TITLE: EAST AND WEST SQUATTERS IN BERLIN: EXPERIENCES BEFORE AND AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE WALL

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Because major East-West sociocultural differences have not been taken into account in the German unification and transformation process—as researched during my year of participant observation in eastern Germany—policy makers have been unprepared for effectively addressing growing, crucial social needs for adequate, safe, and affordable housing in eastern Germany. Neglecting an understanding of these differences in policy designs today undoubtedly will lead to more frustration, anxiety, and anger, which not only can impede the transformation process of eastern Germany, but also might harbor impending social demands for a return of the previously held right to a shelter at a rental rate affordable to the tenants.

In this report I present a conjunctural analysis of a particular urban social context of eastern Germany: I describe the growing yet still segmented housing conflicts which—if my predictions based on participant observation materialize—might develop into open conflicts. The case study on which this report is based presents the urban problematic from the perspective of the urban squatter movement. With this particular case study I describe the social process of unification and how this process is culturally expressed in everyday life when eastern and western German actors meet.

Hidden squatting, with a focus on individual dwellings for personal needs, existed in East Berlin for over a decade prior to German unification as a result of housing shortages and state budget restrictions in the socialist redistributive system of East Germany. "Officially sanctioned" administrative allocations of housing, whereby higher status, higher income individuals were provided with modern, preferred apartment arrangements, created housing inequalities through an administrative mechanism of personal favoritism and reciprocal exchanges of scarce goods. In the 1980s, many East Germans in need of living spaces and fed up with long waiting lists saw closed-down, unoccupied, dilapidated living units
as places where they could make minimal repairs or renovations and become squatters, either legalized or illegal. Finding such urban living spaces was often accompanied by one's need to pay for renovations, police-residence fees, or fines issued to illegal squatters.

The transitional period of legal and political vacuum which followed the collapse of the GDR brought about a tremendous social and cultural disorientation for East Germans. East Berlin administrative officials distanced themselves from their responsibilities for safeguarding public life, which added to the chaotic day-by-day conditions in eastern Berlin. Confusion from this vacuum was accompanied by adventurous opportunities for others who emerged as grassroots groups addressing the urgent need for urban living spaces. Occupation of vacated housing units was considered by participants of the legendary round tables to be legal, and several multi-dwelling blocks of housing were represented by their tenants in a council whose aim was to occupy dwellings which had been vacated under the former urban administration's "strategy of vacancy." These new squatters consciously developed social networks among council members, testing their abilities to engage in personal, political, and legal experiences unknown to the hidden squatters of the former GDR. In opposition to the new and different hierarchical controls of the intruding housing enterprises administered by the communal urban district centers, squatters and councils negotiated future housing reconstruction plans and property relations with the city administrators. The democratic tendency of these days' negotiations was short lived, however. New urban rules called for more city control of occupied dwellings, and with the forceful police action of vacating squatters from the symbolic-center space of Mainzer Strasse on 14 November 1990, the adventurous-yet-struggling eastern Berlin squatters were dealt a major blow.

The western Berlin squatters in eastern Berlin brought with them their collective experiences and habitus, or "feel for the game" of conflict resolution and decision-making practices. These initially impressed the eastern Berlin squatters, but after a while the Ossies began to realize that the Wessies were trying to
idealize the socialism of the former GDR, which frustrated the Ossies and demonstrated the Wessies' lack of seriousness and understanding of distinct East German sociocultural experiences. The "inculcated, generative and transposable" dispositions of Bourdieu's concept "habitus" offer an analytical tool for distinguishing the unique attitudes and social actions in different social fields of different actors. However, when the actor's habitus collapses overnight and the ideological identity of the person is delegitimized, the concept cannot adequately address the despair of the issue of one's transformation of history and identity within a different society's habitus. Among all other dispositions in their respective, distinct habitus, the East and West Berlin squatters seem to have one near-common disposition, namely, that toward active resistance. Both groups of squatters hold and express a mutual commitment to political resentment and resistance toward the rigidity of the socialist state and the capitalist state. Both groups vehemently resist both states' patriarchal kinship systems, the nuclear family unit with its particular-residence rules and accompanying housing practices, and the reproduction of housing inequalities, whether in the market economy of the capitalist welfare state, or within the allocative economy of the rational socialist state. In short, the east and west squatters' political practice of "anticulture" production is directed against all patriarchal states which, for the squatters, reproduce authoritarian habitus structures that are antithetical to the newly forming democratic structures in urban communities. It is possible that the uprooted tenant residents in eastern Berlin will soon join the resistance and struggle to remain in their old dwellings, especially in light of the growing economic conditions of drastic rent increases, rising unemployment, and a new individual tenant responsibility for the economic caretaking of their buildings.

It is my hypothesis that both groups of squatters acquired in their societies distinct 'practical senses' or different 'feelings for the [urban] games' (Bourdieu 1991, 12). The experiences of an East German female squatter, "Jette," reflect and represent a pattern of eastern German views which demonstrate the eastern German perception that western Germans do not understand, or do not seriously
try to understand, the dramatic sociocultural experiences of former East Germans. To the extent that the "invited colonizers"--the term used by my informants for the West German political society--do not acknowledge the different social and historical contexts of east German actors and their differing habitus, German unification will be impaired for many years to come by the resistances among politically overpowered--and at the same time culturally disempowered--people in eastern Germany.

