socialist development of the country and recognise that such a development is possible only where people are freed from their oppressors and govern themselves

5.) Thälmann- Pioneers will invite LPG farmers in order to give an insight into the work of young Pioneers

6.) in co-operation with the FDJ the following celebrations will be adequately supported with music, dance and games:

22.2.1953	Tag der Bereitschaft[55]
1.5.1953	Internationaler Kampftag der Arbeiterklasse[56]
1.6.1953	Internationaler Kindertag[57]
8.5.1953	Tag der Befreiung[58]
7.10.1953	Tag der Republik[59]
17.10.1953	Erntefest[60]
7.11.1953	Tag der Grossen Sozialistischen Oktoberrevolution[61]
13.12.1953	Geburtstag des Jungen Pionier Verbandes[62]
21.12.1953	J.W. Stalin Geburtstag[63]

The entire context of out village must demonstrate that people within our village work with a new consciousness of the labour process

7.) the young Pioneers will be responsible for conducting small tasks to improve the built and living environment of the village

8.) the primary school will assist with pest control through potato-beetle search services, for example.

Fig. 4.8.: Example of a 'friendship treaty': school pledge (Source: material obtained from former KAP leader in Gorkow)

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[55] Day of Preparedness
[56] International Day of Battle for the Working Class
[57] International Children's Day
[58] Liberation Day
[59] Day of the Republic
[60] Harvest Festival
[61] Day of the Great Socialist October Revolution
[62] Birthday of the Young Pioneer Association

The first ten years of school were normally identical for all children unless they had learning disabilities and went to special schools. Otherwise, streaming only took place in the last two years of school (Steele, 1977). Throughout their school years in the GDR, children who were 13 years or older were required to attend one 'day of instruction in production' per week which lasted 3 to 5 hours. This instruction day was meant to be a combination of theory, experiment and field work. Often State projects such as the cultivation of the 'Friedländer Grosse Wiese' in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania were chosen as projects for schools. Children and staff were obliged to fulfil their work requirement of a certain amount of hectares of cultivated land per day (Krenz, 1996). The Party believed that, in that way, characteristics such as solidarity with co-workers, agriculture and the village were strengthened.

4.4.5.2. Pioneers and FDJ

After school, the vast majority of school children attended the 'Pioneers' or, at an older age, the 'Free German Youth' (FDJ). This was in order to continue ideological education outside school. Throughout the GDR, 80% of all 8 to 14-year-olds attended the 'Pioneers'. The educational aim was for them to achieve "pride in [the] socialist fatherland and eagerness to perform useful services for socialism", they should, furthermore, become faithful helpers to Party comrades (Steele, 1977: 174). As mentioned above, some of the activities were to assist elderly people in the community, otherwise, a number of activities were similar to those of the Scouts in the West.

Historically, the FDJ was founded as early as 1946 with the aim to combat fascism. It was not until 1976 that the FDJ was declared to be the Party 'reserve'. This meant that the organisation defined itself mainly as voluntary association of young people whose main purpose was to assist the SED in educating young people according to communist ideals and prepare them for a possible entry to the Party. (Statut der FDJ, nd). The FDJ adapted the contents and timescale of its programmes to those of the Party assemblies and was 'elected' into the local and national government (approximately 10% and 7.4% of seats respectively in 1986 (Statistisches Jahrbuch der DDR, 1986)).

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[63] Birthday J.W. Stalin

In both, the 'Pioneers' and the 'FDJ' there were strict 'rituals' for dress-code, greetings, assemblies and awards. The group in which activities took place was normally identical with one's school-class, with no distinction into female and male groups. This kind of collective, comradeship and solidarity in the group context were key aims of the FDJ. Activities were mostly directed and controlled by the Party via the teacher (Giessmann, 1990). Although Giessmann (1990) stated that membership was experienced as pre-structured and with little space for personal initiatives, this is not always confirmed by my respondents who claimed to have found ways to 'trick' the system and organise events they wanted themselves. Officially, membership was 'voluntary' although one could be excluded from the class if one was not a member. Criticism and sanctions like these were feared by the pupils whose desire was to be 'like the others'. One corespondent explained:

> "One negative feature was that pupils were expected to comply. Outsiders who didn't wish to participate were judged in a negative light. Therefore, there was often a 'voluntary obligation' to join activities of such a collective, so one didn't appear negative." (081)

As a result of such 'voluntary obligations', the total number of members of the FDJ was as high as 98.9% of pupils by November 1989(Giessmann, 1990).

Group activities for school children were normally organised for their holidays as well. Seldom, parent's days of leave were as numerous as school holidays. On average, parents had 20-25 days leave as opposed to their children's 90 days (Steele, 1977). My data suggests that parents in rural areas had even fewer days leave. In order to alleviate the pressure on parents, the State provided cheap holiday camps for all children. The camps were commonly organised by schools, associations or LPGs. Travel to and from the camps was very cheap at 0.20 Marks for any distance by tram or bus (Steele, 1977). The parental contribution to the camps was 4 Marks per week. Hence, 90% of school-children participated in some kind of organised holiday.

4.4.5.3 Working collectives

The working collective in the GDR was a small, task-oriented group of workers. Initially, the industrial working class was organised into collectives, but the socialisation of agricultural land into co-operatives created a basis for the

establishment of collectives in rural areas. The collective not only embraced the labour process but also extended its activities into the private sphere of the workers and was consequently significant for ideological developments.

Initially, the collective had been a politicised institution with the aim of developing a mechanism for the generation of social(ist) relationships among industrial workers. This research for this thesis asserted that many women regarded employment as a major component of their lives and look back at their collective as a 'second family'. The continuity and security experienced in the collective had been an important means of identification for rural women. Rural women in the GDR were more likely than men to be employed in group-based and labour-intensive manual work. Their tasks commonly included work in the fields collecting stones, work in the animal sheds raising piglets, or milking cows (see figures 4.9a and 4.9b). Despite the political claim that women were incorporated into 'male-dominated' sectors, men were far more likely to be involved in individualised mechanised labour operating heavy machines or tractors (see figure 4.10.). Consequently in rural areas the collective had a greater meaning for women's every-day lives than for men.

Fig.4.9a: Cowsheds in Karlshorst

Fig. 4.9b.: Cowsheds near Achmer

Fig. 4.10.: Fields between Schinkel and Wüste

Informed by the theories of Marx, the political leadership believed that the collective 'emotional' atmosphere would enhance the efficiency of the labour force and that this could only be achieved through socialism (Jetzschmann, 1988). The working collective was a fundamental means of labour organisation under socialism. It was critical to the development of a collective 'emotional atmosphere' as the majority of people worked in collectives, and a substantial period of a worker's social life was organised within the collective.

As mentioned above, collective experience began in kindergartens and later provided the context for the socialisation of young people and the development of a socialist personality. For adults especially, the collective provided an important mechanism for socialisation. It additionally served as a platform for social security, co-operation in the labour-process, comradeship, mutual support, comfort, and consequently the overall well-being of its workers (Kahl *et al.*, 1984; Rueschemeyer, 1981; 1982). Some correspondents also commented at length on issues such as mutual support and comfort experienced in the collective (see also chapters six and seven).

Socio-cultural activities were an integral part of village life. The end-of-year assembly of the LPG, for instance, was normally closed with a social event. Celebrations were also held on 'International Women's Day' and the 'Day of the Republic'. Further initiatives were taken by some LPG leaders, mayors or groups such as the 'DFD', 'FDJ', or 'Volkssolidarität' to organise celebrations in the collective, seasonal festivities such as summer, harvest and Christmas, the 1st of May, International Children's Day, excursions and private celebrations such as weddings or special birthdays. All activities were recorded in the 'brigade book' both to commemorate the events and to provide evidence that LPG plans were being fulfilled. Appendix V comprises some examples from a brigade book of the 1980s. Issues are, for example, the International Women's Day, competitions, criticism of LPG planning and alcohol problems in the LPG. The preparation of the programmes for these events was mostly carried out by women in addition to their usual responsibilities. Carrying out such 'socially useful work' was a key aspect of the Marxist ideology (Edwards, 1985; Autorenkollektiv, 1984) and the majority of co-operative farmers were involved in voluntary work (Krambach, 1985). This

level of participation was a consequence, in part, of political and social pressure. Those who were exceptionally active or productive in the village or the workplace were both rewarded and encouraged by awards such as 'Hero of Labour', 'Meritorious Activist' or 'Activist of Socialist Labour' (Shaffer, 1981) usually linked with a small financial incentive. Awards could be given to individuals in the collective, such as 'Best Milking Woman' (see also Appendix V), or to the entire collective, such as the 'Collective of Socialist Work' (Autorenkollektiv, 1984). The mayor of Wilmersdorf reinforced that "people were really proud of these awards, especially because they often obtained a bit of money, too."

In order to demonstrate the efficiency of the political strategy for enhancing the labour process described above, research was carried out by the Academy of Social Science. A study conducted in the 1980s showed that 63.9% of those who had worked in the collective for more than five years 'over-fulfilled' their targets as opposed to 11.6% of workers who had worked in the collective for less than three years. The same study provided an indication of the high level of satisfaction with social relationships in the collective (Jetzschmann, 1988).

The above description implies a high level of State influence on workers through the collectives. Throughout their lives, people were organised into collectives which pursued a political agenda simultaneously to providing a satisfying work environment. This political agenda included formal socialist education in schools as well as extracurricular activities in clubs. Furthermore, both pupils and workers were made to conform to goals which they sought to achieve as a group, rather than as individuals. For example, one correspondent noted that "the aim was for the teachers to appear as a single unit" (081). As noted above, respondents explained that individual initiative and independence were rarely accepted and often alleged to be a sign of opposition to peace. However, the research demonstrates that women adapted to these pressures and found comfort in social structures within the collective. Women described situations of support when a child was sick, or emphasised the significance of the collective beyond the workplace, for instance, when women were on maternity leave or when they were pensioners. A number of respondents used the term 'family' to describe the feelings of integrity, purpose and reward in the collective. Some women described feelings of empowerment through the collective:

"When I got on my bike in the mornings to go to work and meet with the other women, all my sorrows were forgotten." (121)

"We also had monthly discussions in the collective about the work progress. They were really vigorous sometimes. But we had a say and we contributed to decisions being made." (123)

The examples from the brigade book in Appendix V also demonstrate how women used the collective as a place to express their own concerns and criticism. Retrospectively, respondents forcefully reiterated that they were "never the dumb farm women" (036).

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the development of agricultural co-operatives in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania and the district of Neubrandenburg. It first outlined the initial, geographic expansion of LPGs and went on to illustrate the integration of women's issues into the development of LPGs. By referring to the accounts of respondents in this research, the chapter presented both the apprehension associated with forced collectivisation and persecution of large landowners and 'political enemies', and the relative advantage of collective farming for at least some farmers. With regard to the discussion of women's issues, this chapter suggests a complex image of women's rural life in which the suppression through State control and the relative benefits of socialist, rural development for women were significantly interrelated. However, the level of social control was more or less accepted by women and integrated into the organisation of their 'everyday' lives. Women developed strategies to live 'with' the State, because "it was just like that" (Susanne). Hence, they established niches for themselves in officially 'controlled' spaces which offered them a sense of individuality and, at a micro-scale, power. The following chapter will discuss in greater detail the significance that was ascribed to *Frauenpolitik* and socialist services in the village by means of post hoc rationalisation and in light of contemporary experiences with a new socio-political system.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE Wende

5.1. Introduction

The pre-unification developments in the Uecker Randow region described in chapter four capture elements of wider issues that have been discussed by other authors regarding the building of socialism and the consolidation of the GDR (see, for instance, Conradt, 1996). The research for this thesis suggests that most people in the studied region were politically indifferent and lived on a basis that implied 'as much as necessary and as little as possible' political involvement. In contrast to many areas near the cities or in the south of the GDR, the regional developments in the district of Neubrandenburg throughout the 1950s and 1960s were not significantly marked by social upheavals. The revolt in Berlin in 1953, the protests in Poland in 1955, in Hungary in 1956, and Czechoslovakia in 1968 (Conradt, 1996) remained at some distance from the farmers in this district. Instead, other changes, impacted on the developments in the countryside during this phase. The socialist re-organisation of property and arable land affected all farmers and farm-workers as well as the new settlers. A number of farmers, particularly those with large plots of land, were negatively affected by this process. Others, particularly small farmers and those on marginal land benefited from collectivisation. In addition, the shared use of farm equipment and the introduction of regular working hours and holidays, previously unknown to the farming profession, constituted an advantage to many farmers.

Although political change in the GDR was widely anticipated and desired, unification itself presented a shock to many East Germans. The rejection of the entire socialist system was followed by the implementation of strictly Western procedures and regulations. This chapter will address problems resulting from the influence of Western structures and from socialist legacies in East Germany. After outlining how the event of unification was perceived in the villages, the chapter discusses its impact on agricultural structures through privatisation in the studied region. In so doing, complications arising from the perceived 'colonisation' of the region compose a central issue. The sections which form the remainder of the

chapter focus on a discussion of post-unification changes experienced by women at the local level.

5.2. "Behind the seven hills"[64]- changes in Uecker Randow

The political awareness and activities in the bigger cities such as Leipzig, Berlin and Dresden were not mirrored throughout the entire GDR. Removed from these scenes, "behind the seven hills" (Susanne) in the studied region of Vorpommern, life had continued virtually unmoved. The former mayor of Karlshorst described:

> "In towns, surely it was different. Maybe because there are more people. Or because they worked so much here, did so much overtime. That's possible too. I mean, who did occupy oneself with other stuff? Nobody. It was more or less hunky-dory. Farmers are such good-natured people. When I went somewhere else, [people] were more aggressive, where they were organised in unions and so forth .... Here, everything was really rather quiet." (124)

Whilst in the major cities the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the GDR on October 7th 1989 was obscured by mass demonstrations (see chapter one), the respondents in the study villages in Uecker Randow reported 'hearty' celebrations with songs, dance and beer. The former mayor of Karlshorst thus continued his illustration:

> "On the 'Day of the Republic' in October we had a proper birthday celebration and everyone was invited: 'DFD', 'VdgB', 'Volkssolidarität'. We had a blast! Everyone was there. We [were] ... together... with a large core [of the LPG] and celebrated October 7th, really superb and snug." (124)

Few people believed in change or had become openly critical about the regime. The two excerpts of interviews below illustrate some sporadic conversations which centred, for instance, on the disregard for the thousands of people in the GDR who fled to West Germany via Hungary, some of whom deserted their homes and children without provided care. A number of women respondents had been told by relatives from Poland or the West that the protests in and around Leipzig would lead to German unification, but still the women remained relatively unmoved. The focus group in Wilmersdorf noted:

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[64] With the expression "Behind the seven hills", respondent Hanna refers to the fairy tale of Snow White and the seven dwarfs.

> *Karla*: "Isn't it funny that they already knew in Poland? We were relatives and they said to us that Germany will become one Germany. They already told us before we knew."
>
> (...)
>
> *Bettina*: "You shake your head?"
>
> *Monika*: "I must be honest, when it all started and they left for Hungary and the Czech Republic and so, I always thought 'My God, they're so stupid!' Especially if you saw that with those babies [which were left behind] and so. I thought over and over again 'They are stupid. *What* are they doing?'"

Similar notions were described in Wüste:

> *Annegret*: "I couldn't imagine just to leave everything behind as we had *just* painted our living-room. Unthinkable for me, it wasn't a topic at all."
>
> *Doris*: "Many left, though. They came back, but many also stayed."
>
> *Renate*: "Especially in towns it was noticeable. Many left their children behind and that was *so* terrible!"
>
> *Annegret*: "Unbelievable!"
>
> *Doris*: "I could never have done it. Just so, leaving everything behind, with nothing, *nothing* in my hands."
>
> *Birgit*: "No, and I didn't have a suitcase [anyway]."

The views expressed by these women and the reasons for not leaving the GDR themselves such as the recent house decorations or the lack of a suitcase suggest that these women may not have been as desperate to flee as many citizens throughout the rest of the country who did. Women were also ill-informed about the general protests in the GDR and other socialist states. With regard to news reporting on events within the GDR, certain details had persistently been 'omitted' such as the fact that Honecker had initially favoured a 'Chinese solution'[65] to the protests. The women respondents had not been aware of these details. In fact, most information obtained was from family members in Poland or West Germany, or caught from West television, where available[66].

The only example of strongly expressed criticism against the regime in this research was recalled by the former mayoress of Wilmersdorf. On October 17th, 1989 she undertook a day trip to East Berlin to visit the 'Volkskammer' with a group of pupils. She encouraged the youngsters to ask some questions critical about the regime such as the restrictions to travel to the West. She expected to

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[65] The 'Chinese solution' refers to the military crackdown of the student protests for democracy at Tiannmen square in May 1989. A hitherto peaceful movement thus ended in bloodshed (Gwertzman and Kaufman, 1990).

[66] The villages closer to the Polish border reported not to have been able to receive West television.

be made redundant as a consequence of this journey. Instead, on her return to Wilmersdorf, she was informed that Honecker himself had resigned.

Under his successor Krenz, the power of the SED was increasingly weakened and on November 9th, the Berlin Wall was dismantled, an event initially met with disbelief by many villagers. For instance, Doris in Wüste described:

> "It was just there, overnight. We had an assembly here in Wüste and then Peter came, he was the last one, half an hour late. And he came and said, 'The border is open' and we said 'You're nuts!'."

Some villagers had gone to explore the West and most villagers anticipated the introduction of Western consumer goods. But many respondents recalled sobering experiences which prevented them from wanting to live in the West. A correspondent wrote:

> "Aside from the glittering wrap, we also saw much suffering and poverty (beggars in front of a department store being chased away by the police). I got to know people with a second home on Mallorca, a Mercedes for every member of the family and travel abroad twice a year... But I also met people who lived off social welfare with no extras. I saw absolute waste and, at the same time, incredible poverty." (064)

Regardless of some reluctance at the local level, the 'national message' received by Western politicians was for change and thus, national developments toward unification took a rapid course. Rather than experiencing the merits of Western capitalism, though, rural areas and particularly small villages needed to come to terms first with the process of agricultural restructuring which is outlined below.

5.3. Agricultural restructuring since unification

As noted in chapter one, unification implied that the new 'Bundesländer' was absorbed into Western capitalist market economy practically overnight. According to the Western philosophy, freedom of property is a pre-requisite for the free development of individual personalities. It is believed that this kind of freedom motivates economic and social progress (Thiemann, 1996[67]). In fact, private ownership is often regarded as a prerequisite for the functioning of democracy (Przeworski, 1995; Yuval-Davis, 1997). The course and flexibility of social market

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[67] Drafted, yet unpublished article enclosed with personal correspondence.

economy and its success are also determined by private ownership of property (Thiemann, 1996[68]).

At the time of unification, there were approximately 270 LPG(P)s cultivating more than 2/3rd of arable land in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania. The remaining land was occupied by 600 LPG(T)s, 126 VEGs and 33 horticultural production co-operatives. Altogether, the co-operatives cultivated over 90% of arable land (Brick, 1996). In order to regain private ownership from co-operatives, the new federal State initiated extensive 'land readjustments' of which the basis is formulated in the Agriculture Adjustment Act (LwAnpG) of 1990. The aim of land readjustment was "the development of a multi-faceted agricultural structure and the creation of suitable conditions for the re-establishment of competitive enterprises to enable participation of all people, who are occupied in the sector of agriculture, in the development of incomes and prosperity" (LwAnpG, 1996: §3). In effect, this meant that farmers who had been disowned between 1933 and 1945 and those after 1949 until 1960 (see, for instance, Merl, 1991; Smith, 1996b), many of whom had migrated to the West, could reclaim their land.

In order to develop 'suitable conditions' for the market economy, government schemes were devised to encourage farmers to start family farms, or establish new types of co-operatives (GmbH, AG or GbR). However, setting up new enterprises was largely inhibited by a lack of starting capital as well as undeveloped marketing knowledge and experience. Hubatsch and Krambach (in Meyer and Uttitz, 1993) report that only 40% of former LPG members were willing to risk 'going their own way'. In 1990, 82% preferred a collective type of farm as opposed to 7.4% favouring the 'individual' farm. Krambach (1991) noted three key reasons for this choice: (1) the expectation that a collective farm system would offer better chances of social securities (this is reinforced by the discussion of 'socialist services' in chapter four); (2) the lack of management skills as 'single' farmers as well as lack of capital and fear of personal risk and; (3) the affiliation with the co-operative community as a result of social experiences and emotional attachment (see chapter four).

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[68] Drafted, yet unpublished article enclosed with personal correspondence.

In addition to this reticent East German entrepreneurship, a number of West Germans, previously the 'capitalist enemy', successfully reclaimed arable land and property, and began establishing individual farms. In so doing, it was thus predominantly West Germans who benefited from government grants and bureaucratic experience. Stark (1994) gave an example of the distribution of Treuhand properties, whereby 90% of the privatised firms were sold to West Germans. Consequently, East German farmers felt they had been subject to a second expropriation. Indeed, most respondents in the research for this thesis spoke of being colonised by the West both in terms of land and in other contexts discussed below. Signs such as in figures 5.1a and 5.1b reinforced this notion.

In effect, the "development of a multi-faceted agriculture and [enabling of] participation of all people [...] in the development of [...] prosperity" (LwAnpG, 1996) was not designed to benefit all people in agriculture. Rather this regulation was based on a highly class-based and gender-segregated system of historic landownership. Therefore, only those people who had land-rights after unification, but not necessarily those who were in agriculture pre-1989, and who were willing to adopt Western principles in agricultural restructuring were enabled to participate.

Fig. 5.1a: 'No trespassing' sign in Karlshorst

Fig. 5.1b: 'No trespassing' sign near Hellern

5.3.1. Problems of privatisation in the study area

The process of privatisation and restructuring in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern led to an increase of agricultural enterprises owned by private persons from 71.6% in 1991 to 87.5% in 1995. Although the use of arable land by such farms had also increased, the newly established co-operatives still held 50% of farmland (Statistisches Landesamt, 1997)[69]. The region of Uecker Randow experienced a reduction of overall size in farmland by one-third, but is nonetheless still characterised by large parcels of arable land rather than the typically smaller parcels of family farms.

It is significant that, in the six study villages, all LPGs were taken over by farmers from within the region. Therefore, some sort of 'local' rather than external (i.e. Western) co-operative structure was retained. Nonetheless, there were differences between the villages regarding the development of agriculture since unification. The success of privatisation of local facilities formerly associated with the LPGs had a direct impact on the restructuring of the social composition in the

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[69] see also Blacksell *et al.* (1996) for discussion of redistribution of property.

communities, because the local labour market, the economic and social 'wealth' of the village and the continuity of community services were affected.

The decision-making process regarding the continuity or suspension of co-operative farming, and privatisation imposed significant problems on many of the villages. The mayor of Wilmersdorf illustrated this process:

> "We had 5,300 hectares, that is Wilmersdorf, Hesepe, Melle, Bersenbrück and Rothenfelde. It was an enormous area, not the largest, but still very considerable! ... 1990/91 it was divided, because it seemed too big ... In Hesepe ... a separate co-operative, a GmbH was founded and another GmbH emerged from Wilmersdorf, Bersenbrück and Ladbergen. We started out with 2,600 hectares of arable land and today we have 1,000. It went downhill rapidly because of the 'Wiedereinrichter' ... It was a considerable cut altogether. ... We are 27 people today out of 190 originally." (029)

Similar problems occurred in the other villages. It is important to note that the loss of jobs within the former LPG was significant to small villages such as those studied since, in the majority of these villages, no alternative employment possibilities existed. Aside from limited opportunities in local shops or pubs, where available, most work was provided through government funded short-term employment measures (see also chapter six).

Irrespective of the relative success or failure of newly established co-operatives, considerable social and economic costs were experienced at the individual level in all the studied villages. It was notable that the former gentry villages experienced fewer problems than former individual farmers' villages. In Wüste, Schinkel, Hellern and Charlottenburg, the former gentry villages, claims on land were reported but no major social problems had developed from these claims. The mayor of Hellern outlined how the community dealt with arising claims. There was, for instance, a claim on the former pub with an adjacent hall. Although the pub was private property, the hall, which also stood on claimed land, belonged to the community. The hall was deteriorating and, due to financial constraints, could neither be repaired nor demolished. The most simple solution for the community was therefore to grant the new pub owners possession of the hall free of charge. In that way, the community incurred no further cost and the possibility of providing a social meeting point in the pub was maintained. By contrast, the individual-

farmers'-villages of Karlshorst and Wilmersdorf encountered a dramatic struggle due to major social 'eruptions'. The mayor of Wilmersdorf described the events:

> "God, it was terrible ... The Treuhand had a priority list for those who have land and [those] who haven't. The 'Wiedereinrichter' were treated favourably. Large co-operatives stood at the very end of that list ... Every time we lost 100 to 200 hectares [of land], we also had to make four or five people redundant, but the other [farms] didn't take them. [Instead, the workers] were left out on the streets. And the battle in the village! Hardly anyone said 'hello' to the other. It was like war. Once it became so bad, there was a fist fight right here in my office." (029)

The former mayoress of Wilmersdorf also recollected problems regarding the reclamation of property and expressed her dismay in a rather strong manner:

> "In 1990 these West [German] citizens arrived in the village, [these] former Wilmsdorfer resurfaced and said 'It's us now here and we want our property back. Where are our animals?' I really became aggressive and some of them complained but [they] didn't get anywhere with it. I said to them 'Are you not ashamed of yourself? You can't just leave and abandon your cattle in the sheds, it starves!' I said they should've asked someone to take care of it. They claimed to have had *so* many cows. 'Nothing you had', I said, 'you're husband sat his arse by the oven all day and snoozed. Those people should be reimbursed by you!', I said." (119)

The focus group in Karlshorst believed the Soviet land reforms were the origin of contemporary problems regarding property claims in their village:

> *Ute*: "[After the second World War], it was reform land, the [owners] had missed their entry in the land register. Property was irrelevant in the GDR, it was rather a flaw to have it, and many didn't know about the consequences until the end, until unification. And then they didn't follow the events [of land reclamation] which led to dramatic problems."
> *Bettina*: "For example?"
> *Ute*: "Well, somebody who has lived in a place for almost 50 years and now it belongs to the 'Treuhand' and he can buy it back for its current market value. He's been modernising it all those years, because he believed it was his and now he's got to buy it back for thousands of Marks, because the register states it is 'property of the people'".

Respondents noted visible colonisation by Westerners who occupied land and many East Germans experienced inferior treatment by Western administrative personnel in the process of privatisation. One correspondent stated:

> "The 'Treuhand' caused a lot of damage! Considering the dream-wages they received, one would expect more sensitivity. But once again, the East had no chance! ... One didn't even try to hand over some responsibility to somebody

from the East in order to improve the situation. The motto was to let it decay. The 'cream cake' was given to people from the West." (087)

A number of properties, vacated but not re-used, deteriorated rapidly and contributed toward the disintegration of the village's infrastructure. Those people who had to vacate 'their' homes often faced social hardships and insecurities. Many of them were unemployed and not able to afford a new house. A key informant stated:

> "[After they fled] the LPG obtained the land and made it available to the people who, through their own initiative and effort, did many repairs and renovated the houses with their own money. Well, that's how it was. And then they had to leave, all of them. You can ask yourself, they never bothered about their property very much and I just don't know if that's okay in every case, I mean to do wrong again where wrong was done already. That's what I think. Of course it should be given to the people to whom it belongs, but one could have found ways to deal with it differently. Sometimes, it was handled in quite a brutal way." (001)

The concerns of colonisation and large-scale deterioration of unused properties is not unique to the former GDR but has been a less problematic issue in other post-socialist countries (see also chapter one). However, in Bulgaria, for instance, the agricultural restructuring process was protected from occupation by foreigners (Meurs and Begg, 1998). Ignoring social problems related to the reclamation of property, the agricultural restructuring process has largely been accomplished in East Germany and those farms that survived or were newly established operate within the structures of the Common Agricultural Policies of the European Community. But there were variations in how well the villages managed to co-ordinate the restructuring process economically with emerging socio-cultural problems. Communities had to find their own strategies when attempting to overcome old political structures and institutionalise new administrative ones. Community leaders had to deal with economic crises, an ageing and un- or underemployed population, and resultant trends towards social degradation.

5.3.2. Local concerns and the 'key-settlement-dilemma'

In order to address regional development and the reduction of differences in the standard of living, the German state introduced a set of guidelines under the national planning programme. The scheme provided rules and recommendations for local development leaving a certain leeway to account for the integration of

local resources. The planning programme intended to initiate a 'trickle-down' approach from 'key settlements' to rural areas. Thus, a considerable share of resources were spent at the higher level of administration. Henkel (1990) criticised these national planning priorities as discriminating against small villages as 'non-centres' in the 'key-settlement-raster'. Despite the aim to create equal standards of living in all regions of Germany, the implementation of structural policies has weakened rural areas. Before unification, Mecklenburg-Westpommerania would not have been classified as a 'Hinterland', due to strong equalising policies for the entire GDR as well as the availability of employment and basic services (see chapter four). The pattern of the 'Booming South' and 'Stagnating North' observed in West Germany (see also Jones and Wild, 1997; Wild, 1992) has, however, been replicated in the East as well.

Key informants estimated, for example, that 90% of communal spending could be directed by national laws and guidelines. One respondent contended:

> "It's a real joke. We've got, for instance, and I am not sure if you know what it's like elsewhere, but we can buy new equipment for our kindergartens worth 800 Marks a year. That's because our budget is so tight due to the compulsory expenditures. As a result, we decided to extinguish the street lights in the village at half ten, 'cause we have no money." (011)

Furthermore, key informants suggested that, with regard to the de-facto distribution of power, the contemporary planning system did not empower rural villages much more than under socialism. In other words, where more democracy was present theoretically, its dimensions were largely constrained by financial considerations.

In addition to the need for local financial resources for infrastructure development, the entire social sector fell under the responsibility of a "voluntary task force" (023). There were schemes that specifically addressed rural areas such as (1) the village renewal programme at the local level (see chapter seven); (2) government-funded short term employment schemes (see chapter six); (3) the EU funded programme LEADER I and II at the international level, which support environmental and economic measures and; (4) funds available through the 'Objective 1' status of the region. However, such measures were not equally

effective in all rural areas (see chapters six and seven). A key informant criticised structural measures:

"I do think, one should have investigated what is *needed* and what is *good* before implementing new laws. But that's West German bureaucracy, you cannot escape from it at the moment... [childcare regulations] are just schizophrenic in the current legislation. It is an essential, social question... the regulations are legally accurate but once again absolutely useless." (022)

Herrenknecht (1997), for example, argued that all of the above measures were based on Western objectives and procedures and thus largely ignored East German characteristics. Regarding agricultural restructuring it must also be noted that, after unification, the former LPGs were subsumed to a set of national policies which had been subject to critical discussion for decades in the West. Merl (1991) claims that suggestions made throughout reformative discussions were apparently 'forgotten' and existing GDR policies were disregarded entirely as alternative solutions. The chance of improving working conditions for agricultural employees by introducing shorter working days and socio-political standards similar to those formerly included into LPG plans, for instance, had been neglected. This neglect was especially problematic for women in private farming, who have often become a "helping hand" (011) to their husbands (see also Meurs, 1994b). The transitions in rural areas have therefore largely ignored rural social issues for the benefit of a market-oriented approach (see also Herrschel, 1997; Jones and Wild, 1997; Smith, 1996a for perspectives).