For the German unification process to carry out its political and economic goals there must be a vast sociocultural look back into the time and space of former East Germans who now are located in a unified state which recognizes only one habitus as legitimate. German unification actions which hesitate to allow for the sociocultural transition of a society which taught and inculcated different ways of dealing with people and problems--such as needs for adequate, safe, and affordable housing--will have to undertake parallel actions of addressing the social turmoil in eastern (at least) Germany that is growing out of the initial policy failure to incorporate, transitionally, a people's different ideological and societal "practical sense."

It is my further hypothesis that for research undertaken in other former socialist countries of eastern Europe undergoing similar transformations, particularly in urban areas, the general findings and conclusion of this research report have a high probability of being similar, and therefore such dismal transformational conditions could and should be addressed more effectively through a holistic understanding and incorporation of peoples' historical differences in their "regular" perceptions, attitudes, and practices, and thus their identities. In those former socialist countries where transformational policies are now being designed for the privatization of housing--a resource that previously was allocated by the previous state--such policies should take into consideration the shortages of adequate housing and the transformational sociocultural differences that have been found to be so problematic in the present case of German unification.
NOTES

1. Throughout this report I refer to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) as it was before the 3 October 1990 unification by using the capitalized country name "West Germany." The terms "West German" and "western German," respectively, refer to the FRG before unification, and to differentiated sociocultural qualities of the FRG in contrast to eastern sociocultural qualities of the unified Germany.

For the German Democratic Republic as a separate country I use the fully capitalized name "East Germany," or its formal country name (or GDR) when referring to it up until its period of transition and transformation. Thereafter I distinguish the social actors and their system of the former GDR from those of the FRG by using the lower-case spelling "eastern German."

In situations where the above usage might not be explicit I use additional terms, e.g., "former East Germans, or former GDR tenants" now residing in Hamburg, or—as is common in everyday usage—the "Ossies and Wessies," which are indigenous, mutually distinguishing terms for "eastern Germans" from the perspective of "western Germans," or vice-versa.
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INTRODUCTION

One of the major problematic differences between West and East Germany is the historical development of a distinct East German, and a different West German "habitus" (Bourdieu, 1991) which was culturally produced separately among the social actors in the two different Germanies after WWII. Because unification policy makers have not taken these differences into account, the German unification process has been unprepared for effectively addressing growing social needs. One of the most crucial needs is that of adequate, safe, and affordable housing in eastern Germany.

In order to comprehend these differences of habitus one needs to understand how distinctly different social contexts, or "fields of action," were developed in East Germany. Neglecting an understanding of these habitus differences in policy designs today undoubtedly will lead to more frustration, anxiety, and anger, which not only can impede the transformation process of eastern Germany, but also might cause serious social conflicts in the future. Contrary to earlier predictions, the German unification process exhibits myriad complicated and unforeseen problems: I observed these particularly as they were experienced and expressed in everyday life by social actors in eastern Germany during my field research from June 1991 to June 1992. Given the dismal availability of housing, it is a growing possibility that previous East German tenants, the eastern German Graue Panther (Grey Panthers) movement, and
other citizens afraid of being displaced might join the eastern and western German squatters in forming a political movement that demands a return of the previously held right to a shelter at a rental rate affordable to the tenants.²

In this report I present a conjunctural analysis³ of a particular urban social context of eastern Germany: I describe the growing yet still segmented housing conflicts which—if my predictions based on participant observation materialize—might develop into open conflicts. The case study on which this report is based presents the urban problematic from the perspective of the urban squatter movement. With this particular case study I describe the social process of unification and how this process is culturally expressed in everyday life when eastern and western German actors meet.

In Part One I consider the questions: Why was there a squatter movement in the former German Democratic Republic? Was the previous redistributive system unable to distribute housing equally to individual needs? What were the prevailing conditions and availability of housing in East Berlin? In Part Two I present the contours of the first phase of the transitional period as experienced by urban squatters. Part Three presents an oral history account which addresses identity differences between social actors of East Germany and West Germany. Although I have collected several such accounts, the account selected for this report best illustrates and highlights issues of the different social constructions of personhood in the two Germanies. Part Four contains summary findings and brief interpretations of possible public policy consequences.
PART ONE

In Search of Living Space in Socialist East Berlin, or "Hidden Squatting"

By the end of the 1970s East Berlin, the capital of the GDR, exhibited a distinct pattern of squatter living, a pattern which is best referred to as fragmented and hidden squatting. The signs and symbols of the squatters could not gain a public voice under the former state, and it is safe to conclude that under the given societal circumstances, the squatters did not intend to develop an organized form of publicity for either political or cultural resistance or opposition. These socialist squatters aimed neither to create alternative life styles nor an anticulture with different forms of social organizations; they first became squatters not out of an economic inability to acquire a dwelling, but out of the necessity for urban living space in a society marked by a permanent housing shortage. They were individually motivated and focused on single-unit dwellings for personal needs rather than occupying an entire house or an entire block.

During the time of 'the economy of shortage' (Verdery, 1991, 78), living space was an existential necessity and a scarce resource in the rationally organized redistributive system, as Konrad and Szelenyi (1979) identified socialist economies. Within the redistributive economy, dwelling places could neither be bought, sold, nor rented from private owners. On the contrary, urban dwellings were redistributed by the communal administrative centers of an urban district (Kommunalverwaltung), and long waiting lists for limited housing were common in these centers.
In principle, the urban redistributive housing centers first granted dwellings to people who were classified as the most needy persons, i.e., single mothers and families with more than three children, and then to those individuals who had first signed their names onto the waiting lists. Generally, however, housing allocations in East Berlin came close to the pattern which Szelenyi (1983) described for the previous socialist Hungary, where

housing inequalities are being created now, as those with higher incomes get the better housing; and these inequalities are being created by the administrative allocation, i.e., by the distinctively socialist mechanism which was supposed to replace the capitalist market method of allocation. (6; original emphases)

However, within the redistributive economy in the former GDR, the issuance of a type or quality of dwelling was not based solely on one's level of income. Rather, it was also based on one's achieved societal status, or perceived value to the state--an "officially sanctioned" allocation. In socialist East Berlin, as in Hungary, the principle of allocation produced, in the long run, "inequalities in administrative allocation" (Szelenyi 1983, 10). When a person finally was assigned a dwelling place and had moved in, the fear of ever becoming homeless had disappeared.

This situation raised the question, if economic responsibility for maintaining housing did not lie with the tenants, where, then, was it located? In essence, the economic responsibility for reconstruction, repair, and caretaking was centered at the communal allocative offices. But despite continuous redistributed subsidies from the state budget, since the incomes from rents were extremely low, the
communal centers were chronically short of money. The state's shortages of money and the tremendous expense for reconstructing run-down houses finally caused the socialist urban planners to develop "the strategy of vacancy." This meant often that individual dwellings in old housing units were not assigned to tenants anymore, but were left empty. It also was not unusual that such housing units were torn down and replaced with the typical "socialist," functionally constructed, modern panel houses.

Despite their unimaginative architecture, the average East Berlin urbanite highly valued such living conditions because the modern apartments offered such conveniences as central water heating, in-toilets, baths, telephones, and elevators, in contrast to the older houses which still have coal heating and sharing of out-toilets and are without baths, showers, or telephones. Individual dwellings in old houses, particularly in the districts called Stadtmitte and Prenzlauer Berg, were often occupied by families from working class backgrounds, while the modern-looking apartment buildings in the city's center were occupied by important administrators and highly ranked intellectuals, and the modern apartment complexes at the edge of east Berlin most often were allocated to lower Mittelbau office-administrative workers, lower-level intellectuals, or teachers. Within this allocative housing practice arose the opportunity for enhanced personal favoritism, in which scarce goods were mutually exchanged. Similarly, Verdery (1991, 80) observed that "in a supply-constrained system... what must be domesticated is supplies: everyone scrambles for access to the pot. At all points
in the system bureaucratic positions or jobs are used as a platform for amassing resources. Personal influence, 'corruption,' and reciprocal exchanges are some of the major mechanisms.”

In the first half of the 1980s as the communal allocative state centers faced not only serious financial problems, but also a worsening shortage of construction materials and skilled construction labor, the state further withdrew from the repairing of old houses. During this time citizens' fragmented-yet-serious attempts at actions arose--the Aktion Dächerdicht--for trying to repair damaged roofs before they declined further. These actions, however, remained rudimentary, and--because of shortages of money, labor, and construction materials and a growing bureaucratic indifference from the communal urban centers--they failed in the beginning stages.

With passing time, structural conditions in these large, older houses often deteriorated to the extent that these housing units often had only one safe floor left, usually the middle floor. People who were in need of urban living space and who were tired of waiting in line often took matters into their own hands, occupying these spaces as the most desired ones. By doing so they developed their first self-initiative, and in this process they became the first former GDR squatters, or illegal building occupants.

Squatters invested their own labor and money into renovating run-down dwellings. Some of them tried to legalize their dwelling units by going through the process of applying for and receiving a police domicile registration, a state
document which was necessary as proof of a person's residency status in a particular urban district. Of further importance was the act of gaining either the right-of-use contract (*Nutzungsvertrag*) or the more valued lease contract. Whereas the right-of-use contract was restricted in time, and was made between the communal center and the squatter, the lease contract was unlimited in time and entailed the theoretical possibility of future personal reimbursements for upcoming and necessary housing repairs.

Although the rational redistributive system seemed to allow hidden and narrow legal spaces for urban squatters, upon closer examination one discovers that the state always tried to recapture the squatters' individual initiatives. One such practice was to create bureaucratic hurdles. For example, a potential squatter candidate could receive the valued lease contract for enlarging and renovating her own dwelling if she was found to conform politically to the state's ideology. Additionally, a precondition for receiving such a contract was that the squatter had to be a current or previous member of the socialist youth organization (i.e., Die Freie Deutsche Jugend). Furthermore, the housing applicant had to invest a great deal of personal renovation labor for which, in practice, there was no reimbursement.

Another method for the state to recapture the initiative of squatters was to collect penalty fees for not having registered their domicile with the local police. After paying this fee the squatter could remain in the dwelling, but squatters who found themselves in this situation were excluded from any theoretical possibility
or practical means of renovation reimbursements.

A third state procedure was to keep applicants' self-collected address lists of empty dwellings or housing units. An applicant who submitted such a list tried to negotiate with a housing officer for the possibility of receiving one of the found dwellings. Through confiscating the lists the communal allocation center received additional information on the housing situation in various urban districts. In East Berlin this procedure resulted in what were called "Leerstandsmeldungen" (reports of vacancies).