The political trust in market forces has led to a vicious cycle. By implying that some sort of social cost is 'natural' in the process of democratisation (see also Przeworski, 1995), necessary social policy measures may be delayed until the escalation of social pressure. Perhaps this has already materialised through the rise of right extremism.

From the viewpoint of many villagers, unification was introduced in a traumatic way that caused social disruption through unemployment, criminality and disputes over property. The transition also introduced a material dimension to social relationships which had never been a central point in the GDR. The way in which women adapted to the new Germany or endured economic hardship coloured their experiences of unification and life thereafter. The following section focuses

on a range of social issues identified by the respondents to this research. However, the meaning and consequences of (un-)employment and the integration of women into the socio-political process will be artificially separated from this context and placed within chapters six seven.

5.4. The social impact of the Wende

Although most respondents believed unification was a 'good thing' and they could not recall anyone who wanted the 'old' GDR back, they expressed concerns and criticisms of the direction developments had taken since the *Wende*. Unemployment, increasing isolation, alcoholism, and socio-political apathy amongst villagers were key issues in all of the studied villages. With regard to the dimension and significance of change there was, however, a difference between the recollections of the women villagers and key informants. Whilst the village key informants were able to give a general impression of changes in the village dynamics and disruptions to its social structure, women shed more light on the nature of these disruptions and thus added a perspective of individually experienced changes. For instance, all but one mayor believed that, aside from massive unemployment, little had changed. But other key informants reaffirmed the seriousness of isolation, alcohol problems and socio-political apathy within the communities. Further issues raised by the key informants were social diversification, women's new role, the continuity of social life, the loss of informal communication and the abandonment private farming. Key issues discussed by women included: (un-) employment (see chapter six), criminal offences, including vandalism, juvenile crime, child abuse and the rise of the extreme right, jealousy and segregation in the village, and a feeling of being colonised by the West. Initial comments on the *Wende* itself by women were, for instance:

> "Today the world is open to us... so what?" (Marlies)

> "With regard to the masses of unemployed people, one doesn't have to say anything else really." (Hanna)

5.4.1. Social diversification

Initially, the dramatic rise in unemployment and the vast reduction in community services and health care were problematic for the continuity of social life. This process led to social fragmentation: the unemployed versus the employed, the old

versus the young, new residents versus old residents, mobile persons versus immobile persons, people with a politically ambiguous history versus those with none and, to some degree, men versus women began to form different social groups. Commonly, villages were characterised by the presence of the unemployed, pensioners and children, all of whom can be characterised as residents without personal mobility. Since women composed the larger number of unemployed and carers for small children and elderly people, they were more likely to be confined to the village than men. The working population (largely men) needed to be mobile in order to accept work at some distance from the home. This distinction between the employed and unemployed led to differentiated access to social services and goods.

As discussed above, due to the installation of a national planning scheme with a focus on key settlements, the maintenance of social services was no longer prioritised and financially supported by the State. Most social, recreational and health care services were not located within the village but rather between 20 and 50 kilometres away. Therefore, services became inaccessible to one-third of the women respondents who had neither a driver's license nor a car. Bus services were reduced to school bus services and one additional service a day which made commuting into town very difficult, especially for elderly women or mothers with small children. Whereas many men were commuting to the cities for work (or even as far as West Germany) women were not only displaced from the labour market but they became physically segregated, or "ghettoised" (010) in their villages.

It is interesting to note, though, that the loss of the above facilities had a different impact on most correspondents compared with villagers. Whereas only five out of 25 women respondents in the villages were employed and four worked in *ABM*, this figure is higher for correspondents. Out of 34 women who specified their occupation, 17 women were employed and four were in *ABM*. This implies that more women travelled to and from the workplace and thus had the opportunity to use services in town. In addition, at least some correspondents appeared to have access to theatres, exhibitions and shopping facilities, and many prioritised being with their families, meeting with friends, going for walks or travelling (depending on income). None of these activities were discussed by the villagers. The

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difference in such priorities may, however, be both a consequence of proximity to cities as well as cultural interest through a higher level of education. Hence, a slightly lesser focus on the home village was apparent in the writers' discussions.

In addition to diversification through the level of mobility, other forms of diversification developed within the villages. East Germany experienced a rapid turnover from being one of the most advanced socialist countries to "turbo capitalism" (O47). And yet, the availability of certain consumer goods was unequal for some parts of the population. It was largely the unemployed and immobile who were denied access to material wealth. Hence, social differentiation took a predominantly material form.

Although some women could 'share' their partners' income, many were not content because they did not contribute to the family income as they had in the GDR. Whereas many women withdrew from the public, the mayor of Schinkel, for instance, also described the phenomenon of 'gossip networks'. He considered it a 'female peculiarity' which contributed to intensifying already existing feelings of resentment and jealousy amongst villagers. Rather than seeking each others support when similarly affected by unification, the mayor claimed that many women exacerbated the feelings of animosity. However, the mayor clearly identified women as a uniform group. It would appear though that 'gossip networks' may, in fact, be an attempt of identification by demarcating one group of women of another. Unemployed women may, for instance, be one group 'gossiping' about the other (employed) group of women. In doing so, a sense of 'sameness' and solidarity may be established which provides a kind of support (see also chapter eight).

The discussions in the focus groups revealed that there were notable differences in the perceptions of women and those of key informants about the social context in the GDR and since unification. The focus groups, like the mayors, observed increasing differentiation in the villages and ascribed this largely to consequences of the changed employment situation. However, women discussed more in-depth the details of their lives *before* unification and thus contributed to an understanding of the transition process for women by establishing links from the past to the present.

Two key issues related to the workplace emerged which help explain the impact of social differentiation on women today. The workplace, i.e. working collective, in the GDR functioned as a balancing mechanism for intra-personal disputes (see chapter six for discussion). Where social differentiation was achieved, it was either by means of awards, or as promotions at work. Whereas awards were obtained by almost every member of the collective at some point throughout their working lives, preferment incurred predominantly undesirable personal efforts or political commitments.

5.4.1.1. Looking back at social differentiation in the GDR

In the GDR, some workers obtained awards in the collective whereas others did not. Similarly, certain people were promoted in their job and others were not. On both occasions, some became somewhat different to others, but there was an element of regularity and predictability. For example, all workers were likely to obtain at least one award at some stage in their working life. Thus, initial differences were temporary and limited. At large, everyone remained 'the same'. Only extraordinary activists would get more meaningful and distinguished awards, such as the 'Hero of Labour', normally the preserve of an LPG leader. This distinction was, however, not a desirable one to the majority of co-operative farmers due to the burden of responsibility s/he carried. A LPG leader was responsible for the success of the LPG as a whole in terms of agricultural output and social life as well as for providing considerable assistance to the maintenance of village infrastructure. Furthermore, the LPG leader had to be a member of several social and political committees that required his/her attendance regularly. In spite of these efforts s/he did not receive an appreciably higher income than ordinary workers, especially since s/he would not normally have an additional income through private farming.

Other distinctions, e.g. promotions at work, were equally predictable because the State had a considerable influence over the professional path an individual's life would take. In school, students were singled out to continue their education at polytechnic or university. Throughout their higher education, the Party approached students to discuss and/ or determine the students future occupation. If a student was ambitious and 'co-operated', by joining the Party and showing

great initiative within the FDJ and/ or other organisations, a career was planned. Again, most of the ordinary citizens did not have such ambitions and were glad not to have to join the SED. Hence, the level of distinction that was achieved by the promoted persons was acceptable to the community, particularly since co-operative farmers and farm workers who were not politically ambitious also enjoyed financial and social security, regular pay rises, end-of-year premiums and extra income from private farming. The research for this thesis suggests that the majority of women did not feel inclined to increase their multiple burden for such a preferment. Hence, they did as much as necessary to comply with social standards, but as little as possible. Most women respondents claimed to have been very content with the regularity in their lives and the level of socio-economic comfort (see also Chalupsky, 1993; Gwertzman and Kaufman, 1990).

5.4.1.2. The fairness of social differentiation

Since unification, career developments in the market economy have been significantly less predictable than those in the GDR. Rather than political activity and social engagement, other skills had become important for women's career advancement. Key components were, for instance, communication (rhetoric) and presentation skills, responsibility, individual competition and high achievements at the workplace. Self-presentation and individual competition were particularly problematic for women who had been discouraged from practising such skills at their workplace. Moreover, not only a promotion on the job, but getting a job itself could result in social difference. The German welfare system is based on a 'Bismarckian' model[70] (Duncan, 1996; Kofman and Sales, 1996), in which the level of social and financial security is reliant, to a considerable extent, on having work and being mobile. Hence, difference was associated with being excluded from the labour market and, due to the gendered nature of unemployment, with being a woman. As noted above, social differences were visually expressed in material goods, such as car ownership, condition of the house, or quality of clothing. In small villages, where everybody knows everyone, these differences were even more pronounced than in towns.

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[70] The 'Bismarckian' model represents a strong male-breadwinner model, whereby the family unit is the basis for many social benefits obtained from the State.

In sum, before unification, social differentiation was more likely to be perceived as fair. Many women did not wish to bear the implications that distinction had on their private lives, and there was no threat to their personal well-being from not being 'different'. Since the *Wende*, some people who were better off than others did not, from the perspective of other villagers, 'deserve' this distinction because they may have been 'good-for-nothings' in the GDR. In addition, many unemployed people struggled to maintain a moderate lifestyle, even if they were actively seeking work (see also chapter six). In the lives of most women, there was no longer any security or predictability.

5.4.2. The discontinuity of socio-cultural life

Not many villages still have clubs, a feature initially more a consequence of financial constraints than of social commitment. However, most villagers themselves had not shown much interest in reviving these facilities and have instead adopted a wait-and-see attitude. This observation was true for all villages. The social life and frequency of events in the study villages reflected elements of endogenous path dependence (see chapter one). The key informants suggested that those villagers who had been active prior to unification were still active today. Therefore, those villages with an above average socio-cultural life in the GDR would have retained a considerable level of activities today (see chapters five and seven). But the majority of villagers took little interest in initiating events and thus most activities were organised by a few 'moving spirits' (see chapter seven and figure 7.1.).

Overall, the level of activities in the study villages has remained relatively low. For example, the village of Karlshorst had no clubs at all. Although the neighbour village of Tecklenburg, which was part of the same community, had a successful village club and offered weekly crafts workshops, Karlshorst did not participate in those activities. Charlottenburg did have a women's fire brigade and a village club, but both efforts were destroyed by constant disagreements and jealousy amongst its members. At the time of the interviews, there was a choir, and some women were still active members of the church[71], which also organised informal meetings for senior citizens. Social events in Charlottenburg depended almost

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[71] One may expect an increase in church membership since religion is not taboo anymore. In the villages, however, the membership numbers remained largely the same.

entirely on the initiative of the men's fire brigade. Although there were no clubs in Wilmersdorf, the 'Arbeitslosentreff', which was based in a nearby town, organised weekly gatherings for the unemployed. About 10 women attended these afternoons which were spent chatting and doing needlework. A well-equipped youth club which existed in Schinkel, for instance, ceased to exist after youths broke in and destroyed the interior of the club. The mayor reasoned that lack of future perspective as well as practical work with youngsters were the main causes of this behaviour. As in Hellern, the only club was the 'Volkssolidarität'. The most socially active village was Wüste, where people could engage in activities organised by the 'Volkssolidarität', the 'Landfrauenverband', and the CDU. It must be noted, though, that even in Wüste only a few villagers were active agents in such groups and took responsibility for maintaining club activities. According to a key informant in Wüste, as well as the focus group, the majority of villagers were largely passive but able to be motivated when personally addressed to help preparing special events (see chapter seven).

5.4.3. The loss of informal communication spaces

With regard to the disappearance of communication spaces, the mayors described the closure of a number of facilities that were previously established within the LPG. Libraries, kindergartens, pubs and small shops as well as local organisations, especially the 'DFD' for women and 'FDJ' for youths were lost as informal but frequent meeting points. The doctor's surgery hours, too, had been a space for communication where people met, even without a doctor's appointment. Therefore, this opportunity for regular conversations was also lost, particularly for elderly villagers.

Although some villages still had a pub (Hellern, Wilmersdorf and Wüste) or a 'Konsum' (Hellern, Schinkel, Wilmersdorf and Wüste), these facilities no longer served as social spaces for villagers as they had prior to unification. They had lost their significance largely because a considerable number of villagers, if they were mobile, used cheaper shopping facilities in the nearby towns and few villagers felt they could afford regular visits to the pub. Furthermore, most shops in the village were communal property but rented by shopkeepers who depended on local purchasing power. In general, the mayors had been accommodating by lowering rental prices to maintain local though very expensive shopping facilities for

residents who were not mobile. Other villages had become outlets for mobile shops, bakers and butchers. The pubs were mostly privately owned and depended on investments by the owners. The mayor of Wüste described:

> "We had a little shop... I tried to maintain it for the old people who aren't mobile and cannot get to town. I had some *ABMs* and such... the former owner reclaimed his property there and he, well he acted a bit obnoxiously ... anyway, I tried to remodel the rooms in the old school which was empty, also with *ABMs*. We made a shop. We really wanted to keep it whether we'd get rent or not. [The rent] is now really cheap, we had to lower [it] all the time, otherwise [the shop] would have to be closed. We need to keep it for the old people." (012)

As a result of the changes in local infrastructure, many spontaneous opportunities for communication in the village had begun to vanish. In addition, the 'talks over the fence' had also stopped due to increasing social diversification. Few residents were motivated to organise gatherings because they were either too tired from work or depressed from being at home. The absence of public social and political life, as well as the discontinuity of work in the LPGs turned many villages into "ghost towns" (Wild and Jones, 1994: 8).

As noted above, the loss of communication spaces was a consequence of cutbacks in financial assistance for the public sector in general. The resulting reductions in communal services were heavily criticised in the focus groups as an example of the neglect of social issues by the state.

5.4.4. The neglect of social care

Key issues regarding social care raised by the women were related to healthcare. Although the respondents did not comment on the quality of hospitals during the era of the GDR they did contend the reductions in local health care today. As noted in chapter four, all of the study villages had mobile doctors and a community nurse as well as regular 'mother care' meetings. The respondents were mostly concerned that pensioners were excluded from quick and easily accessible care today and often had to travel a significant distance to a nearby town.

The focus groups discussed this fact and expressed dismay over the increasing numbers of people with polio since unification. A key reason, in their view, was

the neglect by 'the system' (or 'the State', 'the politicians') for residential healthcare. Whereas women were previously reminded of necessary doctor's appointment or injections and children of school age were treated in schools, women noted that since the *Wende*, each person became responsible for his or her own regular health checks. Especially low-income families or pensioner avoided these because they could not afford the payments up front for treatment even though they would be reimbursed by their health insurance later. Although women felt that bureaucratic procedures (dealing with insurance) and lack of finance (cost of treatment or medication) were key barriers which inhibited them from getting regular health checks, this behaviour was also an example of women's helplessness[72], and lack of independence and self-esteem. They were not used to voicing their own concerns and complaints or to 'take it up' with people of authority such as doctors or insurance people.

5.4.5. Abandoning private farming

The abandonment of household farming was a further sign of social change in the rural villages. The former mayoress of Wilmersdorf, for instance, observed that most people no longer had animals or gardens, because animals "stink" and "cause too much work" (119). Household farming in the GDR was generally hard manual work which was carried out as 'extra shifts' before and after work (see also chapter four). Even though most unemployed villagers had time for private farming, they could no longer see the benefits of this labour. Buying animals and fodder was not as cheap as in the GDR, and there was no secured market for their private produce. Hence, any financial gains did not match the investment. In addition, many products formerly supplied through private farming, such as fresh eggs, vegetables and fruit had become available since the *Wende* in low-budget supermarket chains, such as ALDI and NETTO.

In many other post-socialist countries, private farming was maintained as a way of self-subsistence (see chapter two). Women in these regions were largely responsible for processing private produce for family use. These women have thus continued the socialist legacy of household farming and, at the same time, maintained farming and food-processing skills. In East Germany, such skills

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[72] This observation contradicts findings obtained from earlier studies which found that women were active agents (see, for example, Beck, 1998; Funk and Kaschuba, 1994)

initially appeared irrelevant to many women who chose to fulfil their needs in cheaper and less laborious ways. This implied, however, that they traded quality for convenience whilst, at the same time, depriving themselves of an occupation and the maintenance of skills. Some respondents still had gardens but regarded them as their own private boycotts of certain, Western supermarket products which had contributed to the substitution of Eastern goods[73]. It should be noted also, that some rural projects which focus on revitalising rural markets and tourism, promote home production such as fruit and vegetables products, milk products, crafts particularly as an employment alternative for women.

5.4.6. Changes within a Western 'mould' (colonisation)

Whilst discussing their loss of local social services, women also bemoaned their feeling of having been colonised by the West, and that not even the 'good things' had been maintained. Aside from the abundance of social networking opportunities and full-time work, 'good things' were, for instance, associated with the 'convenience' of motherhood. Women discussed the impact of Western regulations on their 'new' role as mothers, for example. At the level of childcare, women criticised contemporary expenses incurred through child care which prevented many women from re-entering the labour force. The Western childcare system was seen to be based on the readiness of many women to care for their children at home. In the East, however, the state ideology promoted full employment and thus largely provided for necessary childcare (see chapter four). With regard to the their observations of children in schools, many women noted the introduction of 'typical' Western characteristics at an early stage. They believed that contemporary curricula were often too demanding but, more importantly, that schools began their streaming too early and thus sectioned the population into good students and bad students at an early age. The respondents' descriptions suggested that women regarded the streaming at school level as an early institutionalisation of a class-based society.

In the pilot focus group, one respondent said, for instance, that one reason for this ignorance of positive elements was that "one didn't have the courage, strength and resources to retain those things that were good, we were dependent on

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[73] Rosenberg (1991) and Smith (1992), for instance, noted that there had been contracts between West German suppliers and East German 'supermarkets' (Konsum) to "carry almost exclusively Western goods".

whatever swashes across [from the West]" (Linda). However, only a few women seemed to have been reflecting in greater depth on post-unification events and their own role in current developments. Claudia, in the same group discussion, reduced the extent of blaming 'the other' for losing these 'good things' by saying that "we also lack flexibility to look for ways, because we never learnt to". Gretha agreed with her, by saying that that "we are afraid of changes, because we never had to live with them".

The older respondents (65+ years old), who wrote about their experiences perhaps still recalled experiences of Germany as one country. They welcomed the possibility of uniting both Germanies and the opportunity to communicate the experiences of both the GDR and the FRG. However, none of the women was content with unification at the time of their writing, even though they acknowledged the need for political and economic change in the GDR. They had wanted changes in the *old* GDR rather than being colonised by another, capitalist system. A critical issue regarding the failure of unification was that the desired communication between East and West Germany had not been experienced. Instead, women described the intolerance of the West in an unequal process which had not allowed the evaluation of institutions of both countries and the combination of the benefits of both sides (a 'third way'; see chapter one). The women recognised that the two Germanies were as different as "an apple and a pear" (076). This was particularly agitating to two correspondents who had actively taken part in the pre-unification process by demonstrating on the streets or joining the 'Neues Forum' (see chapters one and seven). In spite of the political inactivity of most other women, they also expressed disappointment or loss of faith in politicians. The West was seen as an intruder who denounced the GDR and controlled development as an economically more powerful force. By promoting a focus on property, career and egoism the Western forces denied time for a approximation between the two German states on an intra-personal level. The Western 'colonists', who began occupying key political positions, were mostly experienced as "rude", "incapable" and "uninterested" in further developing positive features of East Germany. At the same time as oppressing East German features in the transition process, Westerners were posing as the 'winners' of unification.

(Smith, 1992: 53)

When discussing their experiences in the village since unification, women often spoke of aspects of the 'Westernisation' of East Germany which they regarded as deplorable and frequently led them to express prejudices against West Germans. One reason, discussed above, was women's observation that West Germans occupied key decision making positions in their region and throughout the whole of East Germany. Some women also challenged some of the new West German laws such as that on abortion rights (see also chapter seven) and the already mentioned fact that a number of West Germans had returned to claim land from villagers. There were, however, other issues that concerned women at the local and regional level. They talked, for instance, about the establishment of different interest groups, as it was common in the West, and the need to become a 'member of a club' before being accepted in that group or being allowed to participate (see chapter seven). Along with the separation of people by specific interests, women denoted a significant deterioration in the social morale of their village. The focus on issues such as material values, jealousy, competition and dishonesty which caused the social segregation, discussed above, and which were features of women's 'new lives' many women ascribe to the Western way of life. Consequently, many women felt helpless and trapped in the new social framework of everyday life and blamed the transitions solely to the Western system and, in some way, to Western citizens themselves.

Many women compared themselves with West Germans and described some of the arguments they had with their families in the West. They voiced a feeling of not being heard by their Western relatives, never being right -not even about their own lives and experiences in the GDR- and the contradictions between 'good' and 'bad' values of the East versus the West. Most women chose to remain quiet at the time the conflict with their Western relatives took place, but in a group context women expressed their dismay openly. The following examples were discussed in Charlottenburg and within the pilot focus group:

> *Marlies*: "How they talk about us! We should be content with our pension. We never knew how to work."
> [...]
> *Heidrun*: "They think they're always right. And [they] insist on their right."
> [...]

Tilly: "We can look at both sides [East and West]. They don't even know how it is [to be] in a collective."

Julia: "They can just sell themselves better. They're arrogant. But we know many things better than they do! It's just that we underplay our capabilities."

The women felt a strong differentiation between people in the West and themselves. "Once an Ossi, always an Ossi", Hanna stated, for example, whilst reiterating the differences in income, unemployment benefits and pensions, the vast rises in rents, cost for water, food and clothing. Again, women focused predominantly on negative changes and differences. There was an obvious lack of communication between the East and the West which, presumably, caused the Western family members to adhere to their prejudices in a similar way to the women interviewed. The women's argumentation suggested that their criticism was perhaps a result of their fear of new and unknown things, because they never had to deal with significant changes in the GDR. Thus, it almost seemed inevitable that these women should be defensive of the previous experiences in order to protect themselves from contemporary changes and maintain a sense of identity. Graham and Regulska (1997) observed similar behaviour in Poland and quoted Kolarska-Bobinska:

"a changing world of meanings and difficulty in understanding what is happening results in an unwillingness to participate in public and political life and declining confidence in authority. This is accompanied by a growing sense of isolation, loss of purpose, apathy, negative attitudes toward national minorities, and other kinds of behaviours which outside observers perceive as being simply irrational." (p.6)

5.4.7. Crime and youths

A further significant change for most women was the perception of increased crime, sexual abuse and the rise of the extreme right. The women discussed the strict punishment for such offences which was common in the GDR, even when offences were relatively minor. To reinforce their arguments, women talked about the numerous reports on sexual abuse and child murders in their local newspapers. The development of an extreme right youth culture also concerned them considerably. One correspondent noted:

"I am afraid of the humiliation of so many people, which leads to more violence and the deterioration of democracy up until a danger of a new fascism." (063)

Many women could not understand why extreme right demonstrations should receive police protection or that right-wing extreme political parties could obtain voters' addresses for their campaigns (see Appendix IV). Although political news did not interest all women as much, most followed reports on neo-fascism closely and talked about elections in Saxony earlier that year where the right extremist 'DVU' gained a substantial share of the vote. Their observations led them to think that the situation in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania too had become troublesome. Even in their own villages some women had encountered threatening situations. Elisabeth in Hellern reported that at the last village sports festival there was police attendance in case "those bald heads show up". A pastor, too, stated:

"I feel that, with regard to the neo-nazi scene, the perpetrators are more protected than the victims... I always assumed that showing unconstitutional flags would be prosecuted, but when they can still show the national flag of the German Reich [at a demonstration] and no one bothers, I do lose my trust in legal justice." (118)

A few women attempted to interpret the motives for causing youngsters to join such movements; they agreed that high unemployment, the lack of apprenticeships for youngsters, and the lack of motivation amongst youths due to lack of future vision were amongst the main causes. In fact, most women agreed that there should be more recreational facilities for youngsters. Rather than claiming more facilities for themselves, the women reiterated the importance of a greater political focus on the needs of children and adolescents both at the local and national level as had been the case in the GDR.

5.4.8. Has nothing changed?

Most accounts of the mayors suggested that evaluations of change by the mayors were based largely on significant but single events and could not be generalised to the whole of the village life. Furthermore, there was no consent amongst respondents as to whether things had changed significantly or not. The former mayoress of Wilmersdorf was very critical about the attitude and level of activities by women villagers. Both the current and former mayors of Karlshorst also concluded that not much had changed in their community. They referred

predominantly to the divide between Karlshorst and the neighbour village of Tecklenburg. The residents of Karlshorst have always been considerably more difficult to motivate, were less community spirited and less unified than those in Tecklenburg. A general observation about the residents of both villages since unification was that those who obtained early retirement and pensioners were more financially secure. Commonly, these people were more active than many of the younger residents (see also chapter seven). The only time when all villagers liked to leave the house to intermingle and communicate was at the yearly street festival, i.e. the International Children's Day, a legacy from the GDR. However, only since unification had this become a community-wide event, largely due to lack of finances to conduct separate events. Prior to unification the two villages held their own celebrations, on most occasions. Judging from the interviews conducted throughout this research, the attitudes of residents from both villages toward each other have not changed. The Tecklenburger considered Karlshorster villagers as miserable, whereas Karlshorster villagers believed that Tecklenburger always put themselves into the foreground.

In contrast to the above view, the mayor of Wüste believed that despite the severe withdrawal and isolation of women today, "everything was splendid then and everything is splendid today". The mayor claimed not to have observed a great deficiency in the social life of his village, even though he admitted that social activities were less pronounced than before unification. The view that "everything is splendid" was rare amongst the remaining informants.

Both the mayor of Hellern and of Wilmersdorf, for instance, observed that, since unification, women had spent their days going for walks, caring for the family and household, cooking, watching television and having a nap, and believed that women missed the rhythm of working days and the challenges associated with it, and that they were unsure about how to deal with everyday life and what to expect from the future. Hence, although women were complying with their role in the 'male-breadwinner-model', women also appeared to be dissatisfied with their ascribed role of being a housewife.

With regard to women's feeling of emptiness and uselessness, the former mayoress of Wüste offered a possible explanation. She described previous

expectations of many women to enter the 'Golden West' as well as the disappointment and lack of understanding for the fact that market economy dictated the direction in their lives. Before unification, women had been working shifts, got up at 5 am, looked after their children and the animals, went to work, and repeated these domestic duties in the evening. The pattern remained unchanged for about thirty years. As women have largely been confined to their homes and households since unification, they could not imagine what they were supposed to do with themselves. The mayoress stressed that, despite their unoccupied time, it always "takes a person" to organise social events or clubs, but as yet few initiatives had been observed. A number of key informants, when asked how they would describe the role of women today responded that women have no role at all.

Although it is not the focus of this study, it must be reiterated that unemployed men, even though there are considerably fewer in number, also demonstrate similar symptoms of their disenfranchisement such as excessive alcohol consumption (see also Appendix IV). Most respondents mentioned the consumption of alcohol as a coping strategy for men. Some respondents believed that men suffered less from unification, whereas others argued that alcohol was a serious problem which had largely been neglected at the political and public level. Two key issues related to the increase of people with alcohol problems were raised by informants from a regional network of support groups in this research. One issue was the loss of ideologically enforced social networks through the workplace LPG, and the second concerned the loss of personal mentors allocated to those people with alcohol problems in the GDR. Whereas such people were still financially and socially secure in the GDR, this has not been the case since unification. Informants from the support groups added that many women increasingly suffered from substance abuse as well, but in a less visible way. Instead of having alcohol problems, many women used anti-depressants or similar drugs to help them cope with the psychological consequences of unification.

Most respondents felt more discouraged about the social development at the local level and noted an erosion of former values and morale. The accounts suggested that the identification of women with the new society would take considerable time and that the current generation would not be able to deal with the changes.

Hence, many respondents concluded that nothing had changed *for the better*, but many things had become worse.

5.4.8. Reconstructing identities

In most group discussions, women revealed fears of the present and future, as well as sentiments of depressive helplessness in reconstructing their 'blemished' identities. Women were still trying to reallocate the importance of the workplace and their previous value system to another, yet unknown, place in their new lives. At the same time, they were resistant to assume the 'identity' of housewives to which they were assigned by conservative political actors (see also, Kligman, 1994) and the prevalent 'Bismarckian' role model for women (Duncan, 1996).

In summary, the accounts by the village women broadly covered the same issues as the key informants. However, more dimensions were added to the themes of social division and unemployment (see chapter seven). With regard to unemployment, women added the dimension of discrimination, whilst social division was widened from the local to an all German level. This also confirmed the notion of a 'wall in people's heads' in both parts of Germany (see, for instance, Jeffery, 1995). The themes of isolation and apathy were underlying women's discussions throughout, revealing a multi-faceted picture which was predominantly founded on the consequences of unemployment. Little was mentioned of the success of local events that did take place but instead, women expressed general dissatisfaction with socio-cultural opportunities. However, there was no rationalisation of their own situation by the women respondents themselves, i.e. what had happened to them, where they could see themselves in x years and how they could achieve their goals. In addition, there had been no attempts to seek the group context with other women for active problem solving. Rather women "live[d] from day to day" (Susanne).

The correspondents expressed much criticism of the system but also some of themselves. Whilst exploring largely the same themes, most correspondents appeared to be more active than the villagers; they were seeking to interpret what was wrong in their new lives and beginning to make decisions about where they wanted to be in the future. Thus, despite displaying little or no desire for social or political action, these women were at least concerned about their own future. I do

not, however, wish to imply that the village women were not concerned about their future. Instead, I observed that they did not express this as much in the group. Either the villagers consciously tried to forget the hopelessness they anticipated for their future, or they did not have much time and space to reflect on their future lives as the writers had been.

In contrast to the women in the focus groups, the correspondents did not express surprise about the *Wende* itself. Not only did they appear to have anticipated events, most of them had also been critically evaluating the GDR's future and necessary changes. One correspondent wrote, for example:

> "The *Wende* did not come as a surprise to us -we had been discussing necessary changes regarding the efficiency of our economy and democracy within the family, colleagues and friends. But to me, it was like an unstoppable, nearing disaster and I couldn't defend myself. It was disabling. I knew we had failed." (063)

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed, in general terms, the impact of the *Wende* on women in rural areas. It has described how, despite a national consciousness about the democratisation process prior to 1989, the *Wende* presented a sudden change in the studied region both economically and socially. The core of this chapter was formed by respondents' explanations of the social diversification process. The main themes emerging were changes in the infrastructure (e.g. problems of property reclamation and the loss of local communication points), in the labour market (e.g. loss of central means of identification, and loss of working collectives) but also amongst and within village women themselves.