PART TWO
Urban Squatting in the Transitional Period

With the collapse of the GDR came the beginning of an incredible social and cultural disorientation for every person in society, the first phase of a period which I best describe as a legal and political vacuum. Even though old and new laws were officially enforced during this time, urban administrative bureaucrats (i.e., those in the city councils, police departments, and administrative offices) and nearly everybody in the higher level state apparatus rejected their responsibilities for directing, protecting, and safeguarding public life in eastern Berlin. However, this vacuum was not lawless. From the 10 November 1989 breakdown up to the 3 October 1990 official reunification of Germany, the laws of the former GDR were still in force. After unification Berlin experienced a unique situation: eastern Berlin received a provisional legal code which was in several aspects different
from western Berlin, and the whole city received a double government with two lord mayors. These mayors were obliged to negotiate common interests in the decision making processes during the urban turmoil of the day. This phase of the city ended in the first half of 1991.

During this period eastern Berlin was based on authority without legitimacy. Following Weber’s (Bendix, 1977, 417-423), and Habermas’s (1973, 98) conceptualizations of legitimation, during this period in eastern Berlin the normative societal order was disintegrating, or fading away, rather than showing any signs of its previous support, and the law enforcement branch and bureaucratic apparatus distanced themselves from a belief in the previous legal system. For example, the former GDR police were afraid of being labelled as the enemy of the people and of being remembered as the oppressors of the former system. On the other hand, the administrative bureaucrats from the various diverse hierarchical levels of the GDR state and city started to worry about their own future, worries and fears which were real under the upcoming legal evaluation procedures by western German bureaucrats. All these processes together led to an inability for action in eastern Berlin which caused chaotic conditions day by day.

While for some people everyday life became confusing and frustrating, for others this situation presented opportunities for establishing new urban realities which under the ongoing state conditions became irreversible. My focus is one such reality within the overall context of social and cultural urban change in eastern Berlin, i.e., the social field of urban squatters. Various working class
neighborhoods—in particular, urban districts, or Kieze—welcomed the colorful and lively new squatters who moved into the previously somber appearing, run-down houses, although in the course of time, some eastern Berlin neighbors began to fear the unknown and unorthodox ways of living among the squatters.

In contrast to the "hidden squatters" of the former GDR, the eastern German transitional squatters most often now were in search of different cultural ways of living in the newly occupied spaces. These squatters consciously settled down not in single flats, but in whole houses, and if possible preferred to squat in blocks of houses in order to be able to develop social networks and a different sense and experience of community. For eastern German squatters this was an important social time for testing personal, political, and legal boundaries in the newly found civil space in the city.

It was also during these days that various voluntary associations, which were unknown in the former GDR, began to mushroom everywhere in the city, responding to the newly emerging possibilities gained in the civil public space, a space which in the former state was occupied by the social web of the state, party, and ideology. The new associations (often known as Vereine) included women's organizations, lesbian and homosexual organizations, and private schools and kindergartens. In short, these voluntary associations were within a whole spectrum of social, political, and economic interest groups that were trying to become organized, and whose perspectives ranged from the most pro-establishment to the most alternative orientations. These diverse individuals and groups expressed one
common urgency: they all were in desperate need of urban space and immediately began to take over empty houses and other vacant dwellings.

During this time squatters of twenty occupied houses joined together into the Council of Occupied Houses. The main concern and goal of this council was to prevent a further decline of housing through uniting the squatters and continuing their practice of moving into dwellings left uninhabited through the state’s "strategy of vacancy." This was also the period in eastern Berlin when people for the first time experienced, in practice, the meaning of grassroots democracy by participating in the political process, by debating and discussing their goals for constructing a different society in the newly appearing round tables. At the round tables, policy—including urban policy—was made by the people day by day. In December 1989 the round tables reached a consensus and agreed that the occupation of empty, vacated dwellings and houses is legal regardless of ownership of the houses. By April 1990, before the monetary union, eastern Berlin had documented seventy cases of occupied housing blocks. Surprisingly, in hindsight, this avalanche of occupations was publicly approved of at the time.

However, this urban euphoria of community was short-lived. The communal district centers of the former GDR were replaced by city-administered housing enterprises that tried to intrude into the different civil-urban space by reclaiming "law and order." On the one hand these new offices issued legal leases (contracts), and on the other hand they represented the new bureaucratic mode which began
to construct different hierarchies resembling those of the West German late capitalist welfare state. Fearful of such unknown political and economic developments, the occupants of diverse houses, through actions of the Council of Occupied Houses, began to resist and act in solidarity against the intruding hierarchical controls.

By June 1990 (i.e., four months before official unification) the Council of Occupied Houses represented ninety houses of squatters. The council declared that from this time on, all occupied houses would negotiate as a unit with the city-administered housing enterprises. The council began to negotiate the following demands: no forced vacating; guaranteed legal security for squatters; squatter use rights for the upcoming winter; and equal provisional leases for all houses. The council also demanded that a schedule of dates be established so that negotiations could be secured for upcoming debates regarding reconstruction work, property relations, and property rights, which all had to be examined separately for each dwelling. As stated above, one aim of the council was to prevent the city-administered housing enterprises from splitting up the common legal rights of the houses. After examining the council's demands, the district officers promised to consider all of them. The council, in turn, interpreted this as a democratic victory.

Yet, the people's democracy was called to a halt soon after German unification (October 1990). The promises given by the housing enterprises faded, and different city administrators succeeded, step by step, in breaking up the squatters’ voice and the Council of Occupied Houses. The first strategy used in
the break up was to have the police forcefully vacate newly occupied housing. A date was established after which squatting was to be enforced as unlawful. This strategy was officially called the *Berlin Linie* or the Berlin method. Despite this method, squatters continued to occupy empty houses, trying to consciously challenge the *Berlin Linie*. The administrative strategy was not to react and intervene in every case of unlawful occupation. Instead, the officers' intention was to develop simultaneous means for issuing legal and financial advantages, preferring one house over another one, thus, creating suspicion and competition among squatters who were in the Council of Occupied Houses.

Parallel to this practice, the new state moved also toward periodic, forceful actions of vacating several houses which were occupied after the new enforcement dates. The police actions in turn caused tensions and anxieties between the more privileged pre-deadline squatters and the post-deadline ones, which prevented, in part, the development of solidarity among the struggling post-deadline squatters. However, on 14 November 1990 the major blow came with the destruction of the symbolic-center space for all eastern Berlin squatters, the Mainzer Strasse, where 300 squatters had lived for quite some time in rows of houses. A specially-trained western German unit of 4,000 police soldiers violently started a battle against the squatters. People in the street, including the east Berlin mayor of that district who tried to negotiate for preventing the worst, were forcefully washed out of the street by the police's water canons (Arndt, et al. 1992). Even though the state in part could claim victory in vacating the Mainzer Strasse, until June of 1992--during my
fieldwork—there still were many house occupants who tried to resist and to protect urban space in eastern Berlin.

**West Berlin Squatters' Influence in East Berlin**

Shortly before the 1 July 1990 monetary union, and after the abolishment of a law requiring West Berliners to show passports for entry into East Berlin, many adventurous and experienced west squatters moved into the urban frontier of East Berlin. The legal and political vacuum there represented unlimited attractions for the west squatters whose freedom of squatting over the years had become forcefully restricted under west German laws. All the free spaces still available in East Berlin were soon occupied by the west squatters with the approval and understanding of the east squatters. Despite many differences, both had one common interest: to enlarge the squatting community and to strengthen solidarity against official housing policies.

In contrast to the east squatters, the west squatters brought with them their collective experiences of how to interact with state rules and urban strategies. This 'feel for the game' or 'practical sense' (Bourdieu 1991) was highly valued by the east squatters. Of particular interest to the East Germans were the new forms of conflict resolution and decision-making practices, which were non-existent in their habitus. Additionally, plenary meetings, democratic consensus forming, and council and league formations—theoretically and practically unknown—were introduced by west squatters and adopted by East Berlin squatters.
All along, however, the East Berlin squatters discovered that next to common interests there were distinct social and cultural differences which in several ways presented problems for them. Most of the decision-making and conflict resolution practices were only vaguely known among the whole population, and social actors often suffered from stress-induced illnesses brought about by the process of comprehending the different West German habitus. East squatters were also astonished, amazed, and at times amused by the west squatters' political slogans and symbolisms which they had painted colorfully on the outside walls of the run-down houses. Some of the linguistic creativeness and playfulness exhibited in these slogans—for example, "Macht kaputt, was Euch kaputt Macht" (break that which breaks you), or "Ohne Mampf kein Kampf" (fed up and ready to fight), or "Miethaie zu Fischstäbchen" (chop the landlord sharks into fish sticks)—were eagerly observed by the east squatters.

In general, however, East Berlin squatters often became frustrated by those west squatters who tried to idealize the former GDR's socialism, because they believed that the West Berliners lacked the lived experience of the socialist reality in the east. The fact that some west squatters adopted symbols and posters to express their left alternative consciousness (e.g., the GDR flag, the banners of the Socialist German Youth, and the hammer and sickle) seemed from the perspective of the East Berlin squatters politically naive and insensitive toward East German history. In short, this was interpreted as a lack of seriousness and of understanding of the distinct East German cultural experiences and society.
PART THREE

Introduction

During my year of intensive participant observation from July 1991 to June 1992, I collected several interviews and life histories from the squatter community. I have chosen one particular example as a case study of eastern and western Berlin squatters meeting for the first time after the collapse of the Berlin Wall since it presents most expressively the patterned views underlying all of the other interviews.

These patterned views suggest that the eastern and western squatters engaged in interactional practices which can be best analyzed from Thompson’s (1991) study of Pierre Bourdieu’s concept, “habitus”:

The habitus is a set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways. The dispositions generate practices, perceptions and attitudes which are “regular” without being consciously co-ordinated or governed by any rule. The dispositions which constitute the habitus are inculcated, structured, durable, generative and transposable . . . . (12)

While Bourdieu’s concept of habitus widens the theoretical perspective for the analysis of structurally differentiating practices of actors in diverse social fields, his concept does not address the questions which one empirically encounters when the social structure of an entire system collapses. In that situation one is inevitably confronted with such questions as: What happens to actors’ acquired habitus when the social structure disappears overnight? Does the habitus collapse? If it does not collapse, how does it express itself in relationship to a different habitus embedded within a different system’s social fields? What
happens to social actors when their set of dispositions—i.e., their certain cultural actions taken under certain circumstances, their "practical sense," their "feel for the game," their perceptions and attitudes, their "bodily hexis" (standing, speaking, walking, feeling, and thinking)—is being delegitimized or disqualified overnight, as witnessed by the capitalist-socialist transformation in Germany? The abbreviated case study below describes contours of experiences among social actors caught up in these transformational processes.

Experiences of an East Berlin Female Squatter

In January 1990, Jette (who is 30 years old) and her two daughters Hannah (age 10) and Eva (age 5) were in search of an empty living space in East Berlin after they had been asked to move out of a newly established women's center because Jette questioned one of the rules of the house. Jette's first life—her life, as she says, "as a socialist petit bourgeois" housewife, mother, and skilled worker within a "typical" nuclear family—became unbearable for her, and— with the collapse of the old system—she broke with her husband, her family, and according to her, thus, "with everything else which restricted me in the past."