The respondents' accounts suggest that the social impact of unification, part of which is described above, is perhaps still underestimated by both policy makers and academics. The above summary of substantial changes women respondents experienced after unification suggests that unification washed over the lives of women quickly. Due to numerous demands, there was little space for reflection and contemplation on transitions from the past to the present and into the future. Women lost sight of what composed their identities through denial of the past and a lack of placement into their new post-unification roles as women. There were few communication spaces for women in or outside of employment, i.e. in the

village, which could have facilitated discussions about the unification process and its consequences for women as a group. Furthermore, women had not been able to fully explore their own skills and strengths in order to find 'a purpose' and build self-confidence. Many issues were related to women's previous socialisation at and identification with the workplace. The significance of the workplace in women's lives prior to unification and the changed dynamics in the labour market today form the focus of chapter six.

"IT'S, AS THOUGH THE SOUL IS TORN APART"[74]- WOMEN AND UNEMPLOYMENT

6.1. Introduction

In chapter five, I outlined the socio-political and economic restructuring process since unification in the study area. The labour market responded to this restructuring with large-scale redundancies, in which women who were formerly occupied within the agricultural sector were particularly affected. The gendered pattern in unemployment today is, in part, due to path dependence (see chapter one). A key variable is therefore the establishment of highly differentiated employment patterns prior to unification. Furthermore, regional characteristics such as geographic marginality and poorly developed infrastructure prevented inward movement of alternative industries from the West. Last but not least, forty years of socialism shaped the characteristics and identities of people themselves. The lack of mobility and interaction outside the local structures have contributed to the preservation of certain socialist characteristics in rural more than urban areas. These variables, i.e. unemployment patterns, regionality and immobility, have facilitated an outcome which is disadvantageous to the integration of the region into the West German and European market economy. In addition, "locally and historically appropriate" solutions (Meurs and Begg, 1998: 244) to integrative development of the region have largely been neglected in favour of a 'quick' market oriented solution (see chapter one).

For women, unemployment was the most serious of all experiences after unification. Previously unknown, unemployment was largely associated with being a criminal or someone with alcohol problems and therefore stigmatised in the GDR. In addition to providing economic security for women and their families, the workplace in the GDR provided a space for personal development, the establishment of social relations and the overall social integration of individuals. Women not only had the right to work but were obliged to do so in order to be a full member of the socialist society and gain social status. Lack of mobility and spatial confinement in rural areas restricted social interactions almost exclusively

to the local level and thus caused villagers to be highly dependent on local, social culture. A number of key informants suggested that it had largely been through necessity that villagers formed social bonds as material resources were scarce and people were dependent, to some extent, on exchange relationships with neighbours. The research for this thesis does, however, indicate that women formed especially strong social relations through the working collectives (see chapters four and seven). In addition, they relied on the workplace for the maintenance of social relationships. Hence, meetings, social events and celebrations were predominantly organised through the workplace rather than through individual initiative. Many women in this research emphasised that it was virtually impossible to think of the workplace and the social as separated units.

In this chapter, I will examine the gender-differentiated nature of employment prior to unification and describe the continuity of this pattern today. The meaning of the workplace for women in the GDR and women's individual experiences of unemployment and employment since unification will be the focus of this chapter. Key employment schemes will also be evaluated on the basis of the research findings and in relation to the appropriateness of these schemes to the local and historical context.

6.2. Gender differentiation in employment before and after unification

6.2.1. Women's representation within employment sectors in the GDR

By the end of the 1970s the number of qualified women had increased significantly as a result of 'Women's Politics' (see chapter four). However, the integration of women into the labour market took place in a gender-differentiated way. As a consequence, both the productive and non-productive sectors in the GDR remained highly segregated. Women were over-represented in the service sector (72.2%), education (77%), public health (83.3%) and social services (91.8%) (Marx-Ferree, 1993; Nickel, 1990a, b). Of all female graduates in 1987, 60% were predominantly occupied within 16 out of 259 skilled trades only. All of these sectors were 'typically female', i.e. with over 85% women (Fink and Grajewski, 1994; Nickel, 1990a, b). At the national level this uneven distribution is illustrated in figure 6.1.

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[74] This expression was used by respondent (016)

Occupation	%Women
Garment and Textile Industry	>90%
Postal Services	
Salespeople	
Secretaries	
Chemical Industry	>60%
Data Processing	
Transport	>50%
Food Processing	
Agriculture	>37%
Machine builder	<6%

Fig. 6.1.: Gender-differentiated patterns in occupations in the GDR
(Sources: Einhorn, 1993a; Winkler, 1992)

At a local level, where agriculture was the dominant employment sector[75], figures show that occupational segregation took place as well. In the district of Neubrandenburg, for instance, data for women's qualifications show the following distribution (percentage of female workers): Builder 0.3%; Locksmith 6.7%; Agro-technician 37.9%; Pig breeder 63.1%; Waitress 71.1%; 'Facharbeiter' for postal service and newsprint 91% (Statistisches Jahrbuch der DDR, 1976).

Rueschemeyer (1994), for example, stated that women were rarely represented at the higher professional levels. The research for this thesis confirms that most leading positions in the LPGs were appointed to men. Winkler (1975) discussed the distribution of women in leading positions within crop production, for example, and explained that, due to the need for mobility and full-time availability, women had not been placed in leading positions as much as they should have. Instead, women were largely placed in manual, labour-intensive work, rather than leadership or managerial positions. The kind of high qualifications which women were capable of obtaining were largely ignored. In addition, even when women obtained the qualification of 'Facharbeiter', many remained employed as unskilled workers (see chapter four). This observation is not confined to the district of Neubrandenburg only. For instance, Rocksloh-Papendieck (1995) in her study on

women in fruit and vegetable co-operatives near Berlin, also concluded that many women worked in areas for which they were not qualified.

Today, after the right to work ended, unemployment has become a widespread reality in women's everyday lives. The dissolution of agricultural co-operatives, and their subsequent restructuring, are the main causes of unemployment. Between 1989 and 1995 approximately 75% of agricultural employees throughout the GDR were made redundant (Müller, 1996). Throughout Mecklenburg-Westpommerania this figure was 86% (Krambach *et al.*, 1997). However, these general figures conceal substantial gender segregation in unemployment. Only 8,000 of 100,000 women formerly employed within agriculture in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania in 1989 were still employed in 1992 (Ackermann *et al.*, 1993). In fact, entire employment sectors that had primarily been occupied by women were lost following unification. In the study area of Uecker Randow, for instance, the implementation of European Agricultural Policies led to vast reductions in animal stock, crop production and arable land. Consequently, certain professions such as 'milking women', 'veterinary engineer', or 'potato sorter' ceased to exist (020). Throughout Mecklenburg-Westpommerania, many employment sectors were rationalised in the administrative and service sector, whilst others vanished entirely such as the textiles and food industries, electronics and optics (Fink *et al.*, 1993). In all these sectors, women represented the vast majority of employees, up to 93% of all employees per sector. Of all jobs that were lost as a consequence of unification, 75% had been occupied by women (Deutscher Bundestag, 1992).

6.2.2. Incomes and private farming

In addition to occupational segregation, women in the GDR were also economically disadvantaged due to their lower level of income. Although the law required women to be paid equal wages for equal work, they were over-represented in all the lower paid employment sectors. Before unification, the average monthly income for women was 762 Marks versus 1,009 Marks for men (Marx-Ferree, 1993). In 1988, over 70% of employees earning less than 800 Marks per month and less than 20% of those earning over 1,200 Marks per month

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[75] 'Agriculture' in this context refers to employment within the agricultural co-operatives and thus also includes the service sector (shops, education, health care, administration, pubs; see Neu, 1996).

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were women (Winkler, 1990). Nonetheless, women's contribution to the family income amounted on average to 40% (Marx-Ferree, 1993).

In rural areas, incomes commonly consisted of two components; the regular income from working at the LPG and income from private farming (see figure 6.2.). LPG members obtained 0.25 ha of land for their private farming, and the purchase of their produce was guaranteed by the State. The contribution of private forms of agriculture[76] to the GDR market was significant. The share of production for the market was 15% of all slaughter cattle, 34% of eggs, 14% of vegetables and 22% of fruit (Agrarbericht, 1991). In the GDR, statistics were used to demonstrate that the 'standard of living' of co-operative farmers through their formal income was continuously rising. For instance, between 1970 and 1985, there was an increase of 56% in the income of VEG workers (Statistisches Jahrbuch der DDR, 1986). Nonetheless, respondents for this research reiterated that the most important component of income for LPG farmers was private animal breeding. High prices up to the equivalent of 6 months income were obtained when farmers delivered a pig or a bull to the local butcher. Consequently, private animal keeping was the key source of money invested in savings, higher quality consumer products, or holidays to other socialist countries. The co-operative farmers' own impressions were, therefore, that they were comparatively well off, perhaps even better than industrial workers, and that they could afford more than there was to buy. In addition, the contribution of women to the family income was more significant as they were responsible for the majority of work on the private plot before and after their formal work obligations.

One key informant commented on the fact that, as a LPG director, he did not have the time to keep animals privately due to the amount of overtime his position required. As a result of the socialist ideology, his earnings were only moderately higher than those of the average farmer. If the additional income from animal keeping was taken into consideration he actually earned less than the average farmer.

"The co-operative farmers could feed 4 to 6 pigs or bulls for a year. And for a bull they got 6,000 Marks, or for a pig ... 1,200 Marks. That means that people could earn another half of their regular income by private production...

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[76] This includes private farming by LPG members, on church land and private horticulture.

Co-operative farmers worked 40 or 44 hours, like farm workers, and had Saturdays and Sundays off... But [LPG] directors, like myself, we didn't have the time. I had to leave at 5.30 am [to work] ... and in the evening, there was always something to do. We rarely had the chance [to keep animals]. Consequently, directors were working all those hours but couldn't keep private farm-plots (laughs) ... and thus, those [farmers] could earn more than directors." (051)

Fig. 6.2.: Private farm plots in Schinkel

The reliance on an informal income through private farming in the GDR has gained significance since unification, when the demand for private produce ceased to exist. For instance, the share of income from informal employment was ignored in calculations leading to the allocation of unemployment benefit and pensions after unification. Furthermore, pensions were calculated by the income obtained from the latest employment rather than the overall length of employment. In terms of financial security, these issues have become significant problems for women today, particularly for women in rural areas. The division in formal incomes of women and men in the GDR translated into unequal unemployment benefits after unification. In addition, women who had been employed for more than 30 years obtained lower pensions than some women with shorter careers in

West Germany. In the New Germany, unemployed women obtained 65% of their previous income in unemployment benefit. The women respondents perceived this as an unfair inequality between the East and the West. It was, however, not merely a matter of different incomes, but also of social status as women were no longer contributing to the national economy with their private farming. Instead, the market was saturated with produce from existing farms and regulated by European policies.

6.2.3. The meaning of work

The interrelationship between the workplace, social life, public participation and to some extent the family must be strongly emphasised in the context of this study. All four elements overlapped significantly in women's everyday life. This interrelationship was expressed by the way in which the four elements were organised according to political priorities. Social activities took place around or within the set framework of work but were never disconnected. Club activities took place after working hours but included colleagues and were sponsored by the LPG. Participation was essential if one aimed to obtain promotion, an award or a higher end-of-year premium. Social events took place in the context of the clubs or working collectives with the LPG both organising and sponsoring these events. Social events, such as holidays in a resort were also awarded for good work performance. The resort itself was supervised by the workplace and maintained by the co-operative workers. The family became an integral part of these practices as well. Partners were always invited to the social events listed above. Children were commonly involved in the workplace by means of established 'treaties' (see chapter four) between schools and the LPG. Furthermore, in their class, or as 'Pioneers' or 'FDJ' group, children would prepare little plays, dances or sing-along to be performed during the celebrations of LPG workers. Aside from these elements, other issues such as education and further qualification, health care and basic services (see chapter four) were all associated with the LPG and thus with the workplace. Many key informants speak of the fact that the LPG *was* the village.

Work in Western societies and in East Germany today has a less dramatic and less overarching function. Although work can establish links to social life, public participation, and the family, this would largely be a result of personal desire,

ambition and initiative. It would most certainly not take place in a politically planned and fully sponsored way, organised by the employer as was the case in the GDR. The respondents' accounts suggested that women did not associate their previous social well-being with the complex interaction of various community services subsumed to the LPG. Therefore, they were not conscious of how comprehensively their former workplace had permeated every part of lives. When the transformation from socialism to market economy shattered the old workplace, former community functions were often geographically dispersed. As many women had regarded the work-place as a means to their self-identification, the disintegration of it and the dispersion of its components constituted a considerable problem for women's allocation into their new social environment and the formation of identity (see also chapter eight). Many women had expectations of gaining social life and public integration almost exclusively by means of employment[77]. The significance of the range of informal communication spaces inside the boundaries of the work-place (i.e. village) but unrelated to the task was therefore ignored. A group discussion amongst key informants supported this:

Bettina: "What do you think should happen in rural areas to draw women from isolation, prevent their exclusion and promote their integration?"
016: "Create employment."
014: "Yes, that will be it."
017: "That's the most important thing."
014: "Or else our villages will be inhabited by pensioners only."
[...]
017: "But not just that, the jealousy... it wouldn't be fundamentally changed just by employment."
013: "But the jealousy is only there because one has work [and the other hasn't]."
[...]
017: "Of course, the workplace is the most important thing. But if I imagine, the women in rural villages, because everyone knows everybody... how much aversion there is."

In general the focus group recalled togetherness, equality and an active lifestyle- associated with their employment- in the GDR as opposed to jealousy, difference and apathy- associated with their unemployment- since unification. Such accounts contradict, to some extent, the recollections of some key informants. However, this divergence may be, at least in part, explained by the different positions women

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[77] It is assumed that the character of the workplace is equivalent to that in the GDR and thus includes the social sphere as well.

occupied in the village as opposed to those of key actors. All features that were experienced as positive in the GDR had taken place largely in the organised context of the LPG. This contradiction suggests that, perhaps, there was a difference between organised life in the LPG and life outside this context, i.e. on the streets of the village, when people could allow themselves to neglect their 'socialist personalities' to some extent. On a one-to-one basis it was easier to demonstrate differences and begin arguments than under peer pressure within the collective. The workplace united togetherness as well as diversity and provided a means of balancing the two. Disagreement, if based on personal differences, could be settled within the collective context or lose significance in relation to the overall positive experiences as a group. Herta in Charlottenburg said:

"Oh yes, the women in the fields also argued. My mother-in-law, [for instance], she was quite straightforward. [She] always told everyone what was on her mind. Yes, but sometimes, it's better to be moderate, and not burst out immediately. She always came back home, we talked about it and then it was okay. And then she took some wine into work, or coffee and cakes and we all had some."

A key informant supported this:

102: "The unity within the collective was very, very strong [in the GDR]... Everyone was sort of on the same level, if you like. The unity in the entire village was totally different than it is today."
Bettina: "Do you mean everyone who worked in the LPG [was on the same level]?"
102: Yes. They were practically like a big family. One could say that, and that's how the collectives were, too. They were also together after work, not just because it was a collective, but because they all had the same kind of interests. Today, there is this division between employers and employees."
Bettina: So you mean that employers and employees were on the same level, too?"
102: "Yes, yes... Everyone was fully integrated."

As long as this process of problem-solving took place in the unchanging context of the working collective, the individual experience of togetherness was enhanced, because it served to resolve small conflicts. After unification, there was no longer a mechanism to provide such a balance or to ease conflict automatically. The respondents indicated that negative experiences, be they individual, within the family, amongst friends, at work or in the village are often addressed but rarely solved due to a general lack of communication. In addition,

few women had a task that was demanding enough to counterbalance negative energies, for example, by attending to physically or mentally demanding labour. Negative experiences thus became frustrating and manifested themselves in divisions within the village. In spite of these interpretations, it should not be ignored that many women no longer contacted former friends. Although social networking still occurred in some villages, it was not a regular social pattern throughout the region. Hence, it would appear that friendships were more fragile than initially thought and heavily dependent on the socialist work and communal context.

6.2.4. Women's disadvantage in the labour market since unification

In an attempt to cushion the impact of unemployment after unification (see figures above), the government introduced a range of early retirement and short-term employment schemes. Gendered patterns were consolidated as women had unequal access to the governmental schemes that were offered. Early retirement could be granted to workers between 55 and 65 years. However, 70% of women over 55 years took early retirement, compared with 50% of men. Although other government-funded, short-term employment schemes were available in the study area, by far the most significant was that of *ABM*, followed by measures under §249h (see below for discussion). Although in 1992, 68% of all unemployed in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania were women (Boje *et al.*, 1992) and the unemployment rate for women was twice as high as that for men, women were not represented within these schemes proportionally to their unemployment. Instead only 48.5% of *ABM* were offered to women and 1/3rd of §249h. These low figures reflected, in part, the nature of employment in the construction and planning sector as well as care of the environment. Few projects focused on social or youth work. These figures also suggest a discriminatory attitude of employers towards women. Although in 1994 the share of unemployment by women dropped slightly (62%) and their participation in short-term employment measures rose, still only 36.4% and 58.9% of §249h and *ABM* places were taken by women (Schröter *et al.*, 1997)[78].

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[78] Figures for all new Bundesländer indicate that this positive trend seemingly continued: in 1997 55.9% of all unemployed in East Germany were women, 63.5% of all *ABM* were taken by women as were 44.5% of 249h. These latter figures do, however, ignore the amount of women who felt 'obliged' to exit the labour force. In addition, the regional effects of unemployment/ short-term employment are neglected. Schröter *et al.* (1997) noted that women in rural areas are more affected by unemployment and lack of short-term

The following key reasons account for women's disadvantaged position in the labour market (Fink *et al.*, 1993):

(1) Women are made redundant more frequently than men (but men are twice as likely to find work again (Schumann and Jahn, 1991));

(2) Higher obligations to the family result in a difficult re-entry of the labour market (90% of women are mothers and 30% single mothers (Nickel, 1990a));

(3) Low mobility; and

(4) Lower availability of short term employment measures to women.

The above reasons imply discrimination against women in the labour market. Indeed, other authors have noted discrimination against women on the grounds of their gender, age or family status (Marx-Feree and Young, 1993). Beer and Müller (1993) stated that, in East Germany, women from the age of 45 years and above were perceived as 'old' whereas men were not. A rather more complex issue of discrimination is on the grounds of family status. Single mothers in particular face enormous barriers when re-entering the labour market because, as a result of financial problems, many (unemployed) women have had to withdraw their children from childcare facilities. However, the *'Arbeitsamt'* was not able to provide work for women unless they are 'available' to work which means that children must be cared for by public child care facilities (Marx-Feree and Young, 1993a). In addition to financial problems preventing women from making use of public childcare, the decreasing number of children in such facilities led to reorganisation of public child care largely by closure (Kolinsky, 1996), thus making childcare unavailable even for those women who could afford this service.

The lack of political support in maintaining childcare is largely due to the Christian conservative attitude that women should stay in the home. The president of the Berlin parliament and member of the CDU Dr. Laurien, for instance, was critical of the number of children in childcare facilities in the GDR. She proposed, instead, that no more than 12% of children should be in public childcare, a figure that represented the level of public childcare attendance in other industrial societies. Rueschemeyer (1994), however, claimed that the number of women who needed

employment measures than urban women. Another reason given for the lower share of unemployment by women is migration of women, especially 20-25-year old, to the West (Schröter *et al.*, 1997).

to work exceeded the intended total of 12%. Consequently, the women who remained 'unavailable' for employment for the above reasons ran a high risk of poverty (DeSoto and Panzig, 1995; Köppl, 1997) since their right to unemployment benefit was for a limited period of time only (Kolinsky, 1996). Throughout the former GDR, 54.2% of all welfare recipients were female (Schröter *et al.*, 1997).

Discrimination against women re-enterin the labour market confirms the traditional model of the male 'breadwinner'. This notion has been further strengthened by the 'First Report on Women in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania' in 1997. The report showed that married women were even less likely to find work than unmarried women. Respondents in this research quoted CDU politicians, who largely ascribe the role of women to the household and family. These political actors therefore promoted the preservation of this model and hindered the development of integrative models which include women into the labour force more effectively.

Although women in the West increasingly combined careers with responsibilities for the family, most respondents in this study believed that Western women were content with their role as a homemaker more easily. Women respondents indicated that Western women had to work less hard in paid employment to acquire social status compared with women in the GDR. This is especially the case where husbands had jobs with sufficient incomes to enable Western women to work part-time or not at all. In the East, incomes were so low that even if their spouses would work, women stated that they could not live comfortably on one income alone. Nevertheless, the key issue for women was that they wanted to work and did not regard a sufficient income of from their partners as a satisfying alternative to participation in the labour market. Heidrun, in the group discussion in Charlottenburg, explained:

> "My husband could bring home 10,000 Marks and I would know that I wouldn't be tight for money, and I wouldn't have to work. I could stay home, put my feet up. But that wouldn't be me. I'd miss something... I've worked all my life... ever since I was 16 years old. Perhaps I'd go to work half days. Yes, that would be okay."

It must be noted that in spite of this trend to 'push women back to the hearth' a difference between the East and the West remained, indicating that the traditional breadwinner model was less pronounced in the East. For instance, both single and married mothers were more likely to be employed in the East than the West. 53.9 % of married mothers with children under the age of three were working compared with 39.3% in the West, and of the mothers that were married with children between three and six years old even 71.2% were working compared with 45.9% in the West (Statistisches Landesamt, 1996). These figures suggested that women in East Germany were adhering to socialist ideals of combining work with motherhood and reiterated the need for many women to work in order to provide a second family income.

However, this trend of married working mothers and the desire to work becomes less pronounced in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania with the younger generation. The equal opportunities officers in this study observed that, in addition to already existing segregation in the labour market, there is a growing desire amongst schoolgirls to become housewives. In addition, it is more difficult for girls to find apprenticeships than boys (even though the overall situation is so strained that it becomes increasingly problematic for boys as well). Consequently, the number of females under 25 receiving benefits is high and the exclusion of women from the public sphere remains increasing and ongoing.

6.3. Individual experiences resulting from changes in the labour market

Figure 3.6 in chapter three indicated that most women in the focus groups were unemployed at the time of the interview. All but three women had experienced unemployment since unification. Whereas the above description reflects structural developments at a larger scale, i.e. throughout East Germany or, more specifically, in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania, the following section examines the nature and effect of both unemployment and employment at the local level for a deeper understanding of their meaning to women.

6.3.1. Dealing with unemployment

Many unemployed women were subject to a variety of conflicting messages. On the one hand, they were young enough to be employed and to develop further skills for the labour market. On the other hand, many women were discriminated

against in the labour market on the grounds of gender and age and were prevented from contributing their share to the new society. There were not the same provisions to secure them financially leaving the workforce as those women who, for instance, took early retirement. Therefore, there was no confirmation that it was also socially acceptable for the younger women if they contributed to society other than by paid work, such as by caring for the home and family. Even though the political line at the time was that women should stay at home more, there was little support for these women, particularly at the local level in rural areas. As discussed above, few socio-cultural institutions had been maintained from the GDR, especially activities suiting the interests of younger women and mothers. Little assistance was provided for promoting financial security, or access to services and childcare provisions for times when women wanted to participate in local or regional events. Many younger unemployed women were, therefore, neither part of the workforce nor of village life and felt that they were without purpose. Consequently, unemployed women encountered various structural changes locally (see chapter five) as well as individually.

In chapter five, I noted that the diversification amongst residents of some villages had gone further than mere division between those who were employed and those who were without work because of judgements made about the fairness of employment. Hence, there were certain people who had not 'fitted' into the collective or community in the GDR because of certain personal traits, but who might have adapted to the new market economy and its requirements very well and were able to get work, or an *ABM*. Other villagers who had always been people with a 'well developed' socialist character, may have had more difficulties adapting to 'the market'. In spite of their participation in various retraining and education measures they have remained unemployed since unification. In this case, it was decided that some persons did not 'deserve' to be employed as much as others and were therefore blamed. At the same time, the unemployed experienced increasing self-doubt and feelings of social exclusion because they no longer 'fitted' in. As social equality had been a key experience for women in the GDR, social differentiation could become problematic for at least some women[79]. As a result, the younger women respondents, i.e. those between 35 and

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[79] DeSoto and Panzig (1994) also pointed out that women today have a desire for common experience.

55 commonly expressed reservations toward current socio-economic and socio-political developments and taking personal initiatives.

The feeling of displacement from the local context and from the steady lifeline experienced in the GDR was a major theme in women's discussions of unemployment. Throughout the interviews, a range of phrases were used by respondents to try and illustrate what their lives were like to an outsider. Phrases used by the women included: reprehension, weakness, listlessness, bitterness, desperation, depression, loss of social contacts, isolation, low mobility, insignificance of certain freedoms, lack of support, low self-esteem, being too old, being put 'on ice' and loss of faith. Some women make it very clear how they feel by stating that, to them, "everything today is shit" (Hanna).

Reflecting on the meaning of work in the GDR and the social context of the workplace, it is notable that none of the women claimed to be relieved at being able to stay home and spend time with their families. Instead, they felt angry at being forced to "play housewife" (011), to be "back at the hearth" (010), or "back with the pots" (017). Even though many women do not look for employment actively or write frequent job applications, as some key informants pointed out, they remain registered as unemployed not only to continue claiming benefits but to indicate that they are not content with their exclusion from the labour market. A number of women themselves indicated that the sharp decrease in birth rates since unification was 'proof' of women's choice of employment over family. This choice was supported by the absence of incentives to have children after unification. Whereas in 1989 almost 2 million children were born, in 1994 this figure had decreased by 60.4% to 787,000 births. Although there was a slight increase again by 1996, the figure remained at less than 50% of the 1989 birth rate (Statistisches Bundesamt, 1997).

But women's 'silent protest' was largely useless in terms of its efficiency. Many women remained trapped in a cycle of unemployment and short term employment measures. One key informant said:

"You cannot just tell a woman that, really, she should give her life some purpose. Besides, what *is* the purpose of life? The purpose of life surely isn't to stand behind the stove or to wait for the next *ABM* and then be

unemployed again, then some retraining, then unemployed again. That doesn't make sense and that woman tells herself that this is really silly." (079)

Women's outlook on the future of their occupational involvement has diminished. Whereas they first sought suitable employment, they began looking for any kind of job soon after unification. But at the time of the interview most women were merely hoping for an *ABM*. Many women have also experienced some form of de-qualification since unification. In the six villages, all of those women who are currently 'housewives' were previously at least 'Facharbeiter'. Few of the women respondents, however, speak of the fact that they were subject to discrimination, but instead they felt guilty of their de-qualification and believed they were responsible themselves[80]. Because of the meaning women ascribed to the workplace prior to unification, women felt stigmatised and like 'good-for nothings'. They stated that "inside, the soul gets ruined" (016) and that a "tremendously important thing was taken away" (017) from them. Many women respondents stated that there was no space for them any more and therefore, they isolated themselves.

Throughout the discussions, few women referred to other people such as family members or friends as sources of comfort during their time of unemployment. Few women have sought help when dealing with problems resulting from the new demands of their everyday lives. Their image of asking for consultation was equivalent to going 'soliciting'. Some women felt that information given to them, if they did look for advice, was not helpful since the consultants themselves were only temporarily employed as *ABM* staff and were overwhelmed with the same problems they ought to solve for others. Some key informants explained that a number of women had been deterred from going to information centres because of insecurities or prejudices. Particularly in the local context, women did not wish to be 'counselled' by people they had known personally. In such cases, women lacked trust in the counsellor's confidentiality. In the groups, some women had, however, also made positive experiences.

When asked how women spent their time most women themselves claimed to be very busy doing things around the house or garden. Some women tried to connect with their former workplace but were either struck with their own sadness and

desperation about their job loss, or felt like intruding a space which was no longer theirs. Others described how they almost went out of their minds from being restless and helpless. The following excerpts from group discussions in Wüste and Charlottenburg illustrate some of women's experiences:

Renate: "The psychological consequences belong to it. We became unemployed immediately after unification ... we weren't paid much [in the GDR] and from that we got 63% [unemployment benefit]. Meanwhile it's only unemployment support, that's 10 % less. And then staying home, one person bothers the other person ... one comes through one door, the other leaves. And one cannot really talk about the whole thing either... one has to cope with most of it on one's own, cope within, and nonetheless deal with all the rest. One has to budget and be careful not to be in debt... but, well, one always tried... I mean I just couldn't have coped at home, I must be honest. In the beginning, I always ran away from the house... into the garden and I cried. There was enough work in the house, but one just couldn't... all alone... then one had to go somewhere to talk, to hear something else... I just couldn't cope."

Marlies: "A problem today is that many of the older people suffer from depressions and that will never go away. My sister, who is considerably younger than I, she was born in 54, she's got terrible depressions. She doesn't go to any of the agencies, not even to apply for housing benefit, she won't go, she's afraid."
Heidrun: "She hasn't got work?"
Marlies: "No, she hasn't had work for a long time."
Heidrun: "That's exactly it. No work... I am also the type of person, I've always worked, I need to be with people. [When I was unemployed] it was horrific. I got up late, at 9am, went to my mother's to eat, sat at the table, went back home, 'shit, you don't have to do the household, you could do it tomorrow, you'll still be home'. Really, my house sometimes looked worse than when I was working full time... I didn't feel like doing *anything* ... I could've cried day and night... terrible, terrible, and one has got such a bad mood, there were always arguments with my husband 'Well, I can't help it if you're unemployed!'"

Some of the correspondents attended to 'hobbies' and wrote that they read, wrote, solved crosswords or spent time with their families. Three women correspondents described that they were so fearful, desperate and disillusioned after becoming unemployed that they considered committing suicide, an outcome only averted with the help of close family and friends. Family was generally a prominent theme in women's writings, with many giving details about the importance of their family "for the soul" (065) and as an alternative to recreational activities outside of the house, or even to political participation.

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[80] Similar conclusions were drawn by Eichener *et al.* (1992)

Key informants reinforced that the majority of people watched television so much that it almost dictated their daily routines and caused much of the current isolation. With regard to the villagers, all activities mentioned were confined to the women's homes or the village. Women in the GDR had been rooted in their local context (Altmann, 1997) but even since unification, they remained largely dependent on local initiatives. However, many women also expressed a lack of motivation. None of the women reported visiting with neighbours or friends spontaneously, inviting people to their homes, or getting together to visit events in the region. For example, Monika from Wilmersdorf said that she is "not the type to stop someone on the street for a chat" and she indicated that she needed somebody to convince and push her.

Other participants believed that a considerable number of women have become increasingly socially, economically and politically inaccessible. In addition, an erosion of values and social contacts has begun to take place in their environment. Despite the prioritisation of the values of solidarity, support and communal togetherness in the GDR, citizens were never 'taught' to display such attributes outside the prepared context of their working collective and thus, never needed to maintain these values as independent actors. To some degree, women expected that *only* through employment would they experience communication, integration, acknowledgement and self-esteem, and *only* if people were employed would the inequalities and jealousy in the village disappear. Hence, women expected that only another social context, equivalent to that experienced in the LPG, could resolve social problems. It was stated in chapter two, though, that women's issues were not normally prioritised in capitalist democratic development. Consequently, women's 'wait-and-see' attitude implied a dependence on external impulses whilst women denied themselves the opportunity to make changes that they can identify with themselves. They have not yet recognised that work does have a significant impact on the development of personal initiative but it is also linked to various other factors.