After five days of searching Jette found a house which was occupied by Wessie squatters. Upon her arrival, the squatter group was eating dinner in the communal kitchen, getting ready for a plenary house meeting. At that time Jette and her daughters had no idea of what was happening around them since never before had they been in an occupied house nor had they ever before met Wessie
squatters. The only immediate need for them was to find a room to sleep in and some food to eat. Even though Jette had lost her job as a skilled heavy machine technician after the collapse of her society in the chaos of its transition, she had not received any social welfare assistance from the West German welfare state.

The squatters invited Jette to join them in the plenary meeting where her situation was discussed, and where particular importance was given to the issue of whether or not Jette and her children were able and ready to live in a group in an occupied house. After Jette's situation had been presented, and after she told the group that she once had met squatters in the Mainzer Strasse and that these squatters looked quite human and open, the group saw a possibility for her and the children to move in. The group helped Jette to move in, and all three received one room together, but there was also a communal kitchen and dining room where people met. From the beginning on, Jette was excused from contributing money for living and eating expenses, since she was literally penniless.

For Jette and the children all the practices of the West German squatters were foreign. In the former GDR they had never met adults who were so unbelievably open to them and truthful. Jette's daughters were astonished and speechless. The children found it unusual that the adults set the table for them and that they were rather friendly in asking them to take and eat whatever they liked, even though they could not give anything back in return. Eva, the smallest daughter was fascinated and almost shocked when a woman squatter handed her a sandwich which had Eva's favorite cold cuts. All three were extremely timid, and
in their overall desperate situation they forgot the stereotypical jokes and prejudices which are common now in the east about the "Wessies."

But Jette also experienced many problems. She and the Wessies did not know how to talk with each other about everyday practices. At the beginning there was no dialogue possible. The Wessies did not know how to approach Jette, and Jette did not know how to reach them. The situation was so bizarre that no conflict nor confrontation began, since, in Jette's words, "we were total foreigners" ("Wir waren uns ganz fremd").

The children, Hannah and Eva, developed very close personal trust relationships with several people from the Wessie group. This was rather amazing for Jette since the Wessie squatter group had never before lived with mother-and-children squatters. Although Jette thought that she was able to resolve her change-of-life problems (Lebensveränderungsprobleme) alone, she soon realized that she was unable to open up to and develop closer contacts with the Wessie group. For three months the group refrained from trying to intrude into her personal space; however, after that time the group discussed with her at a plenary session that she was hiding herself behind social problems. Since the group was unable to help her and she was still not ready for the squatters' practices of group interactions, they thought it would be better for her to leave the group and to live alone again. Thus, in spite of her children's contacts, Jette had to move again. She was very angry and did not understand the group's decision.

After Jette left the Wessie group she found an Ossie occupied house where
she moved in. There, people did not live in groups; rather, each party lived in its own space and there was no communal kitchen and meeting room. In this house Jette and her two children lived for themselves and also had to take care of themselves; Jette often felt lonely.

In the summer of 1991, while still living in the occupied house of the Ossies, Jette, Hannah, and Eva decided to visit again the Wessie group. Jette's new goal was to reach out and remove her emotional blockade. As they entered the house they received the news that extreme right wing groups in the town of Hoyerswerda in eastern Germany had attacked foreign workers and asylum seekers. To Jette's surprise, the Wessie group did not drive to the town for a demonstration: instead, the group had decided not to teach the "poor and small-minded Ossie youth" a lesson about "Ausländerfeindlichkeit" (hostility towards foreigners), since the Wessie group believed that the foreigners were now becoming scapegoats for the worsening social and economic situation in Germany, and that the politicians' aim was to have Wessie left groups fight Ossie right wing groups so that the politicians did not have to get involved and take responsibility for the attacks on foreigners and asylum seekers. Jette was again very impressed by the Wessie group's analysis.

Jette and her daughters remained until Christmas 1991 in the occupied Ossie house, but their room condition worsened so much that life became unsafe for all three of them. There was no electricity, no heat, and the ceiling of the room had to be protected with safety nets for catching falling roof parts. In January 1992 Jette moved in with a female friend and became ill. She had to be hospitalized for
a kidney infection and physical collapse. Jette contacted the Wessie group and arranged to have her daughters begin living with them again.

After weeks of separation from her daughters, Jette returned from the hospital and hardly recognized them. In that short time both had become self-reliant and self-confident, and had emotionally accepted the Wessie group as their social fathers and mothers. Jette slowly began to open up and to trust the Wessie group, but first only by talking about her children. In Jette's life as a mother in the former GDR she never had time for her own personal development. Now, although she felt, via the Wessie group, what it means to have a personal space, a private space, simultaneously she felt hurt that her children spent most of the time with their new Wessie friends.

Jette decided to move into a single-tenant dwelling in an eastern Berlin rental house, and the Wessie squatters supported and agreed with her decision. They helped her to move and gave her advice on decorating—to her own liking—her rooms. Even though Jette wanted to discuss and to know from the group how she could ask for help, she was unable to ask. She never had learned that before. She still does not know how to organize things on her own in a Wessie way, and she has been unable to say that to the group.

Hannah and Eva successfully built cultural bridges between eastern and western squatters. They learned and understood what conflicts were, how one could deal with them even if it hurt, and that one could start to reach out again to the other person after the conflict had been resolved. For Jette this was new, a
process she had never learned in her "old life." Jette said she learned the process of conflict resolution from her children who, according to her, learned it from "outside." While her daughters have started to learn how to be independent and to ask questions regarding their own needs and interests, and while Hannah even has learned how to articulate and to define what she wants, why she wants it, and how she wants it, Jette still cannot do this.

Differences between Eastern and Western Berlin Squatters

The Berlin squatters have most often been young people from lower- and middle-class backgrounds, and most of them were or still are college or university students, or artists. In their own words, they have rejected the term subculture because a subculture lacks cultural and political consciousness; instead they define themselves as anticulture. By anticulture they refer to a politically conscious learning process in which they try to construct a different culture, parallel to the traditional dominant life forms, particularly the nuclear patriarchal family, which--according to the squatters--is legally, politically, and economically supported and sanctioned by the state, the political parties, and the traditionally oriented families in the society. Thus, the squatters understand that they are perceived as a danger to the state because of their opposition to the "sacred" patriarchal nuclear family.

The Wessie group were primarily students studying in West Berlin who had become engaged in protest movements. They used the legal and political vacuum to occupy houses as long as it was possible. Their basic principle also focused on the philosophy of trying out different forms of living in contrast to the West
German state sanctioned heterosexual nuclear family, and thereby resisting existing cultural, social, and political structures which were perceived as oppressive to their alternative forms of social organization.

Yet, for Jette, reflecting back on the East and West differences, at first there were only unbridgeable barriers:

I grew up in East Berlin where I was taught different ways of how to deal with people and problems and how to approach people. I realized that we even differed in how we ate. The "Wessies" were predominately vegetarians and were diet conscious, which was foreign to me.

The way they relate to each other privately and personally was different, and I did not at all understand what intersubjective (zwischenmenschlich) behavior was.

There was also a common problem: not only did Jette not have any "practical sense" for how to understand the social field and the habitus of the Wessie group, the Wessies did not understand the social field of the former GDR woman and her social and cultural dispositions. While her children bridged the gap between themselves and the Wessies, for Jette "the Wessies were afraid and so was I," because she knew that they wanted to help her, but she did not understand their "methods." "This process is nerve-racking and stressful for both of us," she said.

The Wessies did not understand how difficult it was for her to acquire the new cultural practice of self-initiative, nor did they know how much she wanted them to know that. Neither had the "feeling for the difference of each others' games."

The confusion for Jette was directly related to the chaotic urban situation developing in East Berlin. Part of this change has been excellently documented by Inga Markovits (1992, 59) who studied and participated in the formal collapse
of the legal court system in East Berlin during this period. The German Unification Treaty of 31 August 1990, upon its implementation on 3 October 1990, brought additional legal uncertainties for eastern Berliners, as Markovits points out:

In East Berlin the changeover from socialist to capitalist law was more radical and abrupt. To overcome the city's division as quickly as possible the Unification Treaty denied East Berlin's court system the grace period which was granted socialist courts elsewhere in the ex-GDR. Instead, it provided that on October 3, 1990, the day of German reunification, the West German 'court structure' should 'be extended' into the eastern half of the city. The treaty contained no details of what that provision might mean. (59)

The Wessies, insisting that social services had now changed, tried to teach and lecture her "as fast as possible and cookingly hot" on how to get on in the new system's social welfare aid program, and on how the new urban rules and laws of the FRG "elbow-society" worked. These were words that Jette never had heard before, nor could she imagine their meaning. The Wessies explained to her that she could apply for clothing, shoes, blankets, etc.. an action which in West Germany meant applying for social welfare assistance.

Although Jette was personally left alone as she wanted during the first three months within the Wessie group, she nevertheless felt emotionally and mentally encircled. She still oriented her practices to the legal habitus of the old social structures whose practical meaning she knew by heart. According to her understanding, that system's urban law provided low-fee housing services for single mothers. What was unknown to Jette was that under the West German system such
aid was unavailable, and that the right to a low-rent apartment was nonexistent in a market economy.

Jette felt that she was dominated and refused to accept "the Wessies' lectures," particularly since the Wessie group refused to see that in East Berlin and West Berlin there were still two different legal systems despite the collapse of the wall. When the Wessies began to question Jette, and insist that it must now be the same in eastern and western Berlin, Jette felt that this group, which was at first so open to her and her daughters, had started to fulfill the stereotypic and ironic label "Besser Wisser Wessie" (Better-Knowing Wessie). For her the Wessie squatters' ignorance was based on the fact that they had not taken enough time to get acquainted with the existing cultural differences. The Wessie squatters assumed that the East German habitus—i.e., their cultural disposition for knowing what is right and wrong (their "practical sense"), and for knowing how to get along in the urban context—must be the same as the West German habitus, an assumption which was reinforced by their ability as squatters to continue living in eastern Berlin without an official, eastern Berlin police report of residence, while they continued to be documented as western Berlin residents with western German housing authorities.

But the Wessies had no idea what it meant for a woman from East Berlin to suddenly became unemployed. A woman in the past was self-confident and proud because she had a job and her financial independence. Work was a cultural need and through work one had social contacts with other people. Additionally, the
daily time rhythm was different since children were safeguarded in nurseries, kindergartens and schools. As a female in the former GDR, Jette was socially safeguarded through state services. However, her individual desires, needs, or problems were often repressed, and hence most often remained unknown to her. Even though the Wessie group had caught Jette and her children in a time when she was "sinking," when her world collapsed around her, and even as they gave care and assistance to her and her children, the Wessies did not achieve their goal of making Jette "independent" since, in Jette's own words, "I am still not able to stand on my own feet" in this new society.