The research for this thesis revealed that the extent of withdrawal and the mobilisation of already excluded women often depends considerably on community leaders and their capability of drawing women back into the community. Some key informants had observed that female mayors were often

more persistent in encouraging women to participate more in public life and generally more supportive of women's issues (Antolini, 1984; see chapter seven).

In addition, there is little networking between women within and between the groups of employed and unemployed of women themselves. Instead, there has been a division, whereby many unemployed women remain at home because they are ashamed of their unemployment (see Breakwell, 1986, for similar observation), and some of the employed women stay home because they fear to be blamed for their employment or simply because they are too tired. One key informant illustrated:

> "When [the women] come home [from work], they're usually so tired that they can only slump into an armchair and stretch all fours." (061)

Those respondents who were employed did not describe vivid social relations, pride in achievement or great self-confidence experienced at work. Rather, these women recounted exhaustion, self-doubt, withdrawal and frustration, in spite of the fact they considered themselves lucky to have work at all. The following section outlines key problems for the women.

6.3.2. Dealing with employment

Many women indicated that those who were unemployed look upon employed women with envy because they believed working women experienced social contacts equivalent to those of the former collectives. In addition, employed women were seen as achieving something and having a good self-esteem. Those women who were still working did, however, not confirm all these issues. Although being part of the labour force did make women feel more socially integrated and purposeful, they did not always experience a good level of social interaction. In addition, being employed did not prevent women from experiencing de-qualification either. It transpires that even those who were in leading positions in the LPG or had university degrees had to accept work below their qualifications and capabilities. Some correspondents noted that they had academic degrees prior to unification but became fork-lift-truck-driver (075), for example, or receptionist at a motel (097).

Whilst work was, in part, 'responsible' for the introduction of new norms such as competition, stress, dishonesty, and egoism, lack of work reinforced the importance and expression of material values and, consequently, jealousy in the village. The focus groups discussed this situation and believed that there was much explicit jealousy against those in employment. Consequently, working women could be ignored and excluded from the few social encounters that did take place. The key-informants confirmed increasing antipathies in the villages (or in some cases upholding and reinforcing pre-unification conflicts). This observation reiterates that villagers themselves did not take initiatives to reconnect with each other and recreate the togetherness they claim to miss, but instead reinforced the separation.

In spite of their problems, it was clear to the working women that they were advantaged not only because of their employment and regular income. Firstly, working contributed to women's mobility, whilst secondly, they had the opportunity to understand other people's norms and values at the workplace. Thirdly, it was possible for working women to attend training courses provided by the workplace in order to keep and develop their skills to the rapidly changing market requirements. Finally, most employed women respondents took greater interest in their environment, provided more constructive criticism on policy and regional development issues, and were more socially active than unemployed women.

6.3.3. Opting for pre-retirement

As outlined above, those workers between 55 and 65 years could be offered the opportunity to take early retirement. Doris, who was responsible for the organisation of such lay-offs in her LPG in Wüste, explained this process:

> "The generation who were 50 and 60 years old lost most of their feathers, those who have toiled for 30 or 35 years in the LPG. Women who were 55 could, however, get early retirement and practically everyone in this region, all those women who were 55 [went into early retirement]. But even when we had already begun to make people redundant, those who were about to be 55, we said, 'okay, you'll get a short term workers income so you'll be able to get early retirement [when you're 55]'. We tried everything for those women so they could somehow benefit from the regulation, just to secure them. And then we tried to apply another regulation for older farmers who had been working for 10 years and so forth. We tried to use this predominantly for the women. We sometimes think we are acting too socially conscious, but what can we do? We are all *one* village."

Other co-operatives could, however, not offer such generous transitional benefits to their workers, particularly if they themselves anticipated financial problems in the privatisation process. Hence, where the option of offering early retirement was not available, some women faced a humiliating experience as the discussion in Wilmersdorf showed:

> *Monika*: "As a pensioner, many wanted to continue working. But now it just means that you have to go."
> *Susanne*: "In the GDR, pensioners worked, too."
> *Monika*: "And earned money! And today..."
> *Susanne*: "Today they have to go into early retirement."
> *Karla*: "Early retirement? 'Altersübergangsgeld' And do you want to know what I got per month? Less than 600 Marks! And for that I have worked my entire life[81] [as a Brigadier]! Not even 600 Marks I got as 'Altersübergangsgeld'."
> *Susanne*: "But isn't there also early retirement?"
> *Karla*: "I was unemployed, just like you. Had to show my face at the '*Arbeitsamt*' for five long years."
> *Monika*: "My God..."

For those workers who could take early retirement and be financially secure, the regulation was not necessarily a favourable option. There was, however, pressure from other workers who feared losing their jobs if those who were old enough did not leave. Hence, some respondents who took early retirement described the unrest and anxiety amongst workers in the LPG. The mayor of Hellern, for instance, said:

> "I went into early retirement in 1992... I really didn't want to and I didn't need to... but then there were arguments amongst the other workers and I overheard them say that I was 55 years old and I would stay whilst younger workers were made redundant. But then I said I don't see the point... I did have the opportunity to go. But I was already 'Brigadier', I was even deputy director and I was supposed to take over one of the new co-operatives. Well, that all didn't work out anymore, because I went into early retirement."

A similar feeling of guilt to remaining employed when being 'old enough' to take early retirement was experienced by the mayor of Wüste as well as several women in the villages who 'took advantage' of this regulation. Some women in this research, however, said they were glad to be pre-retired instead of being unemployed. They explained that they would not know what to do if they were unemployed because they would no longer meet with anybody, whereas now,

they would be accepted within groups such as the 'Volkssolidarität'. These explanations suggest a difference between those employees who were 'relieved' at being made redundant, because there were legal provisions for them, compared with those employees who unwillingly left their workplace whilst old enough to remain within the labour force.

Pre-retired women experienced initial difficulties in coming to terms with the fact that the new society had labelled them 'old enough' to stop working, whereas in the GDR they could have worked until their 70s. At the same time, however, it was socially acceptable for them, as the above quotes demonstrate, or even desirable to exit the workforce. In addition, most villagers maintained membership of the 'Volkssolidarität', a group that was specifically concerned with the interest of that age group and older. Indeed, where such groups existed, many women took part in and contributed to the organisation of monthly meetings and day-trips. As noted above, a number of key informants believed that women of this age group were far more interested in their environment and took more opportunities to occupy themselves than younger women (see also chapter seven). They were more likely to volunteer and more joyful and helpful than younger women.

The outgoing behaviour of older women may, at least in part, be due to the fact that they were more financially secure[82] and could be satisfied with their achieved contributions to society, and their continued social integration. Thus, these women shared similar experiences as in the GDR. Consequently, within their peer group they were more 'equal' and did not experience the social division that took place amongst the younger villagers. The former mayor of Wüste, who was the chair of the 'Volkssolidarität' at the time of the interview, described:

> "This afternoon, I [will meet] with the men and women who are pensioners, or early retired, we have a social afternoon with coffee... it is like occupational therapy and we do this every four weeks. If I don't organise it, the women will come to me and demand it. That generation, the pensioners and early retired people, they are organised [into clubs] and they go on day trips. They don't really feel [like the others]. They only see [that] the pensions were raised after unification and they get by with their pensions. This part of the population is

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[81] This respondent had worked in her LPG for over 30 years.

[82] It must be noted that, although women's pensions were higher after unification than in the GDR, they were still relatively low compared with men's or those of West- Germans. This was due largely to the previously low incomes of women in East Germany (see Gerhard and Veil. 1990, for discussion).

content. But the women who are now at home, [who are] between 30 and 50 years old, they were struck [by unification]... They are not content. "

The creation of short-term employment through government schemes was intended to alleviate the problem in quantitative terms. However, social problems that also needed to be addressed remained largely neglected. The following section outlines key schemes for the provision of short-term employment in the study area.

6.4. Short-term employment measures

Since unification, various programmes have been implemented in order to reduce overall unemployment figures. In the studied region, key programmes are 'ABM', retraining and further qualifications, which address predominantly unemployment benefit recipients, 'work instead of welfare' and 'ARROW' focus on welfare recipients. The following sections mainly discuss ABMs because they are the most relevant measures to women in the studied region.

6.4.1. ABM

Immediately after unification many unemployed women in the region were offered an ABM. The duration of this government-funded short-term employment measure was initially up to two years but, in 1997, as this study was undertaken, a number of ABM only lasted for six to nine months because of budget shortages. At the time of the interviews in July 1997, the number of long-term unemployed had risen significantly in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania and a new regulation was introduced to integrate this particular group more effectively. Thus, rather than being eligible for an ABM after one year of unemployment as previously, the waiting period was lengthened to three years.

In general ABMs were located within the communities to assist them in coping with compulsory duties which could otherwise barely be financed by the communities. Hence, work in the 'green sector', e.g. mowing grass, cleaning up parks or maintaining sports fields, was commonly carried out by ABM workers. Employment in the private sector or in profit-making occupations was not allowed under this regulation. Furthermore, the ABM could not compete with employment within the 'first' labour market which normally excluded employment in such

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sectors as residential care. Although social functions, such as the supervision of youth clubs were initially included into some *ABM* projects, these measures became rare. Suggestions for *ABM* measures were offered by the mayors of communities needing assistance, or by one of several 'carriers'. In the district of Achmer, in which all six communities are located, key 'carriers' are 3 'Beschäftigungsgesellschaften', the 'Demokratischer Frauenbund', the 'Arbeitslosenverband', the 'Pommerania', the 'Landfrauenverband' and the 'Bauernverband'.

The director of the '*Arbeitsamt*' monitors all *ABM* descriptions and verifies or rejects them. The '*Arbeitsamt*' then checks computerised files to detect suitable 'clients' for an *ABM*. A key denominator is the length of unemployment, but three additional factors are usually considered as well: (1) mobility if the *ABM* is outside of the community; (2) qualifications if the *ABM* requires specific skills and; (3) availability of childcare. Once a client (i.e. the unemployed) has obtained an *ABM*, s/he receives a work contract similar to that of regular employment. This includes probation, a period of notice and health insurance.

With regards to transportation, a key respondent from one of the 'Beschäftigungsgesellschaften' believed that *ABM* were normally close enough to the client's village to either cycle or walk, if s/he was determined to work. Childcare, in a similar way, was not considered a problem according to the informant. Both mobility and childcare were discussed by other respondents (focus groups, correspondents and other key informants) and opinions diverged considerably. Some women, for instance, did not take an *ABM* because it was six kilometres away from the village and they were concerned about their personal safety when cycling. Child care was not readily available in most villages and women often lacked transportation to take their children to other places. It was also not uncommon for private arrangements within the village to be unsuccessful. One woman, for instance, reported that there was a former kindergarten teacher in the village who would have had the qualifications for child care and who was unemployed at the time. However, the teacher's attitude was "why should [another woman] get an *ABM*, if I look after [her] child, whilst I still don't have work?" (152).

6.4.1.1. The problem of motivation

From the perspective of the 'Arbeitsamt', the most common problem for the efficacy of ABMs was low productivity, "if one can speak of productivity at all" (108), when people lacked both discipline and motivation to work. Low levels of motivation lead, in turn, to low quality of work. Clients took many breaks, did not concentrate on their task, and conveyed a negative image of 'Arbeit Bis Mittag' (work until noon) to observers.

The problem of discipline during the work process was common in most villages. Often, work specified in the ABM proposal could not be carried out due to weather conditions, or even appeared to be useless. The mayor of Wüste thus remarked:

> "There are some ABM available, but how are we supposed to use them? We've got a few in the village now, but the workers were told, there is nothing to do, they should go to the park. ... I say, we don't need to go to the park and sweep up the leaves, they rot by themselves! It's useless work." (012)

On the other hand, there were tasks which seemed both useful and necessary to the mayors (and often the carriers as well) but were not approved of by the 'Arbeitsamt'. Most key informants who were involved with ABMs complained about the inflexibility of the measures and their management and one respondent concluded that, in part, it is a bureaucratic power play whereby the director of the 'Arbeitsamt' "play[ed] a little God" (131). Invariably, there was no 'quality control' of ABMs to evaluate social and other problems and to determine the suitability of subsequent ABM measures.

With regards to the motivation of clients, the 'Arbeitsamt' noted that there are differences between qualified people and unqualified people as well as between women and men. Commonly, higher levels of qualification coincided with higher levels of motivation. Furthermore, women were generally more enthusiastic than men. These observations were confirmed by all respondents involved in the management and monitoring of ABMs who believed that the more qualified people, for example, see more sense in ABMs.

It must be noted also that more qualified clients were more likely to obtain an ABM in 'leading' positions or at organisational levels such as project co-ordinators,

attendants, or foremen and forewomen. Their positions involved more diversity and responsibility and were thus more rewarding. Clients with lower qualifications were more likely to be placed in 'green' *ABMs* which have a lower status. These types of *ABM* would inherently have a lower potential of satisfaction because they were exclusively outdoors, regardless of the weather, involve hard manual work and imposed no challenge to the clients themselves. This was reinforced further by the fact that, once the *ABM* year was over, the efforts made by clients were literally 'overgrown' due to discontinuity of the programme. Hence, the clients' work efforts and the output were not rewarded adequately.

However, the *'Arbeitsamt'* indicated that this discussion of work tasks was predominantly due to women's own choice. They stated that those women with qualifications within agriculture were more likely to ask for a 'green' *ABM* than for further qualifications or retraining. They preferred doing manual work much like they did in their LPG rather than turning to 'mental' activities. The underlying reasons for women's 'choice' was, however, not explored further.

Women's preference for work they were familiar with can be interpreted as both a sign of low confidence and self-esteem, as well as a desire for some continuity in their lives. Low confidence was also expressed by their fear of examinations that could be taken within their *ABM*. Many women were concerned about obtaining further qualifications but remaining unemployed nonetheless. This attitude conformed to the aforementioned feeling of guilt experienced by women for 'failing' professionally. In so doing, women complied with and reproduced the socially constructed stereotype of 'unemployed'.

Although some women were initially enthusiastic when starting an *ABM*, many 'carriers' observed a decrease in motivation. The majority of clients worked well in the beginning half of the project. In the second half, however, they became more depressed and disillusioned as they envisaged the end of their *ABM*, and their return to isolation. One key informant explained that women felt that they were neither needed nor contributed significantly to a common product when participating in an *ABM*. Rather, they believed that their placement within an *ABM* merely served to enhance employment statistics. Contrary to perceptions of the *'Arbeitsamt'*, one key informant reinforced that women *did* want to take

responsibility when working. He believed, though, that it should have been made clear to women that they were a constant labour potential rather than a 'fire brigade'. This opinion was expressed by other key informants as well. A discussion amongst key informants illustrated this:

> *027:* "The labour market is saturated."
> *026:* "And we discovered- in the West they called that ... industrial reserve-troops, the famous women's workplaces..."
> *027:* "Exactly."
> *026:* "In all of the defective areas."
> *027:* "Yes."
> *026:* "If the economy was good, they were employed, if it went downhill they were fired."
> *027:* "Finished."

The message conveyed to women by 'society' regarding the 'value' of their work was critical. Although many women had been familiar with labour-intensive manual work outdoors in the GDR, it was 'socially valuable' work at the time. Within the contemporary socio-cultural context, women experienced a loss of social status through conducting such 'inferior' work.

The lack of motivation of clients caused the *'Arbeitsamt'* to express a critical attitude toward a number of their clients. Clients' attitudes and their behaviour towards staff in the *'Arbeitsamt'* was perceived as negative. Most people had already resigned and thus not thought about what kind of work they wanted to do when they visited the *'Arbeitsamt'*[83]. In addition, they were also very aggressive and expected the *'Arbeitsamt'* to find work for them rather than become active in their own job search. Once offered an *ABM* few clients thought about their 'personal benefit' in terms of "testing new employment opportunities and skills with their new job" (108), and few had an image of their future job prospects. A key informant claimed:

> "The easier and 'cheaper' an *ABM* is designed the better. If they have to work 4 hours out of 8, that's okay for them. The sort of power one needs [to get ahead] nowadays is usually lacking." (108)

Other respondents expressed greater sympathy and explained that *ABMs* were of such limited and inflexible nature that there was little scope for exploring the kind

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[83] Clients were required to pay a visit to the *'Arbeitsamt'* every three months to discuss progress in their job situation. If they choose to ignore their visits, clients are penalised with a loss of some of their benefits.

of jobs available on the 'first' labour market. They did not regard the 'green' work predominantly conducted within *ABMs* as a realistic employment prospect. Furthermore, essential skills for job survival such as stress management, competition, presentation and rhetoric were entirely absent from *ABMs*. A NGO key informant criticised the *'Arbeitsamt'* for its reluctance to accommodate problems of their clients sufficiently. She described:

"I noticed that some villages have extremely poor public transport links, and that the greatest problems are with such villages, because [women] just cannot get away, if they haven't got their own car. There is one bus early in the morning, then the school bus midday and again one in the evening. That is particularly bad and affects school, shopping, doctor's visits, journeys to the *'Arbeitsamt'*, because that is in Achmer and from the villages almost a journey around the world. They travel from morning 'til evening just to go to the *'Arbeitsamt'*, where they *have* to go. In addition, they pay about 20 Marks for public transport... At one point one thought about having the *'Arbeitsamt'* come to Lengerich [because it is much closer], but...the *'Arbeitsamt'* is not interested... they say it costs them more... but we, or the communities, can support that and offer rooms... and I mean, every insurance person has a laptop nowadays, [having access to the clients' data] couldn't be a problem... To us it sounds like a bad excuse. It really shouldn't be a problem. The offices here are also networked and surely a link could be made available for their computers. It CAN only be a bad excuse. You know, it is only the case of seeing staff, say 'good day', show one's face every quarter of a year. Well, they shouldn't have to go all the way to Achmer for that? And then [the *'Arbeitsamt'*] says offensive things like 'They have all the time in the world, they can travel.' If I think of a mother who lives far away, she's got three kids to care for of which the youngest is only three years old. If she's got to travel to the *'Arbeitsamt'* regularly, where is she supposed to leave her child? So, she's got to take it and be on the road for about 12 hours!" (050)

6.4.1.2. Compulsory work

'Arbeitsamt' staff were dismayed to see that a considerable number of people had become very particular about images of their work. According to them, instead of being grateful for obtaining a job, some people turned down work if the pay or working hours were too low. Staff interpreted this as lack of knowledge about the real nature of the labour market, i.e. availability of work and incomes. Clients had unrealistic expectations of their suitability for a job and the employers' requirements.

"The problem is and will remain lack of employment. Those who think that they are able to choose [are foolish]. Only if there is pressure on them to lose unemployment benefit [if they don't accept work] and [consequently] slip into welfare something happens." (108).

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Hence, according to legal regulations, clients had to take any kind of work if offered or they were penalised and lost some unemployment benefit. The focus group in Schinkel discussed what it meant to have to do 'any kind of work':

> *Olga*: "Today, it is worse [than in the GDR]. You *have* to work as well."
> *Hedwig*: "Yes, just that women don't get work anymore."
> *Olga*: "And women don't earn enough to..."
> *Hedwig*: "But who does work has loads of work."
> *Liesel*: "But it's not enough for 4 million [unemployed]."
> *Olga*: "And if you then consider the sort of work that they do offer you. They just want to exploit you. I know, we went to the *'Arbeitsamt'* and they were looking for cleaning personnel for toilets, somewhere near the border, or something. Well, I won't go in shifts, nightshifts and weekends for 8 Marks[84] an hour? Am a stupid?"
> *Liesel*: "At least you can drive."
> *Olga*: "Nonetheless, who's going to work for 8 Marks an hour? Nightshifts, weekends and holidays?"
> *Margarethe*: "And then toilets..."
> *Olga*: "Well, for 8 Marks an hour, that is exploitation. If they would pay me properly, I would do that work."
> *Hedwig*: "I don't know, I wouldn't like to do it."
> *Olga*: "Well, somebody has got to do it and if its kept clean properly. But one shouldn't have to be exploited in that way."

Some key informants other than at the *'Arbeitsamt'* criticised the regulation that unemployed have to take any kind of work or be penalised. One of the women's officers from the political parties, for instance, was concerned with the cost of travel time for part-time work, for car maintenance and petrol, as well as child care, if women earned a small income only. Furthermore, some employers paid less than women would have received if their unemployment benefit had continued. In addition, if women became unemployed again after low paid work, they received considerably less unemployment benefit. Third, formal work was not perceived as secure and continuous as women's unemployment benefit and thus many women preferred the predictability of the latter if 'proper' work was not worth the personal expense.

Another respondent, in the same conversation, stated that women should regard employment as more than merely a cost- benefit calculation. Once this first step was taken and women became more mobile and self-confident, employment, even if it was not a 'dream job', could provide a gateway to better employment. One of the correspondents in this research, however, was amongst those women who

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[84] 8 Marks: approximately £2.70

took this 'initial step' several times. After finding employment, the businesses she worked for went bankrupt and she was made redundant. In spite of suffering from loss of self-confidence every time, she continued to try despite her disillusionment. Many women with less self-confidence at the outset of this process were, however, not willing to go through this frustrating experience without any external support mechanisms.

Key informants from NGOs claimed that more effort should be directed at all times toward training measures which help unemployed women to maintain and develop skills in accordance with the rapidly changing labour market. They acknowledged that it was essential for these women to remain informed and interested. This demand seemed, however, almost impossible to both the key informants in this study and the women respondents themselves, due to an expression of the total apathy felt by unemployed women.

6.4.1.3. The social value of ABMs

Aside from the importance of *ABM* as the only employment opportunity for a majority of jobless people in the near future, there were non-material values of an *ABM* in addition to those mentioned above. The first of two key functions was the provision of social care and recreational opportunities provided by *ABM*s in rural villages which would otherwise be 'dead'. The establishment of social services in the community through *ABM*s was a controversial issue for several reasons. On the one hand, information or consultation services, recreational opportunities and youth clubs were amongst projects that were highly commended. In most villages, these were the *only* services available to villagers, especially those who were not mobile, i.e. many women and pensioners. On the other hand, the limited length of *ABM*s meant that staff changed every year and made the development of trusting relationships between the consultant (or youth co-ordinator) and the 'villagers' difficult. In other cases, the projects ran out of funds after one year and ceased to exist. After the *ABM*s were discontinued, many women concluded that rural areas were not 'worth' being allocated 'proper' services to assist residents with everyday problems. Women respondents gave examples of the contradictions between services in the GDR and the new Germany and evaluated, for instance, the 'care' for young people by the State. Whereas before unification children and youngsters were at the core of social policies, it appeared to women that they

were now a burden and only 'worth' attention by means of a sporadic *ABM* initiative.

The second benefit of *ABM*s was the creation of a space within the rural village for communication. Even though income, continuity of unemployment benefit and pension claims were important to the clients, a considerable number of people, especially women, looked for social contacts through an *ABM*. They were looking for a framework in which to develop a sense of collectivity again, a place to talk, or simply a way to get out of the house. The following examples of the meaning of *ABM*s were taken from group discussions in Wilmersdorf and Charlottenburg.

> *Bettina*: "What does having an *ABM* mean to you?"
> *Susanne*: "Money."
> *Monika*: "Well, to get out, money as well, but primarily to get together with people, not to be isolated. I am just not the sort of person who would want to stand on the street and chat with people."
>
> *Marlies*: "We are mixed with people... one is looking forward to it and one begins to blossom again."

Collectivity is an issue the '*Arbeitsamt*' commented on as well. For example, people with alcohol problems could gain much from being integrated into a group and learning to adopt a daily rhythm again. An *ABM* thus provided them with some stability, new knowledge and new skills. Another key informant added that a number of alcoholics began an alcohol-detoxification-programme after doing an *ABM*. Nevertheless, the value of an *ABM* was not regarded as equivalent to that of work in the 'first' labour market. Getrude in Wilmersdorf, for instance, spoke of herself as unemployed even whilst she was doing an *ABM*. Other women conveyed a similar impression by speaking of the vicious cycle they were in of unemployment and *ABM* and the lack of personal fulfilment. One respondent said:

> "It really makes me sick, literally, every time one goes to the '*Arbeitsamt*' and hears there nothing and we won't get anything. [In the GDR] one worked the whole day, from morning 'til evening, one had the kids, one had the household and now ... we are at sitting at home. And if one gets an *ABM*, for a few hours only, I don't know, it just doesn't fulfil me." (013)

Many women themselves did not consider an *ABM* as a step towards employment on the 'first' labour market but a restricted experience of 'income' and social integration for one year. Whilst still in an *ABM*, women were already looking

forward to their next *ABM* opportunity after another year of unemployment. At the same time, they feared that they might not get an *ABM* again. One reason was, that in their eyes, 'unfair, i.e. subjective, criteria' were applied which determined when someone obtained an *ABM*. Another reason was the fact that *ABM* were renounced to be significantly reducing in numbers due to lack of government expenditure. Even though there were more *ABM* available at the time of the interviews, all respondents noted that this was due only to the forthcoming elections in September 1997. Key informants discuss the dilemma of *ABMs*:

> 027: "The terrible thing about *ABMs* is, that with the start, they already have the dismissal in the heart... [and] I know exactly, with the start of an *ABM*, that after a little while 10 to 15 to 20% [of clients] stop due to illness."
> 025: "Yes."
> 027: "And then the groups are small. But the costs are continued. Then... well, many don't identify with the hard work they have to do, even though they used to work very hard in the LPG and, funny enough, did identify with their work then."
> 026: "Oh yes, but then it was *their* work."
> 027: "It was their work. Now it is aid, support, as one says. And for that support, they have to work so hard, it is too hard. And we have no reason to dispute it because more money is funnelled to this region, purchasing power increases and the cycle of middle-sized businesses is stimulated in that way. But in my eyes, these measures, that are so sporadic and without plan or aim, contribute to the disabling of this region... the disabling... unfortunately... I see it in a very critical manner after I used to be so proud, here as a civil servant, of every workplace created within the 'second' labour market. I am still willing to create some, but I am definitely not proud anymore."

6.4.3. Retraining and further qualifications

Measures which were carried out as 'retraining and further qualification' measures were commonly organised by the *'Arbeitsamt'*, although there were some businesses or other organisations within the private sector who offered further qualifications as well. Despite a higher number of female job-seekers, as stated above, the majority of such measures benefited men. This was largely due to requirements by employers addressing the *'Arbeitsamt'* and current developments in the market economy. Although there were no courses offered specifically to women some were occupied predominantly by women such as domestic economy, secretarial work or tele-work. As such, a change in the classic divide between male and female occupations was not aimed for. Some key informants explained that a number of courses and occupations could not be taken by women if they had no child care. In addition, some women did not qualify for

certain retraining courses if their husbands income was 'too high'. Staff at the 'Arbeitsamt', claimed however, that women themselves 'chose' courses such as the above and thus confirmed existing patterns 'voluntarily'. There was also a significant trend for men to be present more numerously in former female sectors, largely because employers asked specifically for men, and many commercial clerks or administrative jobs were now more often occupied by men jeopardising women's job prospects even more (see chapter eight).

Educational measures were intended to encourage participants to explore and develop their personal skills and job prospects. Clients were usually supplied with basic job application techniques, they completed a placement within the 'first' labour market and in some cases also learnt 'new' techniques such as management skills and word processing. As mentioned above, women generally benefited to a lesser extent from these efforts. Reasons for this unequal distribution included personal barriers, such as self esteem, and external barriers such as accessibility of retraining courses and funding. Women also faced more logistic problems when founding a business. A key issue was that banks granted loans more hesitantly to women than to men (von Laufenberg-Beerman, 1997). Furthermore, many women feared the risk implied in becoming one's own employer, including financial risks and time management problems, especially when they had a family. Overall retraining measures rarely lead to employment in the studied area. Key informants explained that the majority of clients were retrained for a period of 1.5-2 years before being unemployed again. Furthermore, they estimated that perhaps one out of ten participants obtained a job.

6.4.4. 'Arbeit statt Sozialhilfe'/ ARROW

A number of groups lost their right to unemployment benefit under the new system, including the long-term unemployed, bankrupt business owners, pensioners or employees with low incomes, graduates and apprentices without work experiences, or young people with no qualifications, all of whom receive social welfare. Even though a minority of welfare recipients could participate in ABMs, most were offered other programmes by the 'Sozialamt' instead.

Since 1.1.1998 several projects were offered to social welfare recipients similar to the UK's 'New Deal'. Within these projects, welfare recipients conducted up to 14

hours of non-profit work within the community. They received their regular welfare plus 2.- DM per hour (i.e. approximately £10 per week). If a client refused participation, their welfare was cut by 25%. These projects were seen as a time of probation before beginning a larger project called 'Arbeit statt Sozialhilfe'. Those who were successful would then either acquire retraining or an *ABM*. Up to 5% of all *ABM* could be offered to welfare recipients. Most projects in the context of 'Arbeit statt Sozialhilfe', or a similar project 'Hilfe zur Arbeit', were allocated for a length of two years. Often they contained 50% education, which could also lead to qualifications for participants. Youths, for example, obtained a 'Hauptschulabschluss' which qualified them for an apprenticeship. However, the completion of internships within the projects was often hampered by a lack of available placements. Due to the numerous programmes offered to occupy the unemployed most businesses were 'saturated'. This became, in fact, a problem beyond employment measures since a considerable number of businesses had no other incentives to create placements or provide training and qualifications for school graduates.

Initially, many clients experienced significant problems since they needed to adapt to regular working hours and re-arrange their domestic tasks accordingly. Nevertheless, once they succeeded in the probation phase of a project, as the project manager herself explained, they were often more enthusiastic *ABM* workers than recipients of unemployment benefit. The project manager speculated that welfare recipients experienced an *ABM* as reward for previous efforts, they felt they 'earned' the *ABM* and wanted to demonstrate their worthiness in a project. From the perspective of the 'Sozialamt', recipients of unemployment benefit had an expectation of obtaining an *ABM* regardless of their personal initiative. Their motivation was therefore not one of personal attainment. The status of welfare recipients was raised to that of unemployment benefit recipient whereby the former experienced a *positive* motivation. The 'regular' unemployed were, instead, penalised if not participating and thus experienced a *negative* motivation.

In addition, personal contact between social welfare workers and clients was better and more personal than with staff at the '*Arbeitsamt*'. Social welfare centres were located at a lower administrative level rather than the district and people

were seen more frequently. In most cases, social workers knew the personal background of their clients and could address them directly when a project was offered to them. Hence, clients were not matched to computer criteria as with *ABMs*. Furthermore, the project manager believed there was a greater level of trust by the client, because they had already obtained help with housing, banking, schooling, and other everyday issues from the 'Sozialamt' before.

Another difference between unemployment benefit recipients and welfare recipients was the level of support obtained *throughout* the project. Staff at the 'Sozialamt' believed that was essential to provide social care on a daily basis if someone had been at home for a considerable amount of time. Hence, help was provided with developing a daily routine which included work. In order to alleviate transport problems, additional bus services and taxis were organised during the project. Neither of these supporting services were offered to people on unemployment benefit. In contrast, the attitude of the *Arbeitsamt* and *ABM* 'carriers' was that those people should be mobile themselves if they wanted to obtain work and therefore, the provision of additional bus services would not improve their chances of employment. With regards to social services, it was assumed that the unemployed were less dependent and more informed than welfare recipients and had a more defined daily routine. Key informants from non-governmental organisations disputed this notion. Instead they argued that most unemployed "let themselves go" (050) and lost their personal discipline as well. Many unemployed, therefore needed supporting mechanisms like those provided for welfare recipients. With regard to this, the welfare project manager believed, however, that "who really is in need of help does come and get some [help]" (136), and she believed that those villagers who were dispirited perhaps only felt sorry for themselves.

Finally, the project manager commented on participants' motivation and reported similar observations as other key informants, that women as a group were more ambitious than men. At the same time, a considerable number of men had alcohol problems. She believed that women were often more encouraged to participate because they felt greater responsibility for the family rather than just for themselves.

6.4.5. Adequacy of current measures

The 'Sozialamt' estimated that approximately 90% of welfare recipients in the region were involved in one of the above projects. The remaining 10% were those who could not work because they were too old, sick or had alcohol problems. A number of other people, she added, were not inclined to work, preferring instead to live 'freely' on benefit, rather than going to work. Although the outcome of the 'welfare projects' were very positive, the welfare project manager had reservations about *ABM*. She criticised that often, less work was done in such projects but more payment received than in 'real' employment, because businesses could not afford the costs. Furthermore, people working in *ABM* were 'spoiled' because they did not, as mentioned above, practice requirements of the 'first' labour market such as working under pressure and coping with stress.

Key informants also speculated, like women respondents, that after the high availability of *ABM* in the pre-election phase, funds would considerably decrease. There were numerous criticisms about the under-utilisation and under-estimation of the value of the employment schemes. But a predominant concern was that the majority of people in the region, and in the villages in particular, were *dependent* on *ABM* for their employment. Key informants believed that *ABMs* should be improved further rather than reduced. More education within an *ABM* was suggested to maintain people's mental mobility and thus maintain a capable and skilled resource for the 'first' labour market. Furthermore, suggestions were made to transform *ABM* gradually into full employment following a probation period to obtain quality achievements rather than merely an occupation. Social projects especially could contribute to the revival of villages and the beginning of new initiatives. In the public sector, for example schools, 'social' *ABMs* could help reducing problems such as lack of discipline, misuse of drugs and increase of crime. In addition, difficulties at the pupils' homes could be addressed. In order to provide 'serious' support and establish trust between the pupils and the social worker, informants believed, however, *ABMs* needed to become full-time jobs. The long term effect would be further enhanced if projects were more flexible and allowed a response to changing needs in a village.

Ongoing problems such as the lack of motivation, the 'wait-and-see' attitude and lack of mobility amongst the villagers, as discussed above, could also be

addressed by a full-time community worker responsible for the organisation of social activities, networking, basic care and problem solving and potentially seeking sources of funding for village projects. For instance, Altmann (1997) analysed the outcome of the work of community workers in a case study in Brandenburg. The study concluded that the activities of such community workers could be vital to the overall identification of residents with their village and contributed to an increased attraction of the village to outsiders. One of the key respondents in the research for this thesis envisaged a similar position at the community or district level to co-ordinate the development of regional Local Agenda 21 projects. Although both the community worker and a Local Agenda 21 co-ordinator could not contribute to the creation of work, they could develop and strengthen social relations in the village, help villagers achieve a higher personal well-being and thus contribute to the prevention of out-migration. The women in the focus groups supported the need for community workers by arguing that they needed someone to push them, in spite of the fact that they had remained static themselves The issue of participation in the socio-political process will be discussed in chapter seven.

6.5. Conclusion

This chapter discussed unemployment as the key theme arising from the complexity of experiences encountered by women after 'the Wende'. Women's position in the GDR workforce was determined by gender-differentiated patterns established by the state within formal and informal employment. Nonetheless, the workplace had been the predominant factor in the development of women's identity. Norms and meanings formed through collective living and working were the foundation of women's participation in both socio-political and socio-economic life at the local level. In addition, women associated their involvement in the workforce with economic independence and social integration. Such norms and meanings formed in their past lives became the basis for women's evaluation of their contentment and happiness in their 'second' lives.

Contemporary Western political and economic structures have also produced a gender-differentiated labour market. Few women have been able to break through such structures due to widely practised discrimination, lack of adequate qualifications as well as both restricted social and physical mobility. Although

short-term employment measures were designed to alleviate the pressures on the labour market, they have not contributed to the maintenance of women's potentials as social and political agents and as a labour resource capable of developing with new innovations and requirements of the workplace. Instead, post-unification transformations led to a diversification and social stratification at the local level. Whereas women in the GDR largely shared common experiences in their everyday lives, the level of women's involvement with the 'first' or 'second' labour market, or the retreat from the workforce through retirement has produced a variety of contradicting experiences that contributed to women's socio-political exclusion, lack of networking and lack of identification with the 'New Germany'. The following chapter discusses the problems arising from diversification and social exclusion, or withdrawal, for the formation of a local political culture.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RURAL WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF LOCAL DEMOCRACY

7.1. Introduction

As discussed in chapter five, German unification was a sudden and unexpected socio-political event for many women in Uecker Randow. Rather than developing a new political framework from within like other post-communist states, East Germany acquired a democratic, market-oriented system that had been experienced and operated successfully in West Germany. At the time, it appeared to be inconsequential to evaluate the appropriateness of the existing frameworks to the East German context. A hasty unification ignored the full extent of underlying problems of the GDR economy and was overshadowed by a social and economic crisis (see also chapter five). Former Chancellor Kohl attempted to justify the delay in the predicted, vast economic development that was expected in the GDR:

> "The reason for the delay of the expected boom is related to the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union. We didn't actually know how bankrupt the GDR was in reality. Many of us were fooled by the legend of the GDR as 'tenth industrial nation of the World'. Furthermore, it wasn't obvious to us, how closely the GDR industry was linked to that of the 'RGW' countries [...] it was dependent on exports to the Soviet Union. [...] When I met [Gorbachev], I asked 'What about that rumour of the putsch?' I can still see him laughing as he says 'They'll never putsch!' Four weeks later [...] the Soviet Union was dissolved and the trade deliveries terminated. It was impossible to shift the production assigned for export to the 'RGW' and make it competitive for the world market over night." (in: NBI, 1998)

The shift to a democratic system had thus not produced equality and wealth but instead caused widespread disillusionment and social disparities amongst the 'New' German citizens. The assumption that the market would "efficiently co-ordinate scarce resources" (Przeworski, 1995: 14) and hence solve social problems has not yet materialised in rural East Germany. Moreover, as discussed in chapter two, a number of authors doubt that under current liberal definitions of democracy, the market will ever be able to address such social problems adequately.

A significant feature of the 'democratic' transformation in East Germany was that the process of developing effective democratic citizenship was gender-differentiated. The political prioritisation of the market and the proposition of blanket policies to alleviate social problems has neglected the need to empower socially, economically and politically marginalised groups, such as women. Though some respondents in this research claimed to have observed slight positive changes recently, the majority of women remain detached from public life and the political process.

In some villages, people began the process of social organisation, through such vehicles as the 'Volkssolidarität' and the 'Landfrauenverband'. At different levels, key actors called for greater interest by, and involvement of women, and consequently, greater visibility of them as political actors. Political representatives for women's issues, equal opportunities officers and chairwomen of regional women's organisations recognised the urgent need for women to become more involved in the socio-political process, but experienced difficulties in overcoming women's geographic isolation and persistent lethargic behaviour. Some of these key actors found it incomprehensible that women, after having been very much involved in local activities, have withdrawn from the public sphere to such a dramatic extent. Others justified this behaviour because fewer unemployed women had support mechanisms to help them cope with the changes in their lives. A third group of actors believed that it was time for women to become mobilised and take initiatives themselves. However, the reason given by many women, that they 'didn't dare', received little sympathy amongst these respondents.

This chapter discusses women's own experiences of their integration into the socio-political process in the GDR at the local level, and illustrates their 'problem with democracy' today. It shows that women's key interest is in 'the social' whilst they actively abstain from 'the political'. It continues by discussing existing opportunities for women to become both socially and politically active in the six villages. Finally, the chapter tries to evaluate if the lack of women's socio-political participation is due to institutional, practical and/ or ideological barriers at the local level, or of women's indifference.

7.2. Democracy, gender and the village

Women initially supported post-unification changes, symbolised by then-Chancellor Kohl's promise of 'blooming landscapes', and 46% of female voters elected the CDU (Sourbut, 1997). At first, numerous women in urban areas were present in popular movements which focused on creating a "better GDR". But as negotiations about unification were consolidated, women increasingly "dropped out" of political activism (Kolinsky, 1994). Promises made during the early phases of unification, the so-called "wild times of the *Wende*", where "everything was still possible" (029) remained unfulfilled. Some women had been eager to become part of new democratic decision-making in towns (010), but soon realised that "everything was possible" only in conjunction with sufficient capital or 'the right' connections. One correspondent who was active for years since 1989 gave up her political engagement after becoming thoroughly disillusioned:

> "At first I thought I could achieve something with like-minded people... but I learnt that in politics, one has to bend oneself very far to achieve anything at all, especially if it is against the established political parties. I felt that the cost of activism and its benefits bore no relation to each other." (088)

Most villagers observed that life after unification had become very quiet, or even come to a complete halt, and socio-political activism was minimal. Although some women in the research said that "colour was added to [their lives]" (076) after unification, most women merely experienced a different shade of grey. "Everything is better, but nothing is good" wrote one correspondent (096). Few people expressed interest in reviving local activities. The quickest and most obvious reason for this reluctance, as suggested by the women in the research, was unemployment. However, if women's views are compared with those of key informants and with findings obtained from earlier studies in other post-communist and capitalist countries, a range of other features were significant, too. Graham and Regulska (1997) summarised four key factors preventing women from participating in the political process: (1) women adhered to "long-time habits of socialization" (p.6) into passive behaviour; (2) women were encouraged by political rhetoric to stay at home as caretakers of the family; (3) traditionally group interests represented male interests and; (4) patriarchal political structures

continued through the change from socialism to capitalism and suppressed the articulation of women's interests. The findings from this research reveal a similarly diverse picture in which past experiences and expectations intermingle with women's interpretations of and behaviour within the 'new world', the FRG.

Ignorance of women's issues or 'practical politics' (see chapter two) by those already in power was also evident at the local level in the studied area. Moreover, many women themselves refrained from claiming greater priority for women's issues because they considered other issues to be more urgent. As noted in chapter two, social resources such as housing, education, safety, and the environment can be examples of 'practical politics' as well as the redistribution of access to such resources, all of which are significant concerns to women in Uecker Randow as well. Their unemployed status, and poor prospects for re-entering the labour market increased their social isolation and the danger of poverty. Furthermore, their relative geographic distance from services and existing interest groups left them detached from new social innovations and participation in political processes. Their negative visions of the future were further enhanced by a fear of an unsafe future, which was due, at least in part, to the increase of criminal offences and neo-fascist violence (see chapter five).

It is notable that there are two different perspectives on women's integration into the democratic process. On the one hand, the women in the studied villages were disillusioned through first-hand experience of economic and social hardship. There was a considerable scepticism amongst those who were affected by the problems of democratic reform compared with the faith amongst those who trusted in the proven benefits of reform, i.e. policy-makers. Although this is perhaps a conflict likely to be reduced in the course of the reform process, the conflict may be more difficult to overcome since it is evident at the personal rather than institutional level, i.e. through yet unresolved social barriers between East and West Germans. The fact that those affected by reforms are likely to be East Germans reinforces the sense of colonisation by the West which further strengthens social 'dis-unification'. The next part of this chapter will focus on women's experiences of local integration prior to unification and in contrast to contemporary developments.

7.3. Remembering integration in the GDR

In the focus group interviews as well as in the correspondence, women often claimed to have experienced more democracy and integration in the GDR than they do today. This experience contrasts with a general notion of oppression in the

socialist regime exercised through the State (see also Yuval-Davis, 1997). Means of control were, for instance, (1) rigid policing, most notably through the Stasi; (2) control through the school system; (3) organised working and living in collectives (see chapter five) or; (4) a system of insurance passes which contained the dates of compulsory doctors visits as well as donations made to aid for other communist states. The accounts of the women in this research were not, however, overshadowed by memories of fear from oppression or control. Rather, women remembered and treasured the notion that they felt they had a voice and were listened to.

7.3.1. Local groups in the GDR

Many key informants commented on the fact that women were normally very active in both the organisation of and participation in social activities in the GDR. Most women themselves remembered being very active, participating in clubs, most commonly the 'DFD', the 'German Soviet Friendship (DSF)' and the 'Elternzirkel' at their children's schools. Some villages also had a village club, the 'Red Cross', the 'Women's Firebrigade' or, for senior citizens, the 'Volkssolidarität'. With regard to Party membership few of the respondents stated that they were actually members. They pointed to the fact that only those women who were in senior positions, such as main accountant or brigade leader in the LPG, mayoress and kindergarten teacher, had been pressured to join the Party in order to gain promotion. The women conveyed the impression that everyone in the village was active in some way, not least because they had no real choice. When asked during the interview, if they were not bothered by the number of compulsory meetings, women admitted that it could be too much to join each of the meetings The group in Charlottenburg discussed this:

> *Herta*: " I must be honest, sometimes it was a bit too much."
> *Heidrun*: (laughs) "Yes."

Herta: "I came home at six or seven, the lorry came [to pick us up] to the Party meeting in Bramsche. So we got into the truck to Bramsche, and I came home at ten. That wasn't so good. But once we were there it was okay."

Martha: "But you couldn't stay at home."

[...]

Bettina: "What would have happened had you not gone?"

Tilly: "Nothing."

Heidrun: "Well, if you'd never ever go ... in a whole year... you'd probably have been on trial."

Herta:: "Yes."

Brigitte: "Yes."

[...]

Tilly: "But it wasn't bad, we always stayed longer to talk."

Another key informant also complained about the duplications of political propaganda at the meetings:

"We had the DFD. But [the groups were] all a bit scattered. We were given a task by the Party... then we [dealt with that theme] in the 'German-Soviet-Friendship', in the FDJ, in the DFD, the Farmer's Party. We didn't manage to find one organiser for all groups. Each of them did things by themselves... sometimes, one went to a meeting [and thought:] 'Damn, I heard the same thing at another meeting! Couldn't they have done it together?'" (116)

Nonetheless, the majority of women recall predominantly happy experiences both at work and through social events as well as regular day-trips or theatre outings.

7.3.2. Contributions to society in the GDR

Aside from large LPG celebrations and regular group activities, there were also infrequent 'voluntary' activities such as the so-called 'Sabottnik'. Usually in spring and autumn, the LPG leadership organised a 'Sabottnik' in order to clean up the village. Most women recall joviality when working together and, after the task, the preparation of a barbecue. Only when I asked what would happen if women declined to participate did it transpire that, in fact, all residents were expected to go. Those who 'chose' not to participate were required to do extra shifts, a 'Fehlschicht', which commonly implied cleaning farming equipment or similarly undesirable work after hours.

An important part of women's participation in the clubs and committees was also that they felt recognised as public actors. Most focus groups remembered the

regular meetings in the collective to discuss the work process and in general the women respondents claimed to have had more spaces in which they were heard (see also example of brigade book in Appendix V). One respondent said:

> *Herta*: "As women, we made decisions, too. We were organised, not only in the collective, but also in the Party. We always had a say. And one was elected too as a community representative, or a mayor... but today, it's different. As women, we are pushed aside."

In addition to their socio-political involvement in the village described above, women were responsible to a great extent for managing private farming. Many women recalled not only the labour intensive nature of this informal work, but also of the sales procedure of their produce. In particular the negotiations during sales procedures implied a feeling of empowerment for women.

Through the implementation of *Frauenpolitik* (see chapter four), women believed in the significance of their contribution to society as women, even if, from the state's point of view, this was predominantly based on facilitating participation and achieving good levels of production at the workplace. But the almost continuous presence of women as a group reinforced a sense of unity and public presence. This group context was evident when at work, at meetings throughout the week, when waiting in line at the local 'Konsum', or when attending a doctor's or hairdresser's appointment

Women particularly valued the social space gained from the workplace and in the village which was predominantly facilitated through *Frauenpolitik*. This has become even more clear to them today as both *Frauenpolitik* and women's communication spaces have disappeared. Eisenstein (1993) also emphasised that, in spite of the deficiencies of the protective, yet discriminatory, legislation pursued within *Frauenpolitik*, it did contribute to alleviating women's burdens.

There are indications in the above enumeration that women did not usually congregate in official, i.e. political, decision-making spaces. The distribution of women throughout leadership positions revealed a pattern whereby the higher the position was, the lower the presence of women. In spite of Dennis' (1991) claim that "women and young people [were] well presented in the district and community

assemblies" (p.97), it transpires that this involvement was quite restricted. Statistics show that in 1984 almost 40% of delegates in the district of Neubrandenburg were women and almost 24% under 31 years old. These figures were approximately 32%[85] and 12% respectively in the 'Volkskammer' in 1986 (Statistisches Jahrbuch der DDR, 1986). In 1985, 35.5% of SED members were women, of the first secretaries at the national level 5% were women and at district level 0%. Although women held the position of mayor in various communities (30% of city mayors and 10-20% of executive councils at district level were women), these positions cannot be regarded as particularly politically influential since State plans were commonly devised and only needed to be implemented. Dennis (1991) further remarked that "most of the real power lies with the full-time functionaries and professionals" (p.97) which were predominantly men. Consequently, at the highest levels, women represented only 13.5% of members of the Central Committee of which none were full members of the 'Politbüro' (Rueschemeyer and Szelény, 1989; Einhorn, 1989). Although the political representation of women at the higher level was indeed restricted, the above array of statistics also indicates that women's political role at the local level cannot be neglected. The discussion below will also reinforce this was particularly the case within the social realm.

Another important factor contributed to women's sense of integration: dependability and safety. Women's lives were relatively predictable and contained few changes. As long as women complied with certain societal rules, they did not have to worry financially or socially. But it was not simply a matter of complying with rules. As the research by Altmann (1997) showed, women were very much attached to their home village, a finding that is supported by this research too. The discussion in chapter five, for instance indicated that women could not understand when people left their house and home immediately prior to unification, implying that they did not believe life could be significantly more comfortable someplace else. The level of 'belonging' expressed by women in the survey by Schlegel (1993) (see chapter four) reinforces that women's positive

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[85] In West Germany these figures were considerably lower. The percentage of seats in the Bundestag held by women in 1983 was 10%. In 1990, after unification, this figure rose to 20% which was largely due to the number of seats allocated to women by the PDS (47%), the Greens (38%) and the SPD (27%) (Kolinsky, 1994.

recollections of the GDR were not merely a matter of 'Ostalgia' even though they may have been coloured.

7.3.3. Losing a public voice

Though it is apparent from the above discussion that women's decision-making was extended from the home to the public sphere, their memories of integration into village life also revealed contradictions. Women were coerced into participating in voluntary activities and celebrations, but this was balanced by their enthusiasm for the sense of togetherness. They were penalised for not conforming to imposed participation but acquired rewards for solidarity. As discussed above, women also experienced some degree of socio-political "saturation" in the GDR but sense a lack of opportunities today. The women are not ignorant of these contradictions but instead relate and compare them to current experiences which were characterised by contradictions as well. In light of these comparisons, women feel that not only were positive experiences valid that were accomplished through group solidarity in the GDR, they were also more desirable than their present circumstances. Women's current negative experiences are rarely encountered with the opposing positive as it was before (see also chapter six). In addition, women indicated they felt 'more equal' in the GDR. One respondent concluded: "The equality between sexes that we had before is now more or less gone" (120).

Numerous women claimed that they were too old to be worth the focus of social innovations and that efforts should concentrate on providing services to youngsters (see chapter five). They neglected their own rights to comfortable lives and a public voice irrespective of age. In addition, they were not conscious about the opportunity to be potential key actors in making changes for their children. The following conversation illustrated this:

> *Bettina*: "What sort of things would you be interested in and participate in?"
> *Karla*: "Oh well, we're old, we don't need anything anymore, but the youngsters, the youngsters."
> [...]
> *Hanna*: "We *are* too old. We belong to the 'old guard'."
> (the group laughs)
> *Hanna*: "Well yes, go to the '*Arbeitsamt*' and if you're 35, they'll tell you, you're too old!"

At the time of the research, many women claimed that they did not wish to think about the future, not even about the next day. Getting involved in public, socio-political activities did not make sense to them, since it did not promise any positive changes immediately, or any sense of security. One correspondent wrote:

> "One mustn't think anymore, because 'orderly' and 'rightfully'- as we have known our rights [in the GDR]- means nothing today. We are administered and, to a great extent kept, we are kept in tutelage. We are but registered and open like a book to those who can read. Data protection, democracy, freedom, I haven't noticed any of those yet." (086)

The research for this thesis indicated that women respondents had expectations of democratic rights and freedoms based largely on personal experiences before and after unification. The following section discusses key concerns raised by women in the study.

7.4. Women's understanding of democratic rights and freedom

Although a common expectation of becoming part of the Western world was greater material wealth, not many women in the research commented that their expectations of unification also included more democracy and freedom. In fact, only some of the younger women between 25 and 35 stated that they had hoped for greater proportions of both. Some key informants explained that women in the GDR had a rather different definition of freedom and democracy than perhaps women in the West. The underlying ideologies had, of course, been alien to many East German women in the GDR. Features of Western democracy had been suppressed by socialist ideologies whilst the West was portrayed as capitalist enemy. Hence, women had not claimed the right to a place of their own in the political process. Nonetheless, they had a clear opinion of what democracy was not or could not be. Women expected practical proof of democracy rather than what they called "empty phrases". Two respondent concluded:

> "Democracy does not work, because people cannot understand that democracy does not only entail rights but also duties." (096)

> "Democracy is but a fig leaf." (011)

Women's experience of democratic rights was influenced by the experience of social difference (see chapters five and six). Supposed equality and freedom of

choice were two particularly critical factors which determined women's attitude toward democratic rights and West Germany as "perpetrator" of democracy. Women's experience was that, because they were women, they were more affected by unemployment and therefore not equal. Because they were unemployed and economically underprivileged, they were, to some degree, excluded from obtaining certain rights inherent to democracy. They had more restricted choices in the labour market and, as will be shown below, regarding their consumption. Women's experiences challenged both the appropriateness of the prioritisation of economy within definitions of democracy and citizenship and the assumption of 'universal rights' for all citizens. Some respondents strongly criticised the economic focus of the political process as well, as the following quotes indicate:

"There is only talk about an economic union, not about a social union, or how people could be integrated into decision making. There's got to be a change and one must start talking about values." (047)

"It's a fact that the economy directs societal developments, processes and the well-being of people. Economy is prioritised. The government is only a puppet." (082)

"We said goodbye to Ludwig Erhardt's social market economy long ago. We are now approaching the free market economy and that means it's not desirable any more to think that people should be socially secured. People as individuals don't count, only maximum profits. Cash, cash, cash." (079)

Women's assessment of real-existing freedoms largely reflected their experiences of social differentiation. The following discussion exemplifies women's perceptions of democratic rights and freedoms since unification.

7.4.1. Freedom of consumer choice and travel

At the time of unification, many loans were offered to GDR citizens on easy terms. Since nobody envisaged the impact of unemployment at the time and wanted quick ownership of desirable Western goods, many people took generous loans without being fully aware of the meaning and consequences of their actions. With regard to consumer goods, respondents therefore acknowledged that most families owned televisions, refrigerators, CD players and cars. But women also stressed that many families were in debt and risked losing the purchased goods

due to over-spending. After losing their jobs, people initially did not admit to their misfortune and did not seek help until the court intervened to settle their debts.

It must be noted that many of the aforementioned consumer goods became appreciably cheaper after the *Wende*. Food, medication and clothes were, however, considerably more expensive. 'Luxurious' consumer products (clothes, shoes, etc.) were therefore still largely inaccessible for most women. Two women respondents described their situation:

> *Marlies*: "The choice of consumer products is very large nowadays, but after 9 years, we still don't know most of the shops... I just don't dare going inside."

> "One could always say, unemployed all right. But it really is so that they haven't got any money. They have no savings, no property, no land, no nothing. It's hard ... It's worst when the kids are still in education. Before I buy myself something, I think about it ten times, even though I surely need it. But it's true, one wouldn't believe it. Ask those who have gone on a holiday and where they are from, then ask the others who really think hard before they would go to the cinema, because it costs them 7 Marks. They'll say, for 7 Marks, I could buy two loafs of bread ... I don't like going to the shops. One is always pressed to buy things and I don't like to even look. It makes me feel like a second class citizen." *(011)*

The freedom to travel was noted by many women, both the villagers and correspondents. However, many women, particularly those in the villages, could not afford to travel. Travel to other communist countries, had also been very expensive prior to unification but many families could travel when awarded a journey in LPG competitions, for example, or from proceeds from private produce sales. Within the GDR, however, travel had been very cheap since most LPGs offered places for their workers at seaside resorts at very low prices. As mentioned in chapter five, children usually participated in subsidised summer camps.

Key informants stated that people's expectations of being able to live at a Western standard had been raised by the stories told by Western relatives over the years. They explained that Westerners rarely talked about their own financial problems or difficulties at the workplace, and one correspondent stated:

"One didn't believe that the glittering world of the West was worked for, too, and that one had to pay for travel." (082)

Therefore, some women had images of 'standard' Western travel exclusively as long-distance journeys, including America or Australia. A few women, however, welcomed the freedom of travel claiming they could go to places even on a low budget. Some women pensioners had already been to Mallorca, a preferred and cheap West German travel destination, whilst others still enjoyed travelling to neighbouring countries, i.e. the former socialist holiday destinations. Although travel within Germany was not possible for all citizens due to significant costs for hotels and public transport (if transport was at all available), this opportunity to explore the new home country and establish contacts to fellow citizens in the West was not mentioned in this research.

As a result of high expectations and low budgets, many women believed that there was no real freedom of travel. In the GDR, travel was restricted by ideology and, since unification, by capital. One correspondent described the two sides of the new freedom to travel:

"There were many people [in the GDR] who asked themselves, 'Why won't they let us travel? We'll come back.' I was one of those, too. Until 1989, I travelled only where I could, namely the Eastern States. Those journeys were filled with beautiful memories. After 1989, I used the opportunity and travelled to Western Europe and Northern Africa. I like to travel and I spend my money rather on that than anything else. Of course, I must stress that numerous people, and women in particular, cannot afford to travel at all. The same goes for their children." (036)

Most of the women in the focus group though belonged to those people who could not afford to travel. Brigitte said:

"You haven't got the money to travel. We haven't gone to America for the past 40 years and we won't go for the next 40 years."

7.4.2. Freedom of speech, and political choice

Another 'type' of freedom commonly referred to by women was the freedom to speak their mind. Prior to unification there was little controversial speech in public. One knew that information could be passed on to the 'Stasi' and that one could face serious consequences. Even though most women did not experience

State control in their everyday lives, and key informants confirmed this notion, women knew that certain things ought to be left unsaid. Many women claimed, however, they simply had no political views and their complaints were centred on the workplace or people in the village.

Only some of those women over the age of 35 said that they could indeed speak more freely today such as in Charlottenburg:

> *Heidrun*: "I think perhaps we are a little bit more free, yes, I could say that."
> *Brigitte*: "I guess, we can talk freely."
> *Herta*: "Yes, that's true."
> *Brigitte*: "But we still can't travel."

Of those women respondents who were still working, however, many claimed to experience lack of freedom of speech at the workplace. They claimed that they could not criticise their superiors anymore, because of the risk of immediately losing their job. Competition in the labour market was so great that employers felt little responsibility to keep 'disagreeable' employees. Two correspondents described their experiences of such a threat:

> "I used to be a lay assessor, but [my employer] does not allow me to do any work for the PDS in public." (063)

> "Freedom of speech? I think that's an illusion, you have to really consider your words if you want to keep your job or achieve something at work." (087)

As mentioned above, women recounted their regular brigade assemblies in the GDR which served to monitor the work process. This was commonly a place for criticism of both fellow workers and superiors. Vivid and audible arguments took place, but even outside these scheduled meetings women felt they could sustain an informal and critical relationship with their superiors. The GDR laws prevented anyone from being made redundant and perhaps this was one of the freedoms employers liked to take since the *Wende* as, from their viewpoint, it had been submerged for too long. One correspondent reasoned that "the larger the league of unemployed, the better a business can undermine tariff policies and thus democracy." (082.) Consequently, another correspondent concluded: "What good is freedom of speech, if no one bothers with it!" (072).

At the time of the interviews, women criticised contemporary politics and stated that lies and fraud amongst politicians were no different from the past. "Same pigs, different troughs" summarised Brigitte. In addition, a particularly controversial political issue led women respondents to believe that the freedom to vote was but another 'empty' phrase. In summer 1998, when election campaigns in the East were at their height, CDU politician and party speaker Hauser made a public statement causing much dismay amongst fellow politicians and especially East German citizens. He claimed that if the East Germans continued to vote for the PDS, they face considerable cuts in West German funding for rebuilding the country (see also Appendix IV). This threat outraged many women who felt betrayed either because they had voted for the CDU previously, or because they sincerely trusted the PDS to have better solutions for existing problems. In the focus groups, a number of women brought articles on the Hauser issue. These generated vivid discussions and reinforced the weakness of the Western reform process and the meaning of democracy to the women. When asked which party they would vote for, most women were uncertain. "Not black or brown"[86], Hanna said. But Karla added: "One doesn't do its job better than any other." Many women in this research stated that they still supported the PDS, but would not admit to this in public. They even felt that those who admitted to their affiliation with the PDS were very brave.

In the elections in September 1998, however, women did take advantage of their freedom to vote. Many voters openly expressed their support with the socialist party and, at the same time, perhaps their hopes for social change. With the allocation of 24.4% of all votes to the PDS (men and women combined), Mecklenburg-Westpommerania exceeded the 20% of votes the PDS won elsewhere in the former GDR (Statistisches Bundesamt, 1999).

7.4.3. Freedom to work or not

Since unification, women have frequently been told that after 40 years of being forced to work both for ideological and economic reasons, they were 'finally' free to choose to go to work or stay at home. But women themselves belittled this choice. As discussed in chapter six, most women in rural areas lost their jobs immediately after unification and have not been able to find alternative

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[86] i.e. CDU or extreme right-wing parties

employment. Furthermore, the situation in the labour market and the loss of faith in their own capabilities did not encourage women to anticipate re-entry into employment. Therefore, most women felt they did not have the choice of working or staying at home. Instead, they were pushed into the role of a housekeeper unwillingly. In the focus groups, women discussed the possibility of part-time work and most agreed that, if they were financially secured, they would be prepared to work half days. But they would never choose not to work at all (see chapter six).

The reality was, as many key informants asserted, that there were few part-time jobs for these women. Those that were offered, often required women to drive two hours. As mentioned in chapter six, transport was a significant problem for women. In addition, the pay-rate for part time work was generally so low, it only covered women's expenses. Many women thus preferred the security of their 'income' on unemployment benefit or to wait for the chance of obtaining an *ABM*.

Some women came to terms with their allocation in the home, but many felt depressed and unfulfilled. Rather than actively looking for alternatives or protesting against their exclusion, women became introspective and contemplated the past. The discussion in chapters five and six has illustrated this, and one woman therefore concluded:

> "I only want to be reminded of the past." (Marlies)

7.4.4. Freedom to choose a living environment

The freedom of choosing where to live was severely jeopardised by post-unification regulations on property reclamation (see chapter five). Most respondents knew of cases where houses or plots of land were claimed by Westerners, even though 'only' two women experienced dislocation and the vacating of these houses by the previous 'owners' of up to forty years. These people felt they had been rooted in the community and expressed frustration over being expropriated for the second time. Due to low incomes, or low pensions, the 'dislocated' people could not normally afford to maintain their standard of living and had to move to cheaper urban apartments. Due to transport problems, women's social networks could hardly be maintained.

However, many women felt displaced even if they were not physically moving as a result of property claims. The vast changes in the outside world left a number of women feeling like strangers in their own land. One correspondent explained:

"Democracy and a constitutional State are only experienced in a very limited way by the ordinary people. The fight against the bureaucratic jungle and economic issues in life takes much strength and time away from participation in democracy and a constitutional State. Most people feel they are at the mercy of politicians more than seeing opportunities to participate in this society. But only if I am integrated can I feel at home here. In this society, though, I will probably remain in a state of internal migration as long as those who govern [this country] lack every trace of social justice," (063)

7.4.5. Freedom to be a mother or not

Not many women discussed 'motherhood', perhaps due to their age, but those who did were angry about the fact that the GDR right to abortion had been the subject of discussion by Western (male) politicians. In the GDR, it was legal for women to have abortions during the first 12 weeks of their pregnancies. In West Germany abortions are subject to strict criteria and generally illegal. According to one survey, 77% of East Germans were in favour of maintaining the GDR's law (Conradt, 1996). In the course of the implementation of laws for the new Bundesländer, it was hoped to reach a compromise on abortion laws. Indeed, the parliament decided that, after counselling by a GP, women could undergo an abortion within 12 weeks of their pregnancy. In early 1993 , however, the Federal Court overruled this agreement and abortions became unconstitutional (Conradt, 1996; Rueschemeyer, 1994). It was reiterated that "the right of the unborn child to live takes precedence over the right of self-determination of women" (Rueschemeyer, 1994: 115). The discussion on abortion policies, which most respondents, both women and men, had considered progressive and emancipatory in the GDR, became almost a symbol of the 'emptiness' of certain promised freedoms in real life. The focus group in Karlshorst explored this topic:

Ute: "[In the GDR] we were not only recognised as a woman and mother, that is one thing, but more so as human beings... our own, independent personalities were in the foreground more than today. To me it is that discussion in the national assembly that seems as if were are kept in tutelage as women and is so insulting... I disapprove of it so much. I feel offended as a human being because one does not grant me this choice... I just cannot understand that men can go ahead and say 'It's not possible, we cannot agree to abortions', or the catholic church... that they do not grant women, who want to make this choice, for whatever reason, that they do not allow them to choose."

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Marianne: "Especially because the State is not particularly children friendly."
Ute: "If I do have a child, or want to have a child, I want to make sure that it can grow up under the right circumstances and not just survives. I need to think about tomorrow and the day after tomorrow."
Marianne: "But [many women] cannot feed their children from the money they get."

7.5. "Democracy is quite different"[87]

When discussing the lack of freedom and democratic rights women referred predominantly to economic issues. Consumer products, travel, and the choice of one's living environment were related to affordability and women's economic situation. Free speech was experienced as threatening to economic security because women could lose their job a result of speaking freely. Being a mother, especially a single mother, was likely to incur unemployment or an inability to afford consumer goods or travel. The attainment of freedoms and democracy, an issue of priority in many Western democratic countries, may thus have had a 'bitter aftertaste' for women in rural East Germany.

It was frequently pointed out that, even when unemployed, many women had more money because of their unemployment benefit. Some key informants therefore believed that women were 'better off' than in the GDR. This equation, however, ignored the fact that the cost of living was also rising and that 'survival' could not simply be defined by having money, but included social and personal well-being. Furthermore, statistics from the 'Report on Women in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania' (Schröter *et al.*, 1997) demonstrated that many unemployed women were indeed at risk of falling into poverty. Through the subsequent danger of social exclusion these women suffered both economic and social distress.

Women in this research judged the value of democracy not by its mere theoretical existence, but by the level of personal comfort that could be achieved compared with their lives in the GDR. It appeared that women prioritised the economic aspects inherent in democracy as well. But the fact that women's issues included social dimensions such as the need for employment to maintain social relationships, the threat of dislocation from a place to which they feel attached, and decisions over abortions indicated that these were more than just economic issues. In addition, they were issues that were not 'universal' to all citizens and

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[87] This expression was used by key informant (012) in this research.

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thus likely to be ignored in the overall political agenda (see chapter two). Two pastors and one correspondent phrased what many other respondents in this research indicated as well:

"I always say that the quality of life of a human being does not only consist of freedom. That is important, too, as it is to buy whatever one wants to buy. But instead, what also belongs to quality of life is security in one's environment, in the village and to feel safe. That has changed for most of us here in this region." (117)

"I dare say that 'true' democracy in a capitalist State is just not possible." (076)

The experiences of women support theoretical discussions that democracy does not account for the needs of marginalised groups and that the accessibility of certain freedoms can be class and gender-differentiated (see chapter two). Therefore, the achievement of individuality in society by means of democracy does not, as Graham and Regulska (1997) pointed out, necessarily liberate women. In addition, if democracy continues to be pronounced by an economic focus within patriarchal structures[88], women's inclusion will become increasingly problematic. As mentioned above, women miss certain features of the GDR which they benefited from as women, such as the right to work, availability of social services and integration into the working collective. Men did not lose these features to the same extent and were more likely to enjoy the economic advantages of unification. Furthermore, they also benefited from the freedom to discriminate against women (Graham and Regulska, 1997). In order not to 'lose' women in the political process and maintain their focus in the present and toward the future, the political process needs to give greater priority to women's needs.

A restricted experience of economic merits and freedoms as outlined above does not, however, in itself determine the level of women's socio-political participation. There is evidence from other geographic regions that social marginalisation can lead to political involvement through local initiatives, such as self-help groups (see for example Alston and Wilkinson, 1998; MacKenzie, 1994; Sachs, 1994; Teather, 1994, 1996).

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[88] The discussion over abortion rights is perhaps the most pertinent example.

7.6. Participation since the Wende

7.6.1. Activity types

The analysis of respondents' accounts revealed a complex web of different circumstances under which women did or did not become active in everyday socio-political issues. The historical context of women's socialisation in the GDR played a key role as did the contemporary socio-economic context and the animation of women by key actors in the village. Therefore, elements of path dependence were observed in the context of participation.

The findings of this research suggest that, at the local level, activities of individual women were very diverse. The number of local groups and the extent to which women's activities made a political difference was limited. Those women who did become active were visible in the social sphere rather than the political. Few women were active in the local council and in only one of the study villages, a formal women's group had been established which was also concerned with policy issues (Landfrauenverband). The analysis of data suggests the presence of four 'activity types' of women (see fig. 7.1.) .

Many of the interviewed women complained that nothing was happening in the villages anymore. But discussions with key informants revealed a variety of activities within the community or the region and everyday village life that offered opportunities to participate at different levels: 1) at the social level; a) in activities already organised by local/ regional groups or the community; or b) in local groups themselves; and 2) at the level of local politics. These opportunities are discussed in the following sections.

Type	Activity in GDR	Activity since *Wende*	Characteristics	Qualification and employment status
'Moving Spirits'	Mostly active	Active	Take responsibility for events; group leadership; motivate other women	Key positions in the GDR; mostly higher qualifications; today mostly employed, or pensioners
'Safe-players'	'Off-and-on' active	'Off-and-on' active	Join in already organised events, or participate in organisation when 'pushed' by moving spirits	Mostly lower or medium-level qualifications, or retired
'Betrayed'	Active	Passive	Ceased activity as result of village conflict or political disillusionment	Often key positions in the GDR; medium or higher qualifications
'Removed observers'	Passive	Passive	Critical of everything both before and since unification; or endure personal discomfort in silence, at risk of becoming depressed	Mainly lower qualifications; today mostly unemployed

Fig. 7.1.: Activity-types of women in the study villages (Sources: own research and Ackermann *et al.*, 1993; Glade and Bartmann, 1996)

7.6.2. Activities at the social level

Respondents reported that women were generally more visible than men when social events were organised in the village. Although this did not involve large numbers, women helped to organise local events if they were addressed by key actors. Four key reasons for this gender-imbalance emerged from the analysis of data. First, many activities such as preparing food or rehearsing programmes with children for village activities were traditionally female and men were embarrassed to offer the same kind of help. Second, many women generally felt more responsible for the family and ascribed more importance to the organisation of activities that benefited the family. Third, women were more likely to be present in the village throughout the day, since more women than men were unemployed. Fourth, many activities that were offered by unemployment organisations in the village were homecraft activities making the programme less attractive to men, a point NGOs such as the 'Landfrauenverband', or the 'Arbeitslosenverband' agreed with. They believed, however, this was justified as most formally organised, local groups such as the fire brigade, fishing, hunting and the rifle-association were for men. But, when unemployed, many men also had alcohol problems and abstained from group participation altogether.

It must be noted also that, although local activities were welcomed by a number of women, not all women participated. Some NGOs expressed concern over the fact that predominantly pensioners[89] joined the groups. Younger women, especially those with children, either found the activities offered inappropriate to their needs, or were prevented from participation because they had no means of transportation or childcare. In addition, a considerable number of women still felt ashamed to admit their unemployment and tried to hide away from the public sphere. Some key informants also conveyed the impression that crafts workshops, i.e. knitting and needle-work, were degrading for women because these activities did not mobilise them socially.

Many key informants believed that initiatives of local groups were an essential means to re-creating social networks, encourage communication and practise democratic skills. In a focus group of 25-35 year old women, however, a negative

view was expressed on what they regarded as 'exclusiveness' of interest groups. They felt it was not easy to join the group casually, because they had to become paying members from the beginning. In addition, many women looked upon the growth of a variety of clubs as a Western feature and therefore a further sign of colonisation which they refused to support. And, once a group member, some women contended that group dynamics were often distorted because group members were not friendly with everyone, or their spouses disliked certain other members and consequently discouraged participation. At the same time, women indicated they could not influence developments which would 'inevitably' happen to them. Although some were self-critical for not being flexible enough, none of the women expressed determination to counteract such disintegrative developments.

The former mayor of Karlshorst described an example of how the problem of "exclusiveness" of groups was alleviated in his village by subsuming a variety of clubs to one 'village and culture club'. By doing so, all clubs convened separate meetings for only those members who were interested in that specific activity. At the same time, larger events, such as the New Year celebration, were organised with the support of all groups.

Whereas from the viewpoint of many young women, indeed nothing may have been going on in the villages, the various events did contribute to the development of a socio-political culture from which other women benefited. But the passive women, unused to developing and pursuing their own interest, were left behind. Although some events took place in or nearby the village, there were no human or financial resources to approach women individually, or to convince them of the value of their participation. Instead, and unlike circumstances in the GDR, women needed to examine the newspapers for dates and times of events and had to remind themselves.

The above discussion indicates that barriers to participation were created by adherence to pre-unification patterns of everyday life as well as the transition to the West German system. In addition, two key problems associated with the study

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[89] However, early retired women, or pensioners, who are not already members of a local group did not wish to socialise much and claimed to be content at home. After approximately 40 years of labour-intensive,

area itself were suggested by respondents in the research: qualification and mentality.

7.6.3. The influence of qualification on participation

A number of interviewees believed that the lack of qualification was the predominant cause of women's passive behaviour. For example, it was argued that particularly those women who were over forty at the time of unification had not had adequate training. Therefore, they remained under-qualified despite having obtained formal qualifications such as a 'Facharbeiter'. Furthermore, once women completed their formal vocational training in the GDR (regardless of their age), they were often placed in work for which they were not qualified[90].

Earlier studies[91] also identified key characteristics of those women who were active as opposed to those who were not. A study by Dahms *et al.* (1996) demonstrated that women who were previously occupied in agriculture had not considerably benefited from contemporary retraining measures. The majority of those women who participated in retraining did not obtain regular employment as a result. The relationship between low qualifications, and low levels of motivation and personal initiative was also established by staff in the *Arbeitsamt* of the studied area. They stated, for example, that women with an agricultural background were commonly less prepared to engage in vocational training than women from other professions (see chapter six).

Research carried out by Ackermann *et al.* (1993) also showed that highly qualified women were more likely to be re-employed, to have a good income and to be a member of an interest group. In addition, only those villagers who were employed were also more mobile. A large number of women, especially those over forty, had no driver's license and were dependent either on 'getting a ride' from a neighbour to larger supermarket outlets, or on mobile but expensive shops that delivered to the village. Because public transport was poorly developed, few women visited the larger city for a shopping trip or events. Lack of mobility was, as indicated above, a problem with regards to participation in social events as well and

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manual work, activities in and around the home were welcomed and perhaps needed activities.
[90] This finding is supported earlier research in a fruit and vegetable co-operative in the Haveland near Berlin (Rocksloh-Papendieck, 1995).
[91] See, for example, Altmann (1997) or Glade and Bartmann (1996).

homebound women were dependent on local events. Through lack of choice they were forced to join whatever programme was offered, or none.

The findings from this research and earlier studies suggest that older working women were more active in voluntary activities and more perceptive of new opportunities to diversify their lives. This could be due to their previous experience in professional engagements (see also figure 7.1.) and the fact they did not have younger children to care for. One key informant addressed the problem of this 'professional' gap for the local democratic process:

> "Those with work have a bad conscience. It really is quite a burden especially because it takes away democracy. Because those who work develop themselves further and they should assume certain functions in the village. But women who have stayed home for some years cannot do that anymore. Their mental mobility has decreased ... A person who doesn't discuss problems as much, as when he would be at the workplace, is left behind. And if those people [who work] ... say 'Come on, let's do something'... the others will say 'Sure, you can talk, you've got work and what should we do?' ... People's thinking is restricted to the house, the garden, that's it!" (026)

7.6.4. Pommeranian mentality

If the assumption of most respondents in this research is correct, the level of interest and activism of people throughout the region decreases dramatically towards the East which would lead to the expectation of considerably lower engagement in the studied area of Uecker Randow. This finding is consistent with an earlier study comparing social and political activities throughout the former GDR (Glade and Bartmann, 1996).

Glade and Bartmann (1996) found that, of all of the five new Länder, women in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania were by far the least interested in participating in the project on voluntary activities in the social sector and in politics. In fact, there was a drop in the rate of interest from the South of the former GDR to the North. Furthermore, those women who were interested in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania were in average older than in other regions. None of the women was younger than 31 and the average age was 50.7 years compared with 40.8 years in Saxony-Anhalt. Mecklenburg-Westpommerania also had the lowest number of working women amongst the participants (i.e. more pensioners and early-retired women)

and, at the same time, the highest number of women who had already been active in voluntary activities before their participation in the project.

It must be noted that a number of respondents commented on the 'typical' nature of the people in Mecklenburg-Westpommerania as being particularly immobile compared with other regions in the former GDR. Some informants who were interviewed during preliminary fieldwork even called them 'concrete heads'. The mayor of Schinkel explained the nature of the people as follows:

> "One says about the people from Mecklenburg-Westpommerania that they are stubborn, that's not true. But they are not so adaptable as those in Saxony or Thuringia... [instead] they are slower and need longer to understand things, that's without saying they're dull... But once they've decided something, they'll stick to it." (035)

7.6.5. GDR socialisation

A considerable number of key informants and women in focus groups argued that activities in the villages since the *Wende* reflect certain patterns already apparent in the GDR. Other commentators on the transitions in Eastern Europe also observed that women were 'trapped' in certain behavioural patterns even if they had become irrelevant (see, for instance, Graham and Regulska, 1997, or Kamenista, 1998). Furthermore, women were not socially or politically stimulated and, as a result, remained static.

In this research, the observation of 'historical passivity' led some key informants to be critical of villagers themselves. Although this group of respondents was in favour of more political focus on local development, they also believed that it was up to the local population to show more initiative. The former mayoress of Wilmersdorf, for example, strongly criticised her fellow villagers today:

> *Bettina*: "But if there *are* events, what keeps women from going?"
> *119*: "Idleness ...If a person doesn't *want* to do anything [political resources don't help either]"
> *Bettina*: "So it's not a case of lacking interest by politicians?"
> *119*: "[The women] don't want to... If I say, I go [to Stettin] to see the castle, do a harbour cruise, there's lots to see! They'll look at me [with big eyes]. No ...Sometimes, they'll say 'Nothing is happening'. But who's going to make something happen?... Should I always just wait until someone shows up and calls upon them: 'Shall we?'"

Similar experiences were also evident from the observations of correspondents as the following quote illustrates:

"It seems bizarre, but although everything is possible, most people remained more or less true to their previous lifestyle." (094)

The roots of the problem were therefore also in people's attitudes rather than politics and society alone. As noted above, at least in Wilmersdorf, people had never been keen on personal initiatives. In the yearly reports of the LPG, such as those obtained from the former animal co-operative in Wüste and Wilmersdorf, the organising Committees expressed the opinion that more women should join organised activities. In the documents for Wilmersdorf, the trips to the theatre were particularly criticised for low attendance.

The mayor of Schinkel bemoaned that the Women's Day had received disappointing attendance since unification. He saw the major problem in the increasing polarisation of the village as a consequence of some residents being employed and others being jobless. The mayor explained:

"Well, it was okay for a few weeks and then [the course] was dropped again. Why, I don't know. Surely it is so that, one feels it everywhere, this gap... the unity [in the village] was gone as the collectives broke apart... People's interests are so different. One person's got a bigger car than another and they have a problem. This jealousy. One has got work, the other hasn't. And that contributes to the fact that people are not holding together as they used to." (035)

It seemed that women developed certain behavioural patterns which may have been less obvious to themselves at the time. A key reason was that the political power, exercised through the LPG, prescribed certain events and developments, and thus assured a high level of personal involvement. After the *Wende* this force disappeared and previously underlying patterns, such as idleness and lack of self-initiated activity, became more apparent.

Whereas before unification, a sense of collectivity was experienced through the working collectives in the LPG, this kind of work organisation no longer existed. Since many of the common interests and communication had been closely related to the functioning of collectives in the GDR, few common interests were apparent

in the village since unification. The habit of expecting to be organised persisted as much as the habit of drawing social experience and common interests from the workplace. Neither of the two habits had been substituted by an alternative mechanism to mobilise residents' own initiative and to provide a common interest. The possibility of regarding the village *itself* as a common interest, because it was the place of living and socialising for all residents regardless their occupational status as well as a place for local democracy, had not yet been explored.

The variety of behaviours and motivations conveyed by women regarding their participation in social activities suggests that women cannot be treated as uniform groups of social agents. Rather, further elements such as previous engagement, post-unification experiences, employment situation, level of education and age determined the degree of women's social mobility. Most respondents reiterated that the vast majority of villagers regardless their characteristics was, however, passive. The implications of this aversion to political participation for the expression of active citizenship is illustrated in the following section.

7.6.6. Participation in formal programmes

In different regions throughout the former GDR, there were different formal programmes for revitalising rural areas. Although, some form of public participation was commonly desired, it was not always achieved. Aside from short-term government funded employment schemes or model projects specially designed to benefit development at the local level, the only institutionalised and widely distributed programme was the 'village renewal plan'. In the studied area, the focus of planning and resources was toward the built environment. However, the interviews suggested a gap between different strategies desired at different administrative levels.

At the ministerial level, for example, it was stated that structural problems needed to be addressed urgently, and comprehensive participation of villagers in the planning process was seen as "a waste of time and money" (023). It was further believed that social developments should not be part of a regional programme but rather take place by means of local voluntary activities. It was argued that regional programmes would be too prescriptive and therefore undermined local decision-making power. Hence, whilst a need for development from 'within' was

acknowledged, resources to encourage and facilitate such a development were not made available.

This was a key problem for the villages which largely lacked financial means to significantly support such initiatives in the community. Hence, they "ha[d] to do a 'split' between what [was] necessary and practicable" (O22). Nonetheless, planners also believed that too little commitment to strengthening the socio-cultural context was expressed by local officials. Particularly the creation of meeting places that would have helped citizens to identify more with and feel more responsible for developing sustainable initiatives for the village received little attention. Locals needed to feel that their input was important for the village as a whole (see also Parade, 1992).

Residents were generally interested in the programme, if they aimed to improve their own houses. Some planners remarked that women were often the most active part in organising the paper work and pushing their husbands to pursue the issue further. However, in many cases property claims were outstanding or people were not prepared to take loans from a bank to conduct repairs and thus, there was little interest in private measures. In addition, few citizens offered suggestions for improvements in the village itself.

In Wüste participation initially took place through the establishment of a forum which consisted of five villagers (two women) who drew locals into the planning process and monitored the progress made. However, this initiative did not last long. Of the studied villages, only in Tecklenburg, the neighbour village of Karlshorst, did locals express an interest in discussing both private and public measures in a group. They had decided upon public improvements they wanted to pursue even *before* the planners came to the village and were well prepared for the first meeting. This remained an exception, even when taken into account experiences of the planners in other villages than those studied.

Some respondents claimed that official support would reward those who were already active and encourage others who have not yet taken any initiatives. But local women claimed the fact that nobody was prepared to pay for work carried out in the village, especially socio-cultural work. This was a concern particularly

for those on unemployment benefit or welfare, for whom voluntary activities were equal to financial burdens due to travel expenses, membership fees and other costs incurred (see also Altmann, 1997). One woman concluded that, since everyday costs were rising, people simply could not participate. "A positive attitude alone is not enough" (017). One key informant suggested that women should be credited for the amount of voluntary work they undertake and that this should, for example, contribute toward their pensions.

Many key informants regarded the role of women in the planning process as an essential one. For example, one respondent believed that women, "by nature" (060), evaluated developments both with the heart and the soul. Therefore, they had a better sympathetic understanding than men, which helped them to consider village-related issues with greater responsibility. Hence, the respondent stated that:

"Women need more support irrespective of upcoming elections or bad [employment] statistics because they are a continuous resource. It has to be a constant task and not sporadically as though they were the firebrigade." (060)

But in contrast to what key informants believed *should* take place at the local level, evidence of initiatives, responsibility for 'the social', identification with the village as a whole and women's 'heart-and-soul-approach' was not abundant. One respondent said:

"You can search for the active [people] with a magnifying glass." (014)

7.6.7. The local political culture

The discussion of local social activities indicated that participation is gendered as fewer men than women are visible, irrespective of observed differences amongst women themselves. With regard to political representation, unsurprisingly, this relationship is reversed; far more men than women are included into the political process. In the implementation of programmes such as 'village renewal' discussed above, the consolidation of gendered power structures is evident. Men are predominantly in key positions making decisions over the framework of programmes and approving of proposed initiatives by the community. Women's concerns and input into the programme are regarded as less consequential than

structural problems and therefore treated like 'private' problems to be addressed at the voluntary level (see also Yuval-Davis, 1997).

In four of the six studied villages one woman per focus group was currently involved in the local council. These four women had occupied a position of leadership before unification and were experienced with organisational tasks and assuming responsibilities (see also figure 7.1.). In addition, they were known and accepted by male political actors in the community. Some respondents indicated that women in more powerful positions had been regarded as 'Mannsweib'[92] since the GDR suggesting they resembled men in many of their characteristics. It was also noted that participation in the local council such as in the social committee, for example, was only possible, if a woman was nominated by a political party. The inclusion of women into the council was therefore largely restricted by male 'gate keepers'. Only few women were willing to become party members indicating resistance against such 'male rules' but with no demands for alternative political structures. One key informant confirmed this by stating that women were discouraged from participation by political actors who were already in power. Instead, women were actively pushed outside the decision-making circles. Ideas at a small scale, preferably at the voluntary and social level, were welcomed but not so at the formal and political level.

In the group discussions, women feared not to be taken seriously or to be overpowered by men in official positions. Moreover, a number of women were simply not politically interested, an observation confirmed by all key informants. The lack of spaces for formal political decision-making in the GDR significantly contributed to women's contemporary reluctance to become mobilised. But a common reason for remaining estranged from political activities was the belief that contemporary political actors would "do what they want anyway" (086). Women associated 'the political' exclusively with 'big' party politics. They felt neither knowledgeable enough to contribute nor motivated to be involved in, as was noted above, the 'dirty game' of politics. In the group discussions this issue was largely neglected in favour of women's recollections of social activities. Most women have adopted a political 'wait-and-see' attitude.

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[92] Translates as "male woman"

7.6.8. The role of the mayor

As in the pre-unification period, the role of the mayors in the village was considered by many respondents to be a key issue in motivating women. However, mayors were mostly voluntary and if they were employed elsewhere, their main interest was in the workplace. This was the case in half of the study villages. But key informants also noted that a considerable number of mayors were pre-retired or pensioners and hence had no responsibility to an employer.

Throughout the first few years after unification the mayors' time was largely spent learning Western laws and regulations. This kind of constraint limited the amount of time and energy that could be spent on maintaining and reinforcing social life in the village. If a mayor had not occupied a position of leadership prior to unification, they concentrated on the immediate urgency of learning the rules of the new system rather than learning to become an effective 'moving spirit'. Others, such as the mayor of Wüste and the former mayor of Karlshorst who already had an understanding of organisational procedures, had established a good relationship with locals. The existence of such pre-conditions made motivating locals toward social activities easier. In most cases, the only incentive for a mayor to include social issues into their political agenda was their personal conscience.

Aside from Charlottenburg, where it was said one could "forget about the mayor" (Heidrun), the focus groups appeared to be content with their mayors and their level of interest in the community. However, some key informants contradicted this view and criticised many mayors for not mobilising resources enough to assist the revival of social life. Frequently, women's interests were ignored altogether, because other issues were considered to be more urgent. Children and youths fell behind in the prioritisation of local issues for similar reasons. Key informants suggested, as noted above that in those villages where the mayors were women, more women were active and motivated to contribute toward social development on a voluntary basis. Consequently, fewer women suffered from loss of self-esteem and loneliness. A number of key informants reinforced the view that personal communication with such isolated women is essential. One respondent said:

> "I do believe that [women] are not included enough... One has to invite them personally to participate several times, it is only possible like that... Many women actually feel they have a purpose again." (001)

Most mayors described lack of money as a major deterrent to the development of the socio-cultural sector in the village. "If a budget needs to be cut", one respondent explained, "the first things to go are social issues" (061). This is due to the fact that social issues are merely voluntary responsibilities. Virtually all respondents talked about the limited funds in the village. The mayor of Hellern questioned the appropriateness of certain compulsory duties as well. He explained that the maintenance of the firebrigade, for example, was compulsory even in small communities. The cost of the firebrigade building and staff was a burden preventing other pressing issues from being solved. The mayor of Wilmersdorf gave another example:

> "We want to renovate the community hall through the 'village renewal programme'. But its always a problem: dough! [The community] always has to pay a certain amount, too. And often that's why the initiatives fail. It's not so easy at all. A new roof would cost 100,000 Marks and we'd have to pay 20,000. With our budget that's impossible... Ha! (laughs) It's crazy!" (029)

A key reason why mayors have struggled to accomplish their tasks, with regard to women's issues, was that mayors did not know many details about how women have dealt with the transitions and their wants and needs. This reinforces the negligence of women's issues in the assessment of 'universal interests' and the urgency for creating mechanisms that specifically include women into the local socio-political culture.

7.7. Conclusion

A key outcome of the discussion in this chapter is that 'local democracy' was not a familiar concept to local women. On the one hand, women were not familiar with the principle of democratic citizenship and therefore did not become pro-active themselves. On the other hand, women continuously searched for proof of democracy and freedoms by constantly referencing the present against the benefits of their past lives rather than focusing on present opportunities.

In addition to already existing, widespread political passivity, political procedures have consolidates patriarchal structures in which predominantly male interests are

pursued. The real distribution of men and women in political and social activities created gendered spaces at the local level. In addition, by acting according to perceived but short-sighted merits of personal involvement in 'the social' and 'the political' women contributed to reproducing such patterns. The potential that the local level offered for women to develop 'democratic skills' such as knowledge about rules, laws, operating procedures and power dynamics within the political process is largely neglected by both men and women. Consequently, the establishment of networks to facilitate integration into higher levels of the political process was inhibited[93].

The discussion above suggests that a key problem with democracy is the perseverance of patriarchal institutions which do not sufficiently legitimise women as political agents or formalise women's concerns in the form of a political agenda. The softening of the division between the social and the political should be aimed for in order to challenge the association of these activity spaces as exclusively female and male (or unemployed and employed). Greater political attention is needed, for example, to transform women's legal rights to social and economic equality into de facto outcomes. The importance of women's participation at the local level needs to be more explicitly recognised and their contribution translated into local activism[94]. The local political culture must support more integrative strategies, particularly as women are emotionally "deeply rooted" (p.7) within the community (Altmann, 1997) and therefore more likely to be receptive to approaches at this level.

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[93] See also Kamenista (1997). In addition, Sachs (1994), Schmitt (1994) and Teather (1994) offered examples of the significance of local initiatives for women and the challenge imposed by the staticness of gender roles in rural areas.
[94] See also Regulska (1998a).

POWER STRUCTURES AND WOMEN'S 'COUNTERSPACES' IN RURAL EAST GERMANY

8.1. Introduction

This thesis has focused on the gendered aspects of post-unification transformations in rural East Germany. Significant themes throughout the thesis have been the social consequences of change in the labour market and at the workplace, and issues associated with the socio-political integration of rural women. This conclusion then has two principle objectives: the first is to assess key findings of the thesis with regard to the nature of dominant patriarchal power structures, and the extent to which they shaped developments in the GDR and the New Germany. Whilst dominant power structures are explored which have essentially suppressed women, the argument also draws on examples of "counterspaces- [as] positions and spaces from which women attempt to inflect dominant spatialities" (Phua and Yeoh, 1998: 313). Secondly, key mechanisms which have contributed to the formation of gendered identities within these dominant structures will be discussed. It will be shown that both the GDR and the New Germany institutionalised forms of patriarchy which have inhibited women's full integration into decision-making structures and instead encouraged the development of different 'male' and 'female' roles. Although this political arrangement subordinated women as a group, women themselves are not, of course, uniform in their characteristics and ambitions. Instead, some women have adapted to such pressures by becoming like men, for example, whereas others have created unique spaces for themselves in which dominant structures can be contested[95].

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[95] In addition, the thesis indicated, although not explored in depth, that certain groups of men are also disadvantaged within patriarchal power structures, particularly men who are unemployed are at risk through increasing alcohol problems. On various occasions it was pointed out by the respondents in the research that men who stay at home as unemployed, too, suffer from lack of opportunities for identity formation. Whereas women, through their multiple burdens, still had tasks to fulfill in the house and family this has been considerably less the case for men. Many respondents did, however, not regard drinking as a problem but as a way of coping with the transitions. Therefore, social problems of unemployed men are also likely to be underplayed if not neglected as potential problems that may evolve.

The following discussion will deal with the issues of patriarchal power and identity formation in relation to each other rather than in turn. It will first address the context of the former GDR and then turn to contemporary developments in the New Germany. The final section of this chapter will propose an agenda for further research based upon the findings of this thesis as well as questions that have emerged from it.

8.2. The construction of gendered identities in the GDR

When analysing the process of post-unification transformation on the basis of official documentation and anecdotal evidence it transpired that patriarchal power structures could be distinguished in three key developments: through land consolidation, through the way in which the labour process was organised and through socio-political power structures at the local level. Although the other elements also supported the consolidation and expression of patriarchal power, clearly the most consequential mechanisms affecting women at a day to day level were those associated with work, as this concerned virtually every part of their lives. The following section will illustrate the development and consolidation of patriarchal power structures in the GDR, with respect to the three mechanisms identified above.

8.2.1. Land consolidation

It was noted in chapter four that the forced collectivisation of land by the Soviet administration after the Second World War was the starting point for the subsequent development of socialist rural communities. Large landowners and political enemies had been disowned, and their land redistributed to small farmers and new settlers. Land consolidation and the establishment of a new social order proceeded in a gendered way whereby the previous, class-based and patriarchal distribution of power was abandoned and replaced with socialist, yet still patriarchal, power structures.

The oppression experienced by the land-owning class as a consequence of land consolidation predominantly affected men who had comprised the vast majority of large landowners and political adversaries. Therefore, the acquisition of land by the state effectively dismantled pre-war power relations in which men had played a dominant role. In fact, the more power they had, through ownership of land or

political status, the more dis-empowering the consequences of post-war developments were.

The redistribution of land to small farmers in the late 1940s took place largely according to traditional agricultural gender roles, since most settlers and new farmers adhered to conservative gender divisions of domestic work[96] and paid employment through previous family-based farming. Consequently, the agricultural development in the early post-war phase was, again, largely male-dominated. In spite of efforts to integrate more women into male agricultural sectors through the construction of lighter technical equipment, for example, such efforts were only temporary when men were unavailable to conduct this work. Nonetheless, there was a distinct and continuous political effort through educational measures and the creation of women's work, to fully integrate women into the workplace and the organisation surrounding it. *Frauenpolitik* (chapter four) and the establishment of a variety of community services facilitated female participation in the labour process and the combination of work with motherhood. In addition, state ideologies promoted the development of a space for social careers which largely implied voluntary engagements in the community. The latter in particular was remembered by respondents as a woman's space.

The political ideology allegedly promoted equality between all members of a community, i.e. between women and men. Through the development of LPGs, previous boundaries between those members who had contributed to the LPG with land and those who had joined merely by means of their workforce, were increasingly blurred. Men and women were similarly dis-empowered (Watson, 1995) because decisions regarding their location within the workforce as well as their preferment were determined at the level of the Party. However, the unequal nature of male and female work and the involvement of men and women in local politics re-established gender inequalities.

8.2.2. A gender-differentiated work-place

As noted above, the meticulous organisation of work - supported by socialist ideologies - assumed a key function in the subordination of women to patriarchal constructs, but also for women's means of identification and experience of

democracy. In chapter six it was argued that many of the jobs undertaken by rural women in the GDR were located within a group with other, predominantly female, co-workers. The structures within employment were often based upon typically 'female' traits such as caring, cleaning and nurturing, whereby women's natural capabilities were extended to the work-place, i.e. the public. The construction of female identity in the socialist community was consolidated through the nature of interaction between women in an all-female work context. Such "spatial arrangements [therefore] fix[ed] and construct[ed] women's identities" (Phua and Yeoh, 1998: 313). In addition, and although individual women were freed from household duties by making use of childcare services, mending services, canteens and other facilities, their domestic tasks were accomplished by other women. Despite claims of emancipation, the construction of femininity and the category 'woman' itself was therefore not altered merely by women's increased participation in the work-place. An observation made elsewhere can also be assumed in this context:

> "Such a 'genderised mode of labour substitution' [...] serve[d] to further entrench the patriarchal nature of gender roles in society because it simply change[d] the identity of the woman doing work that society regards as rightly theirs" (Huang and Yeoh, 1996: 489).

In contrast to women's group-based labour, men in the GDR conducted more work individually (even though as part of the collective or brigade). Rather than doing caring work in the animal sheds with piglets and calves, men's tasks reinforced attributes of masculinity[97]. Many men were in control of machines, driving tractors or combines on the fields or, if in leading positions, controlling labour power. The accounts by the respondents in this research indicated that men's work tasks frequently included more geographic or social mobility than women's even if carried out at the local level. Work in crop production, for instance, was located on large-scale fields within the community or, if part of a KAP, in other communities as well. Leading positions often incorporated journeys to other LPGs or the district city for meetings. Due to health restrictions in certain types of employment, for women but not for men, men's work often incorporated an element of risk.

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[96] See Reskin and Padavic (1994), for example, for wider context of women and work.

[97] For discussion of gender roles in agricultural work see, for example. Brandth (1995), Brandth and Haugen (1997; 1998).

It can further be argued that men's contribution to the state was believed to be of greater significance than women's, particularly if located within crop production. Within this sector, men's work contributed to the accumulation of national assets since grain was a significant part of international export. In addition, good harvests also enhanced the work of animal production. Crop production thus received greater financial assistance from the State. In contrast, women's labour was largely for the 'good of the community' such as in sectors aimed to alleviate housework burdens for working women such as cooks, childminders or cleaners. Women were therefore often placed at the lower end of the production chain and positioned to support more significant, male work (as stone collectors or crop harvesters on the fields, or as secretaries or administrators, for example). This was further reinforced by the lower representation of women in leading positions compared with men (chapter seven and, for example, Kolinsky, 1994, Winkler, 1974). The following section illustrates how the organisation of local politics contributed to maintaining the status quo in gender roles and relations.

8.2.3. Socio-political power

The Party adopted a patriarchal model to structure the social, political and economic space within communities. Although the political influence of LPG- and communal leaders was effectively limited through their subordination to decision-making at higher administrative and political levels, most significantly in Berlin, the fact that most leaders were also Party members gave them considerably more influence at the level of the community. For example, LPG leaders could exercise power in a counter-productive way by delaying infrastructure repairs within the community, or by obstructing the organisation of abundant social events.

Male-dominated power structures were, however, also obscured by the complexity of administrative levels and bureaucratic procedures involved in the organisation of work, politics and social life. Such structures had therefore become largely invisible to many common people who therefore blamed 'them up there' rather than individual local leaders for systemic problems. More immediate difficulties were solved in an amicable way with superiors who, in small villages, were often peoples' neighbours or friends. The research indicated that boundaries between

superiors and workers at the local level were largely blurred and, in everyday practice, there was little awareness of existing hierarchies.

It was noted above that women's involvement in voluntary communal activities was predominantly a result of state ideology and planning in which the female social space was facilitated by male political actors. For instance, women's furtherance plans (chapter four) and decisions about community services such as local shops and childcare were discussed and proposed by women themselves within women's committees but the implementation was verified by the (male) LPG leadership. Similarly, the nature of women's involvement in local groups was pre-determined by a political programme.

This entire pattern of where women and men worked, what tasks were performed and how, when and where they socialised was largely directed by the planned economy of the patriarchal State. Clearly, gendered spaces were constructed which resulted in a subordination of women as a group (see also Spain, 1992). Even the "furtherance of women's interest" (Bondi, 1992b: 244) through education, employment and committee work (and in the GDR explicitly through women's furtherance programmes), which Spain (1992) regarded as means to degender spaces, was channelled by overarching patriarchal powers. Women became dependent on the social context of the workplace and community both of which were subject to patriarchal power structures within the State, and maintained through political pressure. Hence, the place of women in society at large was never altered merely by the physical presence of women in what was previously the male public and work sector. Instead, public places, including the workplace, were subject to processes which, in fact, supported typical roles in society as woman or man.

8.2.4. Gendered identities and unfocused locales

Although the state constructed gendered identities and preserved gender roles through planning and policies, women in this research contested the subordination of their interests. Through a gender contract[98] (part of which was *Frauenpolitik*), women received assistance to alleviate the burden of domestic responsibilities (chapter four). Furthermore, women were often represented in the

media as hard working and complimented for their achievements as mothers and workers. Formal awards and the yearly celebration of the International Women's Day were another component of this gender contract by which women were thought to accept the trade of some of their freedoms and choices for personal benefits and public recognition. Women in this research stated they "believed every shit [the Party] told" them (Herta), and it is thus likely that women also believed such political arrangements were advantageous for them as individuals and the society as a whole. Chapters four and seven outlined memories which illustrate the feelings of pride and empowerment that women experienced within their daily routines.

Although, as noted above, women contested the fixed socio-political boundaries of their daily activities to a certain degree, they were generally not capable of making changes to the dominant patriarchal structures. Nonetheless, they did manage to negotiate daily activities within existing gender-boundaries in a way that largely satisfied. Women's own experiences presented a contrast to interpretations of social structures from a white Western feminist perspective. This may indicate that women suppressed the most upsetting impressions in order to move through their lives relatively undisturbed. Alternatively, some feminist perspectives may also risk underplaying the importance of micro-niches within patriarchal structures which also enabled women to establish empowering spaces.

Gendered identities were not solely constructed through women's integration into economic and socio-political processes subsumed to state ideologies and easily identified by outside observers. In fact, little can be said about identities without knowledge of what meaning actors themselves ascribed to daily activities and negotiations within such dominating structures. Therefore "explicitly inequitable divisions of labour" may indeed have left many women seemingly "untroubled" (Phua and Yeoh, 1998: 311). In the study area the extent to which women were content can be related to women's perceptions of personal benefits they gained from the gender contract. As will be discussed below, the presence of a number of "unfocused locales" (Dyck, 1990: 473), too, assumed an important role.

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[98] See also Perrons and Gönas (1998) for discussion in the European context.

Phua and Yeoh (1998), for example, discussed women's strategies to cope with superior structures in the public housing landscape developed in the home or neighbourhood. Similar observations about such counterspaces can be made in rural East Germany. The framework of reference is, in this case, the socio-political space constructed under the conditions of socialism whereas the locations for coping strategies are, for example, unfocused locales.

Unfocused locales are sites which "'emerge' during the course of the day's activities" (Dyck, 1990: 473). In this research context they included waiting for children at the nursery, kindergarten or school; standing in line at the shop or post office; attending various social events or other functions; chance meetings at the library, doctor's surgery, or hairdresser; or organised occasions such as birthday parties or weddings (see also chapters four and seven). Many of these sites were commonly associated with women's places. Dyck (1990) noted that they are "sites of communication, a communication which not only relays information, but negotiates, and shares meaning of available concepts" (p.481). She therefore acknowledged unfocused locales as sites that shape gendered identities and meanings "which are an inextricable part of the way knowledge of our geographical and social worlds is constructed" (p.482).

Judging from the accounts of women in this study, unfocused locales can be regarded as key places for the maintenance of their social networks and therefore contributed to their overall well-being and quality of life. Chapter five indicated how significant the loss of such sites was for women with regard to social spaces for communication. Moreover, it is important to note that unfocused locales had, like the work-place, been an element of identity formation. They constituted a space, or niche, in which women balanced inconsistencies in their lives, such as clashes with political ideology, and where women generally did not feel oppressed. As will be discussed below, the significance of such places became even more pronounced, retrospectively, as women's daily routines were severely disturbed by the effects of German unification.

8.3. The re-construction of gendered identities in the New Germany

There was a general notion that the unification of the two Germanies would be advantageous for the development of East Germany. Politically, the decision-

makers were quick to abandon the values and ideologies of socialism. Few commentators doubted the benefits that capitalism would bring the former GDR. However, it was suggested in chapter five that the enthusiasm for German unification conveyed by the media was not uniform throughout the former GDR. In the study area it was observed that unification was largely experienced as a sudden, even tragic, disruption to the relative continuity in rural areas. Although, in the wider context, greater wealth and inter-German communication were anticipated, this milestone in German history was overshadowed by a sense of loss and disorientation for many women. The adoption of Western market principles led to economic transformations which, at the local level, caused significant social problems. It transpired that, as was noted elsewhere. the mode of capital operation was not "merely without borders, but without responsibility" (Eisenstein, 1997: 144). Political freedom and economic progress did, for instance, not change the position of women in the new Germany. Instead, the three mechanism that were identified as contributing toward the consolidation of patriarchal power structures in the GDR, (1) land consolidation; (2) the organisation of the labour process; and (3) socio-political participation, are also evident as elements of post-unification transformations. The followig sections therefore aim to retrace the nature of such processes in the context of the New Germany.

8.3.1. Land consolidation

The privatisation of agricultural co-operatives was intended to facilitate a foundation for democracy but also led to the fragmentation of land and property. In particular the return of West Germans who reclaimed their land resulted in feelings of anxiety and resentment amongst locals, and was often referred to as colonisation. The procedure of redistributing property was based on ownership structures that were abandoned between 1933 and 1945, and 1949 and 1960 (chapter five). As noted in the preceding section above, ownership at that time was more likely to be male than female as women were predominantly farm helpers or housewives. The result of property restitution after the Wende therefore re-established male-dominated ownership structures. Where land was not re-possessed by original owners it was sold to predominantly Western business persons or enterprises. Due to gendered patterns in Western leadership (see example, Reskin and Padavic, 1994), emerging ownership structures in

agriculture were determined by male leadership. Agricultural decision-making and subsequent economic development, previously marked by patriarcha structures in socialism, were replaced by male-dominated and market-oriented ideologies.

From the outset, unification therefore established structures that imposed barriers to women's participation in decision-making. However, in addition to a gender-differentiated process of property restitution the subsequent establishment of new agricultural structures was largely class-differentiated. For example few local farmers had assets to continue the operation of large-scale farms. Many Western competitors, however, could access greater financial resources which were then used to equip themselves with modern machinery and sufficient land. In addition, many Western businesses were part of established networks that facilitated rapid inclusion into the market economy. Although not much investment was made, particularly in the study area, the impact on physical space, and social space associated with this, was significant. Where funds were available, farm buildings were modernised, and property fenced off and marked by company signs creating visible symbols of progress or intrusion, depending on the standpoint held (see figures 5.1.a and 5.1.b). Chapter five illustrated, through examples from the study, the type and nature of conflicts which caused social disruptions at the local level.

The implementation of Western regulations in this context raises further points of criticism. Although extensively practised in the West, it was pointed out in chapter five, that a number of procedures had been questioned by some Western commentators. In Western democratic society, laws and regulations are regarded as expressions of universal interests. It is questionable, though, if such universal interests were, in fact, determined adequately or were rather a matter of political convenience. Although no assessment of political intent can be made, the observed consequences for women in this study indicate that there is a need for critical review of contemporary, rural political strategies and the application of a gender-impact assessment for future policies. In the following sections, I will discuss the impact of changes in the labour market on the formation of power structures and the re-construction of gendered identities in the studied area.

8.3.2. A gender-differentiated work-place

The unequal integration of men and women into the labour market, discussed in chapter six, was largely based on conservative and discriminatory employment practices. The subsequent social diversification in rural villages unleashed both previously dormant and newly composed social conflicts. The process of re-negotiation of identity and social boundaries caused many middle-aged unemployed women and single unemployed mothers to become marginalised. Although a number of side effects of post-unification transformations were noted by the respondents, such as the vast increase in crimes and youth delinquency, these were regarded as symptoms of unemployment.

Unemployment in the GDR did not officially exist but the way in which employment was organised by the state suggested to many recent commentators that unemployment was merely concealed. Irrespective of discussions about the adequacy and productivity of work, the workplace constituted the most significant element of women's daily routines under socialism.

In addition, events after unification eradicated the conditions of the socialist gender contract and construction of gendered identities. The contemporary gender contract is no longer matched to the personal benefits women received as mothers and workers in the GDR. Instead it embraced almost exclusively conditions determined by the traditional family unit (see reference to Bismarckian model in chapter six). Women were therefore encouraged to establish identities around the domestic sphere and in the context of motherhood.

Signs of a re-gendering of employment and associated power structures were evident in this study (Bondi, 1992b). A key informant in Wüste, for example, described changes in the animal sector. In contrast to the dozens of women who were employed as milking personnel prior to unification, there were only two full- and one part-time male staff who operated the milking machines since the *Wende*. The explanation given for this dramatic change was not economic rationalisation per se. Instead, it was stated that the work task included a greater level of responsibility as machinery, worth tens of thousands of Marks, needed to be operated. The respondent referred to male attributes such as greater confidence

and flexibility rather than qualifications which were predominantly equivalent to those of women.

Another example is the changing nature of previous female employment in the public sector, such as banking. The banking profession experienced an increase in public status in the New Germany compared to that in the GDR (see also Einhorn, 1993b). At the same time, however, there was a rise in male employees effectively pushing women out of what had been a typical female employment sector (see also chapter six).

The nature of the work-place, has changed less for men than for women. With regard to the process of identity formation around work, women were therefore more likely to experience conflicts. McDowell (1992b) noted that "women's identity is constructed through relations with others rather than, as is the case with men, through the separation of self from others" (p.411). As discussed above, much of men's work in the GDR was carried out individually compared with women's group-based labour. Those women who were still employed after the *Wende* encountered contemporary work practices which were generally more individualistic and impeded the formation of identity through relations with others (chapter six). This was even more evident for those unemployed women who withdrew into isolation. Furthermore, women's lives in the GDR had been more static, or rooted, as their geographic and social mobility was more restricted than that of men. Many women found the flexibility required for a number of employment sectors and career advancement problematic because it was against their nature or even seen as Western.

An underlying process which took place as a result of such challenges was a pollution (Cameron, 1998) of previously fixed identities as men or women (and *Wessis* and *Ossis*). In this particular case, "the idea of fixed and opposed gender groups [was] blurred" (Cameron, 1998: 294), although more for women who, as noted above, experienced greater changes than men. Many women had regarded themselves as equal to men, working as hard as men in the GDR, if not harder (*ihren Mann stehen*). Certain women were even considered to be like men (*Mannsweib*). With regard to the household income, women contributed up to 40% of the total income and were therefore more or less economic partners in a

marriage (chapter six). Losing full-time employment largely resulted in women's allocation to the domestic sphere as mothers and wives, and dependence on a husband's income or state benefits. Ironically, women were made to believe that the home ought to be their prime source of identity formation once a traditional gender role model had been put into place.

However, having sought a means for identification through the workplace it is likely that women will ascribe at least some importance to their employment status for identity formation rather than reverting entirely to the domestic sphere. This is, obviously, a dilemma as many women are unemployed and therefore socially stigmatised. Women initially blamed themselves for their joblessness although stigmatisation takes place on a larger scale. Within a community, unemployment is often associated with problem families, laziness, or alcohol problems. For these reasons, even normal families are at risk of being labelled and marginalised if the parents are unemployed. Having undergone social diversification, the village offers little scope for women to link into networks which can provide motivation or connections to move on from their joblessness to employment opportunities and thus widen their choices (see also Hanson and Pratt, 1991).

With regard to the choices women have on the labour market, they are perhaps more likely to accept *ABM* work in the green sector because they are more competent in work tasks experienced in the previous context of the LPG. Therefore, women believe they are less likely to experience personal failure in a new job or job training. Women therefore actively and consciously try to avoid complying with characteristics ascribed to the category unemployed, such as being incapable of accomplishing more demanding tasks. But at the same time women reproduce stereotypes by not challenging both themselves and such social categories. Although the nature of work in the green sector may be familiar to many women, the social status obtained is certainly different to that in the GDR. Many, predominantly male, respondents in this research stated that women's work in the GDR was hard and often undesirable but that women were admired for their strength and stamina and awarded public status. In the New Germany the nature of *ABMs* can, in some cases, be associated with social failures. This is, however, also gender-differentiated as men are more often allocated either in leading or

supervisory positions or, at the opposing end of the spectrum, outside these structures when having alcohol problems (chapter six).

As many women remain in such structures without challenging either their position within, or the nature of structures themselves, it becomes more difficult for them to break out. In addition, the *Arbeitsamt* or potential employers often function as gatekeepers who form and consolidate gendered patterns in the labour market and contribute to the institutionalisation of gendered identities (see also Schmitt, 1998). Once constructed, such boundaries can entrap both men and women in existing gender roles through the distribution of labour, conditions within the domestic sphere and the gender contract in general.

The discussion of developments in the GDR above reinforced similar processes and outcomes of the re-gendering of space. However, it was also noted that women themselves felt equal and emancipated not suppressed. The nature of the gender contract and the presence of unfocused locales were identified as key denominators in women's overall contentment with their position in the village. It was argued that the changing nature of employment practices and work-place requirements as well as the disruptions of social networks have posed considerable problems to women's adaptation and identity formation. With regard to unfocused sites, chapters five and seven already noted the reduction of community services and the impact on the social bonds in the village. The following section suggest that there were, however, at least some spaces that still contributed to women's identity formation.

8.3.3. Gendered identities and unfocused locales

It was noted earlier that the processes of privatisation and rationalisation since unification resulted in the presence of few physical sites offering space for spontaneous social interaction and negotiation of meanings. In addition, there were considerably fewer community events which women helped organise and in which they participated. Nonetheless, the accounts of some respondents suggested that there were some alternative locales. One respondent, for example, described gossip networks. Although reference was made to women as a group and with a negative connotation, the significance of such networks should not be dismissed lightly.

On the one hand, spontaneous gatherings of this kind offered women an opportunity to communicate and discuss their daily activities as well as the impact of post-unification changes on their lives. On the other hand, women may have found a means of identification in these networks. As a result of the social diversification in the village, many women who were part of sporadically formed gossip networks were largely either middle-aged unemployed women, or senior citizens, who spent much of their time in the village. As they were less mobile both geographically and socially than (commuting) employed women, they no longer shared common experiences and were, to some extent, left behind. Many women experienced self-doubt and had to cope with being categorised as a social group they did not wish to belong to. The presence of gossip networks therefore presented a space for these women to be part of a group which in itself negotiated an identity through each other rather than comply with the stigmatised image of the unemployed. Although this identification process did adopt a strong demarcation from other women through gossip at the time, it may have been an essential strategy for women who tried to cope with the multiple stresses imposed upon them by unification.

The diversification of social groups according to gender and class has resulted in the creation and utilisation of different social, economic and political spaces. As meanings were largely negotiated through communication within the boundaries of a peer group, emerging concepts and strategies were not necessarily relevant to members of other groups. This then shed significant doubts on the adequacy of employing universal interests in socio-political decision-making within a democracy. As discussed above, an emphasis on property and the way in which property has been accumulated automatically establishes gender- and class-differentiating patterns. Consequently, the development of democratic citizenship within such boundaries excludes marginalised groups whereby women are "*made absent*" (Eisenstein, 1997: 156, original emphasis). Therefore, in contrast to observations for the GDR, contemporary processes at the local level show little evidence supporting empowering functions of unfocused locales due to predominantly socio-economic conflicts. There is evidence from earlier studies (for instance, Kamenista 1997; 1998) that feminist movements have resulted in the empowerment of women elsewhere but the data for this study do not replicate

such findings in the rural context. With regard to the empowerment of women as a group within the new German framework, general criticisms discussed within the feminist literature can be supported though this thesis as well. The last section will therefore conclude with some comments on the persistence of patriarchal concepts in contemporary politics.

8.3.4. Patriarchal politics

In the New Germany, no claim of a functioning democracy that promotes equality can truthfully be made as long as universal interests are determined largely by those *within* power structures. This argument draws from Lister's (1997) discussion of differentiated universalism whereby, in theory, "universalism is understood [...] not as a false impartiality but as a 'universality of moral commitment' to the equal worth and participation of all" by means of "shift[ing] views in dialogue with others" (p. 39)[99]. Although difficulties are acknowledged, particularly with regard to the problem of marginalised groups in entering such a dialogue, two approaches are suggested to facilitate "transversal politics" (see also Yuval-Davis, 1997). First, it is proposed that perceptible disadvantages which prevent certain groups from acquiring a status as citizens should be taken into account. Lister (1997) exemplified those related to cultural and linguistic difference. Second, different needs, according to cultural and historical interpretations should be the foundation of citizenship.

The research for this thesis indicated that if a "politics of needs interpretation" (Lister, 1997: 41) were applied to democratic development in the New Germany, a variety of issues (see chapter seven) concerning women needed to be addressed as "genuine political issues as opposed to 'private' domestic or market matters" (Lister, 1997: 41-42). Enabling structures should be put into place allowing women to become more politically active in order to fulfil what some commentators have regarded as "citizenship obligation" (see discussions in Lister, 1997; Yuval-Davis, 1997). The participation in local issues and women's groups assume a significant role as a means of gaining self-confidence, power and skills for wider political engagement (see chapter seven). The few groups that operated

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[99] See also special issue of *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space (1995)*, volume 13, and particularly contributions by Massey (1995), Mouffe (1995) and Natter (1995) on radical democracy

in the study area had indeed begun to develop such skills. However, Lister (1997) reiterated that this

> "does not mean [...] ignoring the continuing need both to open up formal political arenas to women and also make formal politics more accountable to informal." (p.34)

The disintegration of barriers toward political engagement and the stereotyping of the unemployed as incompetent political actors remain issues that must be seriously addressed. The facilitation of local groups is significant for providing unfocused spaces for socialisation, identification and political discussion within and between groups. Although such spaces are essential for the strengthening of the local context, efforts must not terminate at this level. As noted by earlier commentators, they must be regarded as a stepping stone to wider social and political change aimed at improving quality of life and building more effective and inclusive citizenship rather than a type of citizenship marked by the privileged (Yuval-Davis, 1997).

8.4. Further research

Although this thesis has addressed a variety of previously under-explored themes, the research foci on rural women in East Germany, and the construction of gendered identities and consolidation of patriarchal power in this regional context has certainly not been exhausted. The understanding gained from the analysis in this thesis has also raised questions and identified gaps which require further investigation particularly since the thesis has dealt with a relatively wide range of problems rather than a single, isolated issue.

A key concern of the thesis was to begin unfolding local social dynamics. Whilst valuable insights were gained from the accounts of predominantly unemployed, middle-aged women, the voices of other actors who were also part of such dynamics have largely remained silent. In order to fully understand the nature and extent of social problems and, perhaps, to seek adequate solutions, a wider audience needs to be consulted. This initially includes other groups of women such as those who are employed, older or younger, disabled, or lesbian, for example. In addition, the experiences of men should be investigated including the variety of different types of men (according to employment status, social status,

disability, sexual orientation, for example) within this group. The perspectives of more groups of actors in the village will then contribute to an enhanced understanding of social dynamics.

With respect to such dynamics, the formation of gendered identities from the standpoint of men in the village ought to be investigated as well. The presence of male unfocused locales prior to 1989 and since unification would complement the discussion initiated in this thesis. The thesis has assumed throughout, on the basis of literature and the accounts of female respondents, that identity formation which, in part, takes place in such locales is different for women and men. It has further been assumed that women are more disadvantaged through the implementation of patriarchal power structures, largely ignoring the fact that these are also structures determined by political class. Although it is likely to be the case that women *as a group* are more disadvantaged, even once male perspectives are known, the thesis has not investigated the possibility of identity problems for many men such as those who are unemployed, have alcohol problems but also of those in leading positions who have difficulties adjusting to the new ideologies in policy-making.

A focus of subsequent policy-based research should include an assessment of the local political culture in order to identify more clearly established barriers that exclude women from political engagement. It can be assumed that there is, perhaps, little awareness of such barriers by policy-makers themselves who have been pre-occupied with the adjustments necessary to move on from a socialist to a capitalist framework. An in-depth discussion about values and motives in politics would raise an understanding of local processes whilst, at the same time, sensitising local actors to the needs of women.

Regarding the specific needs of women, a number of research opportunities can be identified. Throughout the thesis, it was assumed that a white Western feminist perspective may not capture local processes adequately and therefore remains partial. The thesis attempted to adopt, in part, the standpoint of women respondents who largely reviewed processes from their socialist background and ascribed different meanings to place and space than perhaps their Western counterparts. It would therefore be beneficial to gather similar data from women

other post-socialist countries in order to determine if socialism is a significant factor, or if observed developments are region-specific. If, however, socialism is relevant in the interpretation of women's experience of issues such as unfocused locales, identity formation and power structure, for example, these findings can enhance a discussion about Western and Eastern feminism similar to that of white and black feminism.

With respect to research in a comparative context, the discussion of gendered citizenship and the suitability of the current economic rather than social focus in democracies should be of ongoing interest in research on women in post-socialist countries. In addition, more data capturing experiences of specifically rural women in such countries would be beneficial in assessing the impact of global economic and political changes on different regions.

Since data for this thesis were collected time has, of course, elapsed and the meaning of place and space for women may have been altered by more recent, positive or negative, developments. In particular the assessment of employment practices and inequalities on the labour market should continue to be of interest to academic researchers. This should not merely include a quantitative assessment of labour market changes but should also utilise women's daily experiences. In light of this discussion, a review of focused and unfocused locales can also prove to be useful. At the time of this research little could be said about the meaning of such spaces today as few such places had assumed significance. This may, as noted above, however, have changed and impacted on women's identity formation.

Last but not least, methodological experiments should further be encouraged. This thesis has used a mix of methods including correspondence and focus groups. Both methods appeared to offer potential for a respondent-oriented research which allowed in-depth insights of women's experiences whilst providing a sense of satisfaction and achievement for the respondents themselves. Experiences from further research with such methods especially with regard to their potential for ethically correct and empowering research could also complement discussions of feminist methods and methodologies.

It is not claimed that the outline of further research possibilities is comprehensive and complete as researchers with different special interests will undoubtedly identify further gaps. This can only be welcomed if the gendered changes in rural East Germany, or Eastern and Central Europe in general, are "to be understood with the depth they deserve" (Giarchi, 1996: 256). The breadth of opportunities is therefore encouraging also for prospects of pursuing useful knowledge within the research agendas of applied geographers, be they humanistic, radical, economic, political, regional, feminist or of any other kind.

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APPENDIX I: LIST OF JOURNALS

LIST OF JOURNALS CONSULTED FOR 'GEOGRAPHY ON WOMEN'

- Annals of the Association of American Geographers   1988-1998
- Antipode   1980-1998
- Applied Geography   1981-1998
- Area   1975-1999
- Economic Geography   1985-1998
- European Urban and Regional Studies   1994-1998
- Geoforum   1976-1998
- Geographical Journal   1974-1998
- Geographical Review   1985-1998
- Geography   1980-1999
- Journal of Geography in Higher Education   1988-1998
- Journal of Historical Geography   1980-1998
- Progress in Human Geography   1977-1998
- Scottish Geographical Magazine   1987-1998
- The Australian Geograper   1993-1998
- The Canadian Geographer   1974-1998
- Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers   1980-1998

APPENDIX II: CONSENT FORM AND QUESTIONNAIRE

Einverständniserklärung

Datum, Ort:

Name der Teilnehmerin (Druckschrift):

_____

Hiermit bestätige ich, dass ich mich über den Vorgang und die Ziele der heutigen Veranstaltung sowie der Teilnahme an einem Interview innerhalb des oben genannten Forschungsprojektes genügend informiert fühle. Ich nehme freiwillig an dem Interview teil und bin mit der Verwendung der Daten zum Zwecke der Arbeit einverstanden. Ich verstehe, dass keine meiner persönlichen Daten unter Angabe meines Namens kenntlich gemacht werden. Meine Angaben werden vertraulich und anonym behandelt. Im Falle einer Verwendung meiner Daten oder einer Veröffentlichung zu anderen Zwecken als angegeben, werde ich schriftlich informiert und um Genehmigung gebeten.

Im Falle einer Verwendung meiner Angaben innerhalb einem oder mehreren Teilen der Arbeit möchte ich im Vorfeld die entsprechenden Textpassagen lesen und kommentieren (bitte ankreuzen) ☐

Mir sind folgende Angelegenheiten im Rahmen dieser Einverständiniserklärung bzw. der Verwendung meiner Angaben ausserdem wichtig:

_____

_____

_____

Unterschrift:

_____

Name der Teilnehmerin

Ihre Altersgruppe (bitte zutreffende Angaben im Folgenden ankreuzen)

16-24 ☐   25-34 ☐   35-49 ☒   50-64 ☐   65+ ☐

Sind Sie

Alleinstehend? ☐   Zusammenlebend? ☐   Verheiratet? ☒

Haben Sie Kinder?

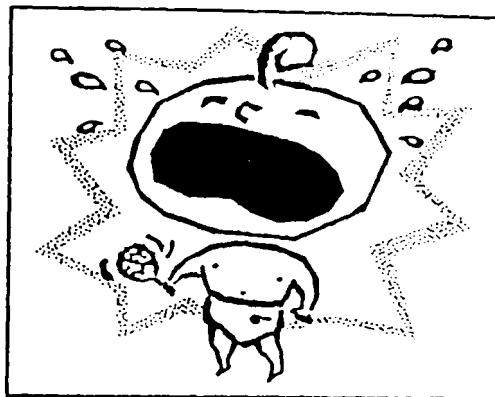Ja   ☒   Anzahl der Kinder _____2_____

              Alter der Kinder _____

Nein   ☐

Ihre Ausbildung ist   _Facharbeiter für Schreibtechnik_

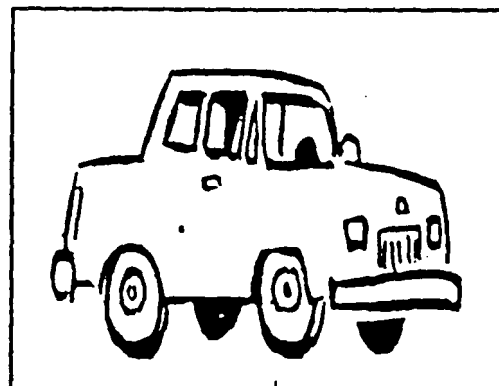Ihr Beruf ist   _Arztsekretärin_

Haben Sie eine Fahrerlaubnis?   Haben Sie ein Auto?

Ja   ☒   Ja   ☒

Nein   ☐   Nein   ☐

War es ein Problem am heutigen Termin zu kommen?

Ja   ☐   weil _____

              Besser ist _____

Nein   ☒

Sympathisieren Sie mit einer politischen Partei/ einem Verein?

Ja ☒ Welche(n)? _____ *PDS* _____

Nein ☐

Beschreiben Sie kurz Ihren Wohnort

_____ *Neustadtk* , *Krimkow* _____

_____

_____

Warum sind Sie heute gekommen/

welche Erwartungen hatten Sie?

möchte aufs Land ziehen und wollte dann die Probleme kennenlernen

Mit welchem Eindruck werden Sie heute nach Hause fahren?

mich selbst von Anfang an in die Belange des Dorfs einzumischen und etwas auf die Beine stellen

Vielen Dank!!

Bettina van Hoven

Mai 1997

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Fragenbogen

Name der Teilnehmerin

Ihre Altersgruppe (bitte zutreffende Angaben im Folgenden ankreuzen)

16-24 ☐   25-34 ☒   35-49 ☐   50-64 ☐   65+ ☐

Sind Sie

Alleinstehend? ☐   Zusammenlebend? ☒   Verheiratet? ☐
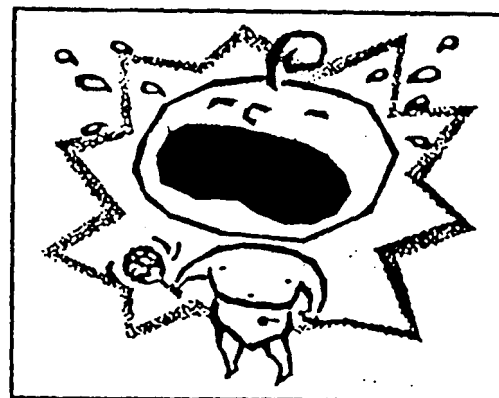
Haben Sie Kinder?

Ja ☒   Anzahl der Kinder   _2_

　　　　　　Alter der Kinder   _11 und 13_

Nein ☐

Ihre Ausbildung ist   _Pädagogin_

Ihr Beruf ist   _Sozialpädagogische Bildungsreferentin_

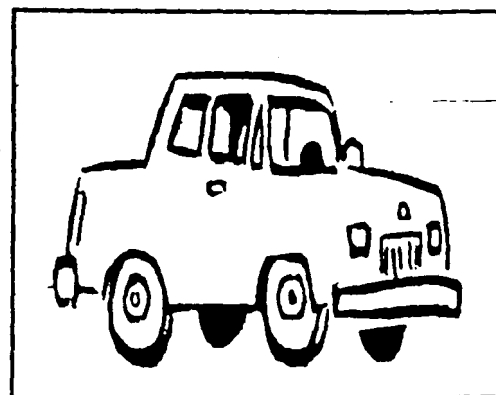Haben Sie eine Fahrerlaubnis?　　　Haben Sie ein Auto?

Ja ☒　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Ja ☒

Nein ☐　　　　　　　　　　　　　Nein ☐

War es ein Problem am heutigen Termin zu kommen?

Ja ☐   weil _____

　　　　　　Besser ist _____

Nein ☒

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Sympathisieren Sie mit einer politischen Partei/ einem Verein?

Ja ☐ Welche(n)? _____

Nein ☒

Beschreiben Sie kurz Ihren Wohnort

Ich gebe zu, dass mein Wohnort nicht gerade schön ist, aber ich fühle mich wohl, und ich möchte auf gar keinen Fall zurück in die Stadt. Es gibt in unserem Dorf noch keine schöne Straße und die Häuser sind überwiegend sanierungs-bedürftig. Aber ich denke, mit der Zeit werden sich diese Dinge ändern, und darauf freue ich mich.

Warum sind Sie heute gekommen/ welche Erwartungen hatten Sie?

Ich bin eigentlich aus purer Neugierde gekommen, und ich muss feststellen, dass es doch sehr interessant war, wie die älteren Frauen es damals gehabt haben.

Mit welchem Eindruck werden Sie heute nach Hause fahren?

Ganz sicher bin ich beim nächsten Mal wieder dabei. Schließlich hat man an diesem Nachmittag an 8 Dinge gedacht, bzw. über Dinge geredet, die man schon fast vergessen hat.

APPENDIX III: PHOTOS FROM EXCURSIONS

Fig. III.1. landscape near Wüste

Fig. III.2. Landscape near Achmer

Fig. III.3. Road into Charlottenburg

Fig. III.4. View of village near Wüste

Fig. III.5. View of Hellern

Fig. III.6. Village centre in Karlshorst

Fig. III.7. A focus group and me during the excursion

Fig. III.8. Focus group interview

APPENDIX IV: NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

Erschreckend hoher Alkohol-Konsum

II. Familienkonferenz des Landes in Züssow

Züssow (EB/CS). Mit seinem Kribbeln in den Beinen ist Herr M. aus Vorpommern schon einmal beim Arzt gewesen. Das liege am Trinken, bescheinigte ihm dieser. Herr M. hat weiter getrunken, rund eine halbe Flasche Schnaps am Tag. Erst als seine Kinder nichts mehr mit ihm zu tun haben wollten, seine Frau drohte, ihn zu verlassen, da entschied sich Herr M., in seinem Leben etwas zu ändern, Hilfe zu suchen, um dem Alkohol abzuschwören. Herr M.: „Ich will doch meine Familie nicht verlieren."

Es war nur ein Fallbeispiel, das Ulrich John, Direktor des Instituts für Epidemologie und Sozialmedizin Greifswald, gestern auf der II. Landesfamilienkonferenz in Züssow (Ostvorpommern) Sozialminister Hinrich Kuessner (SPD) und den anderen rund 70 Anwesenden in seinem Vortrag über Prävention, Früherkennung und Frühbehandlung aufgezeigt hat.

Daß Herr M. aber nicht ein Einzelbeispiel in Deutschland und besonders in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern ist, das beweisen die Zahlen. „Und es sind erschreckende Zahlen", sagte der Sozialminister. So werden pro Kopf im Jahr in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern rund 16 Liter Alkohol getrunken, in Vorpommern sind es sogar 17 Liter. Im Bundesdurchschnitt werden rund 6 Liter weniger konsumiert. Kein Wunder also: 90 000 Menschen im Nordosten Deutschlands sind als alkoholkrank einzustufen.

Früher eingreifen

Das Suchtproblem nur aus volkswirtschaftlicher Sicht zu betrachten, lehnte Kuessner ab, auch wenn die Kosten für die Behandlung von Suchtkranken und der wirtschaftliche Verlust durch Arbeitsausfälle sehr groß sei. Vielmehr müsse man viel früher ansetzen, noch bevor Alkoholismus auftrete

MV

H. Kuessner

beziehungsweise jemand süchtig sei. Das bedeute, daß nicht nur die Ursachen wie beispielsweise Jugendarbeitslosigkeit bekämpft, sondern vor allem präventiv gearbeitet werden müßte. Doch diese Art der Suchtpolitik, die auch das gesellschaftliche Bewußtsein schärfe, könne nicht im „Hauruckverfahren" arbeiten. Daher setze er vor strikten Verboten „wertvolle Gespräche als langfristige Strategien". Das erweise sich bei dem Vorschlag, keinen Alkohol mehr an Tankstellen zu verkaufen, als sehr positiv. „Hier sind jetzt die Tankstellenpächter von sich aus an uns herangetreten, um an diesem Vorhaben aktiv mitzuarbeiten", erläuterte der Sozialminister.

Feste Stellen geplant

Auch wenn laut Kuessner mittlerweile in Sachen Geld das „Ende der Fahnenstange" erreicht sei, sollen in den Kreisen des Landes ABM-Stellen in Beratungseinrichtungen in feste Arbeitsplätze umgewandelt werden. Das sei die Zielstellung und auch bereits im Haushalt 1998 eingeplant.

Wie wichtig die Arbeit in diesen Beratungen ist, machte die Leiterin der Regionalstelle für Suchtvorbeugung und Konfliktbewältigung Greifswald, Karin Böhme, deutlich. Es komme darauf an, das Selbstbewußtsein der Menschen zu stärken und zwar durch „Verbesserung der Kommunikationsfähigkeit", um Konflikte besser lösen zu können. Der Familie komme dabei eine besondere Rolle zu, schließlich erlernten in ihr die Kinder die Verhaltensweisen und damit auch die Fähigkeit, nein zu sagen.

Sozialminister beklagt Impfmüdigkeit im Land

Ärzte kündigen verstärkte Aufklärung zur Immunisierung an

Warnemünde (ADN/dpa). Mangelnder Impfschutz seit der Wende hat in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern dazu geführt, daß schwere Infektionskrankheiten nicht auf dem Rückmarsch sind. „Obwohl beispielsweise Keuchhusten vor der Wende fast ausgerottet war, werden derzeit wieder sechs Erkrankungen pro 100 000 Einwohner im Jahr gemeldet", sagte Sozialminister Hinrich Kuessner (SPD) auf dem 1. Landesimpftag am Wochenende in Warnemünde. Hatten sich zu DDR-Zeiten mehr als 90 Prozent der Einwohner gegen Keuchhusten impfen lassen, sind es jetzt nur noch rund drei Viertel der Bevölkerung, erklärte Kuessner.

Auch Masern- und Mumps-Erkrankungen gehörten in Mecklenburg-Vor-

Hinrich Kuessner.

pommern noch nicht der Vergangenheit an. Im vergangenen Jahr habe es etwa zwei Erkrankungen pro 100 000 Einwohner gegeben. Sehr gut dagegen sei das nordostdeutsche Bundesland bei der Zurückdrängung von Tetanus bei Neugeborenen und bei Fällen von Diphtherie und Kinderlähmung. Dort gab es in den vergangenen Jahren keine Meldungen über Krankheitsfälle.

Um die Vorsorge zu verbessern, wollen die Ärzte verstärkt über Impfungen aufklären. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

sei bundesweit das einzige Land, das alle Impfungen bis zum 18. Lebensjahr kostenlos anbiete, hieß es außerdem.

Besonders alarmierend sei die Impfvorsorge bei Jugendlichen, bei denen sich eine Impfmüdigkeit breitmache. Während Kinder bis zum zehnten Lebensjahr recht gut gegen alle Krankheiten laut Impfkalender immunisiert seien, betrage die Rate bei den Elf- bis 18jährigen nur noch 25 Prozent. Aber selbst bei den Impfungen im ersten und zweiten Lebensjahr gebe es Unterschiede. Erhielten 1996 noch 95 Prozent der Säuglinge den kompletten Impfschutz, wurden im zweiten Lebensjahr nur 75 Prozent der Kinder zur Wiederimpfung dem Arzt vorgestellt.

Montagskurier: ... alle Senioren

Dreimal mehr Alkoholtote als im Bundesschnitt

Rostock (dpa). Zur Eröffnung einer neuen Fachklinik für Suchtkranke hat Sozialminister Hinrich Kuessner (SPD) gestern in Rostock auf das große Problem der Alkoholkrankheit in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern hingewiesen. 1996 seien im Land rund 1450 Menschen daran gestorben – etwa dreimal mehr als im Bundesdurchschnitt. „Für bedrohlich halte ich auch, daß die Trinker immer jünger werden", sagte der Minister. Umfragen zufolge würden bereits sechs Prozent der 14- bis 18jährigen täglich Bier trinken und drei Prozent dieser Altersgruppe sogar schon hochprozentigen Alkohol konsumieren. Zur Beseitigung oder Linderung von alkoholbedingten Gesundheitsschäden müßten durch die Sozialversicherungsträger im Land jährlich rund 120 Millionen Mark aufgewendet werden. **Seite 5: Bericht**

Der Besser-Ossi

Dieser Typ hat sich hierzulande völlig zu Recht einen schlechten Ruf eingehandelt: Der „Besser-Wessi", der aus seiner vermeintlichen Unfehlbarkeit heraus meint, allen sagen zu müssen, wo's langzugehen hat. Allmählich etabliert sich daneben eine neue Spezies, der sogenannte Besser-Ossi. Einer von ihnen heißt Reinhard Höppner und ist SPD-Ministerpräsident von Sachsen-Anhalt. Nach seiner Einschätzung wird das (mentale) Zusammenwachsen von Ost- und Westdeutschen aufgrund unterschiedlicher Biographien noch Jahrzehnte dauern. Diese Äußerung zeigt, daß er vom Westen ungefähr soviel versteht wie gemeinhin Bürger der alten Bundesländer von Ostdeutschland. Denn es hat beispielsweise nie ein „Zusammenwachsen" zwischen rheinischer Fröhlichkeit, westfälischer Dickschädligkeit, bayerischer Grantelei und norddeutscher Kühle gegeben. Sowenig wie es in der DDR den Einheitsbürger gab: Da seien schon die Sachsen davor.

Gerade die Vielfalt macht den Reiz aus, und wer von deutschen „Stämmen" spricht, meint damit nicht irgendwelche völkischen „Blut- und Bodenwerte", sondern unterschiedliche Temperamente und Lebenseinstellungen. Die woher rühren? Richtig: Aus unterschiedlichen Biographien, Erfahrungen, Dialekten, aus urbaner oder ländlich geprägter Heimat. Der west-östliche Graben, von dem viele meinen, ihn ständig beschwören zu müssen, ist häufig nur eine fiktive Kluft – eine ideologische Brille. Nach dem Motto: Sagt der Wessi „wir sind ein Volk", antwortet der Ossi „wir auch". Umgekehrt gilt das ebenso.

Weil der Ton die Musik macht, hat Bonns neuer Regierungssprecher Otto (Kasper) Hauser soviel Kritik geerntet, als er den Ostdeutschen mit dem Holzhammer nahelegte, wen sie zu wählen hätten und wen nicht. Höppner macht's kein Stück besser, wenn er einräumt, der Westen habe zwar reichlich in die neuen Länder investiert, doch sei dies in Ostdeutschland weniger als Akt der Solidarität, sondern als Almosen empfunden worden. Jenen Arbeitslosen in den alten Bundesländern, die wegen der ABM-Mittel zugunsten des Ostens keinen Job bekommen können, geht bei soviel Arroganz das Messer in der Tasche auf. Aber es ist ja bekannt: Gegen Dummheit kämpfen selbst Götter vergebens.

Gerhard Deckl

Kopflos

Es ist beängstigend und beruhigend zugleich: Die rechtsextremistische DVU verfügt über Geldsummen, die es ihr leicht machen, einen intensiven Wahlkampf zu führen. Kein Wunder, der Münchner Verleger Frey wird auf rund 60 Millionen DM veranschlagt, und da kommt es auf ein paar Mille nicht an, um völkisches, ausländerfeindliches und antisemitisches Gedankengut unters Volk zu bringen. In Sachsen-Anhalt ist diese Strategie auch aufgegangen – mit einem zweistelligen Ergebnis bei der dortigen Landtagswahl. Zu verdanken hat das die DVU sicherlich auch dem Umstand, daß die Wähler nicht so genau wußten, auf was sie sich einlassen, wobei es schon interessant ist, daß rund 80 Prozent ihre Erststimme der PDS gegeben und mit der Zweitstimme für die DVU votiert haben. Diese Wahlanalyse beweist: Extreme berühren sich.

Beruhigend für unser Land ist, daß offenbar (noch) kein Prominenter zu finden ist, der sich in den Dienst der DVU stellen will. Bisher hat niemand sein Gewissen oder seine demokratische Grundüberzeugung für – erkleckliche – zwei Millionen Mark verkauft bzw. sich dafür vereinnahmen lassen. Das mag sich ändern, wenn die DVU die „Kopfprämie" erhöht. Aber eines wird damit ganz klar: Es handelt sich bei dem „Vorsitzenden in spe" nicht um einen Überzeugungstäter, sonst würde er sich freiwillig zur Verfügung gestellt haben, sondern um eine Marionette, der Mammon wichtiger ist als das eigene Gewissen.

Darin wird eine Schwäche der DVU offenkundig. Die Alt- und Neo-Nazis verfügen zwar in Ostdeutschland über ein gewisses Protest-Wählerpotential, aber strategische „Köpfe" und Führungspotential, die sind nicht so leicht zu finden. Und diese Tatsache eröffnet wiederum halbwegs gute Aussichten, daß die DVU den Sprung in den Landtag verpaßt, weil die Wähler im Land nach Sachsen-Anhalt wissen, um wen und was es sich bei dieser Partei handelt.

Gerhard Deckl

So richtig jubeln kann Jagoda nicht

Chef der Arbeitsämter verkündet Trendwende bei Beschäftigung – Doch Millionen suchen weiter einen Job

*Von den Korrespondenten
Matthias Röder (dpa) und
Anja Schiffel (AP)*

Nürnberg. Am Anfang stand die ungewöhnliche Geste. Mit erhobenem Daumen signalisierte Bernhard Jagoda seine Erleichterung und zeigte auf den abwärts gerichteten roten Pfeil auf der Tafel: Erstmals seit August 1995 war im Mai die Zahl der Erwerbslosen geringer als im Vorjahr. „Für den Arbeitsmarkt war der Mai auch ein Wonnemonat", freute sich, der Präsident der Nürnberger Bundesanstalt für Arbeit bei der Vorlage der jüngsten Statistik. Der Rückgang ist aber für den Chef der Arbeitsämter kein Grund zu ungetrübtem Jubel. „Bei aller Freude dürfen wir nicht verkennen, daß noch fast 4,2 Millionen Menschen eine Arbeit suchen."

Ob bewußt oder unbewußt – jedenfalls nahm Jagoda in der nur 22minütigen Pressekonferenz das Wort „Trendwende" nicht in den Mund, sondern sprach lieber von einem „schönen Etappenziel". Die Bundesanstalt erklärte jedoch später die Langfassung des Arbeitsmarktberichts mit dem in der politischen Diskussion höchst umstrittenen Wort für autorisiert. Im Westen sei die Trendwende da.

Experten warnen

Die Warnung vor verfrühtem Jubel kam gestern nicht nur von SPD- oder Gewerkschaftsseite. Auch einige Wirtschaftsinstitute sahen erst einen bescheidenen Anfang gemacht. Unbestritten ist, daß die gewaltige Ausweitung der Arbeitsmarktpolitik speziell im Osten die Lage dort günstiger erscheinen läßt als sie ist.
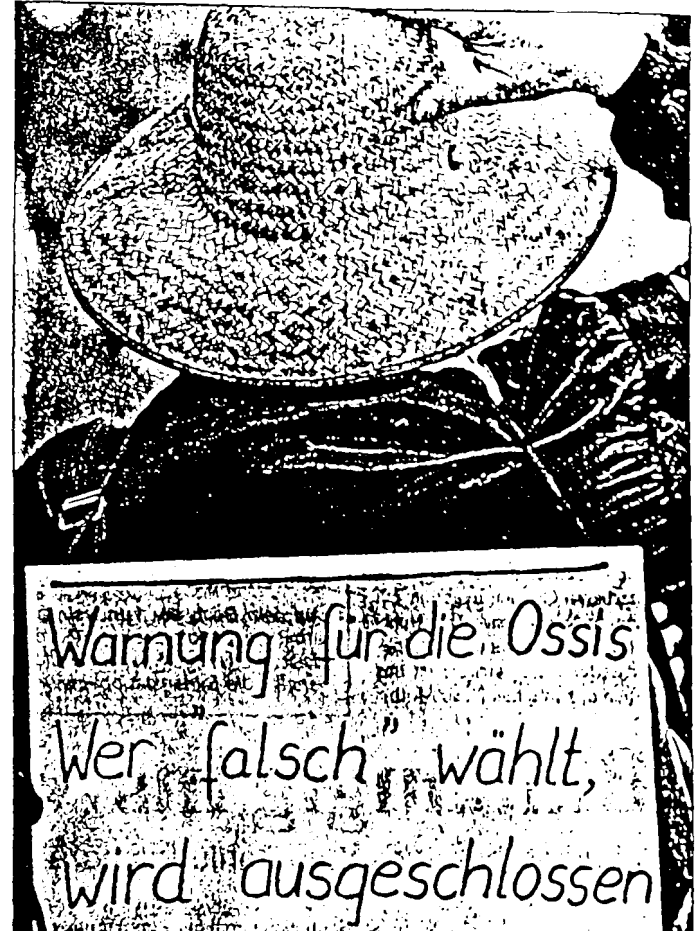
„Es wird noch sehr, sehr lange dauern, bis wir befriedigende Ergebnisse bekommen", meinte der Arbeitsmarkt-Experte des Deutschen Instituts für Wirtschaftsforschung (DIW), Wolfgang Scheremet, in Berlin. Wachstumsraten von über drei Prozent, also mehr als für 1998 prognostiziert, seien für einen deutlichen Abbau der Jobmisere erforderlich.

Als Lohn der Lohnzurückhaltung interpretierte dagegen das Kieler Weltwirtschaftsinstitut die „erste Tendenz für eine Besserung". Für ein spürbares Abschmelzen der Massenarbeitslosigkeit sei aber noch ein langer Atem erforderlich. Nach der Rezession zu Beginn der 80er Jahre habe es sechs Jahre gedauert, bis rund 1,5 Millionen neue Arbeitsplätze entstanden seien, betonte Harmen Lehment vom Kieler Institut. Die Arbeitslosigkeit auf zumindest 3,5 Millionen zu drücken, sei eher ein Ziel für das kommende Jahrtausend, meinte DIW-Fachmann Scheremet.

Jubel wollte gerade auch bei den ostdeutschen Gewerkschaften nicht aufkommen. Der sächsische DGB-Vorsitzende Hajo Lucassen warnte vor Euphorie: „Eine Trendwende sieht anders aus. Ich erwarte von den Unternehmen, wenn sie tatsächlich ein überdurchschnittliches Wachstum in Ostdeutschland erleben wollen, daß sie auch Leute einstellen." Es bestehe die Gefahr, daß die Bundesregierung aus wahltaktischen Gründen die Arbeitsmarkt-Instrumente nur noch bis zum Jahresende einsetze. „Eine wirtschaftliche Eigendynamik im Osten Deutschlands ist jedoch keineswegs zu erkennen", erklärte die stellvertretende DAG-Vorsitzende Ursula Konitzer in Hamburg.

Proteste fortgesetzt

In Thüringen, von Jagoda als dasjenige der neuen Länder mit dem geringsten Arbeitslosenzuwachs binnen Jahresfrist hervorgehoben, gingen gestern in 18 Städten Tausende Arbeitslose auf die Straße. „Zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik waren in Thüringen etwa 154000 Menschen ohne Arbeit, heute sind es schon Frauen und Männer, die keinen Job haben", betonte der Vorsitzende der Arbeitsloseninitiative Thüringen, Hans-Hermann Hoffmann. Eine Trendwende lag für ihn noch in weiter Ferne. Auch in anderen Städten ließen sich die Arbeitslosen nicht von den gesunkenen Mai-Zahlen beeindrucken und protestierten. Am fünften derartigen Aktionstag sollen sich nach Angaben der Veranstalter rund 50000 Menschen in über 300 Städten beteiligt haben. Einer der zentralen Orte war Weimar mit rund 800 Teilnehmern, wie Beobachter berichteten. An den meisten Veranstaltungen nahmen allerdings nur jeweils rund 50 Menschen teil.

Ihren Unmut über die Regierungspolitik macht eine Erwerbslose bei der Protestaktion von Arbeitslosen in Berlin auf diese Art deutlich. Fotos (2): dpa

APPENDIX V: BRIGADE BOOK EXAMPLES

Kann Alkohol

krankhaft wirken?
Auch in unserer Brigade werden wir mit dem Teufel Alkohol nicht ganz fertig.

Der Produktionsleiter sagt, das diese Menschen krank sind.

Doch die

## Meinungen

gehen da weit auseinander.

Frau Scheibel unsere Lehrausbilderin, reiste für 3 Tage in die CSSR.

Der XI. Parteitag brachte durch seine neuen sozial-politischen Maßnahmen auch für unsere jungen Muttis in der Brigade große Vorteile.
2 Kolleginnen nutzen ihr Babyjahr u. müssen in der Brigade ersetzt werden.

Kollegin B. Strebe hat
Hochzeit!

Herzlichen Glückwunsch
von der Brigade!

311
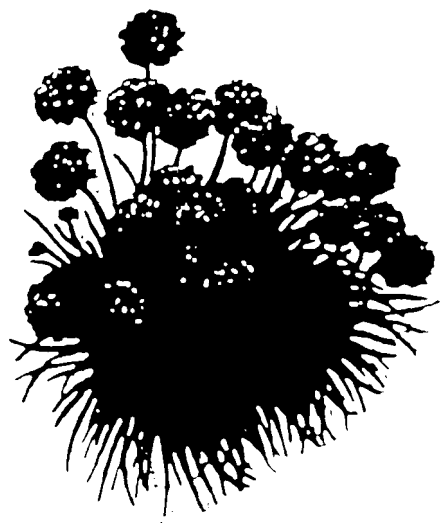
Denken die Pflanzenbauern
wir sollten uns
so helfen?

"Als Pflanzenproduzent versteht man doch
etwas von der Tierhaltung; nur
warum kommt da keine Milch heraus?"

Was hat die Leitung unseres
Betriebes bisher unternommen?
Es sollte innerhalb der Brigade
mit den Pflanzenproduzenten
diskutiert werden.
Lohnabzüge allein tragen auch
nicht zur besseren Arbeitsmoral
des Kollektivs bei.

8. März

Auch in diesem Jahr wurde der internationale Frauentag in unserer Genossenschaft gefeiert.

Alle Frauen waren herzlich eingeladen. Aus unserem Kollektiv wurde die Kollegin Inge Rothkämper mit der „Ehrennadel der LPG" u. einer Geldprämie ausgezeichnet.

Die Pioniere unserer Patenklasse überbrachten uns Glückwünsche u. Blumen an unserem Ehrentage.

Am 21. März 1980 wurde in Zarnekow Kr. Demmin das diesjährige Bezirksleistungs-melken durchgeführt.

Aus unserer Brigade nahmen die Kollegin Strebe u. der Koll. Jürgen Schulz daran teil.

Koll. Schulz belegte den 8. Platz u. Kollegin Strebe den 10. Platz.

Von der Leitung war dieses Melken unzureichend vorbereitet.

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Es war eine schöne Feier, sehr gemütlich
aber die Beteiligung war schwach.
Die Kolleginnen Knoll u. Schultz
wurden ausgezeichnet.
Sie leisten ausgezeichnete Arbeit
im Kälberstall des Betriebes.
Herzlichen Glückwunsch dazu.
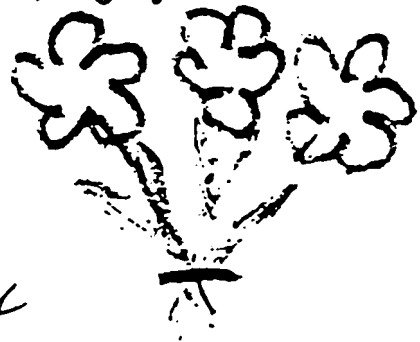
An dieser Stelle muß
auch einmal gesagt
werden, das an diesem Ehrentag
aller Frauen, auch an die Kranken
u. an die Alten unseres Betriebes
gedacht werden sollte. Haben wir
nicht ein kl. Geschenk oder ein
Stückchen Kuchen übrig. Diese
Frauen würden sich sicher darüber
freuen, denn auch sie haben Ihr
Bestes vor Jahren.
Der Frauenausschuß des Betriebes
sollte sich auch mal Gedanken
machen.