For Jette the Wessies knew how to live in independent social groups, they knew strategies for conflict resolutions, they knew how to express themselves verbally in relationships with others; she knew only life from the perspective of "a typical socialist petit bourgeois." The Wessie group was better equipped to deal with social problems, confronting problems together, working them through, and trying to develop further social interactions and relationships, while each person remained responsible to herself and the group.

On the other hand, Jette realized that there was no real social connection nor common interest among the Ossie squatters in her house for constructing new ways of living everyday life. Each Ossie squatter was on her own, left alone with her problems, since they never had learned practices for confronting and working out problems within a group, practices which would have been dysfunctional in the old society. In Jette's view, East Germans did not know how to deal with conflicts
or arguments. and--according to her--people still walk away or develop stress-
related illnesses before they engage in conflicting arguments. Jette's cultural 
expressions seem to be in accord with the outline of Markovits's (1992) research 
wherein common harmony of the individual and social elements was the norm of 
socialist law:

Socialist law did not strive for autonomy but for harmony. If to us 
settlements are better than judgements, to socialists settlements are 
better than discord. Our law drives on conflict. But East German law 
was meant to prevent conflict, to overcome, or at least to diffuse it. 
Children, please, no fighting! As always, it is the metaphor of the 
family that best conveys the intentions of socialist law. (80)

According to Jette, the Ossie squatters are still at the beginning stages of learning 
how to deal with conflicts in different ways, the processual stage where they have 
to grapple with the different social environment and the fragile stage where they 
only now are starting to work in groups regarding their past. For Jette, this is the 
most difficult process because each one has to face social injuries and personal 
pain. For her, this pain of casualty (Verlustschmerz) was caused two years ago 
after the collapse of the wall: "There for a short time we had future dreams of 
how to construct our own new society. We never got a chance. Instead, we 
received different state orders, and 'what we wanted' was forced on us by 
victorious others."

Nevertheless, Jette, looking back to the beginning, convincingly told me 
before I ended my urban project:

You know, now we know much more about each other. The Wessie 
group learned that it is not so simple to come to East Berlin and that 
they cannot understand us through West German glasses.
and through West German social, political and legal eyes. The Wessie squatters saw that we also have our experiences and that the new social conditions imposed on us are often more difficult for us to live with here in East Berlin than in the elbow society of ‘Wessieland.’ The Wessie squatters have intensively dealt with this--and this fascinated me. I have experienced how they changed from Wessies into human beings. They have learned to listen to us, to hear us and to comprehend the processes which affect every person here. The Wessie squatters have learned that all the changes around us brought dramatic conflicts for all of us.

PART FOUR

Conclusion

Hidden squatting, with a focus on individual dwellings for personal needs, existed in East Berlin for over a decade prior to German unification as a result of housing shortages and state budget restrictions in the socialist redistributive system of East Germany. “Officially sanctioned” administrative allocations of housing, whereby higher status, higher income individuals were provided with modern, preferred apartment arrangements, created housing inequalities through an administrative mechanism of personal favoritism and reciprocal exchanges of scarce goods. In the 1980s, many East Germans in need of living spaces and fed up with long waiting lists saw closed-down, unoccupied, dilapidated living units as places where they could make minimal repairs or renovations and become squatters, either legalized or illegal. Finding such urban living spaces was often accompanied by one’s need to pay for renovations, police-residence fees, or fines issued to illegal squatters.

The transitional period of legal and political vacuum which followed the collapse of the GDR brought about a tremendous social and cultural disorientation.
for East Germans. East Berlin administrative officials distanced themselves from their responsibilities for safeguarding public life, which added to the chaotic day-by-day conditions in eastern Berlin. Confusion from this vacuum was accompanied by adventurous opportunities for others who emerged as grassroots groups addressing the urgent need for urban living spaces. Occupation of vacated housing units was considered by participants of the legendary round tables to be legal, and several multi-dwelling blocks of housing were represented by their tenants in a council whose aim was to occupy dwellings which had been vacated under the former urban administration's "strategy of vacancy." These new squatters consciously developed social networks among council members, testing their abilities to engage in personal, political, and legal experiences unknown to the hidden squatters of the former GDR. In opposition to the new and different hierarchical controls of the intruding housing enterprises administered by the communal urban district centers, squatters and councils negotiated future housing reconstruction plans and property relations with the city administrators. The democratic tendency of these days' negotiations was short lived, however. New urban rules called for more city control of occupied dwellings, and with the forceful police action of vacating squatters from the symbolic-center space of Mainzer Strasse on 14 November 1990, the adventurous-yet-struggling eastern Berlin squatters were dealt a major blow.

The western Berlin squatters in eastern Berlin brought with them their collective experiences and habitus, or "feel for the game" of conflict resolution and
decision-making practices. These initially impressed the eastern Berlin squatters, but after a while the Ossies began to realize that the Wessies were trying to idealize the socialism of the former GDR, which frustrated the Ossies and demonstrated the Wessies' lack of seriousness and understanding of distinct East German sociocultural experiences.

The "inculcated, generative and transposable" dispositions of Bourdieu's concept "habitus" offer an analytical tool for distinguishing the unique attitudes and social actions in different social fields of different actors. However, when the actor's habitus collapses overnight and the ideological identity of the person is delegitimized, the concept cannot adequately address the despair of the issue of one's transformation of history and identity within a different society's habitus. Among all other dispositions in their respective, distinct habitus, the East and West Berlin squatters seem to have one near-common disposition, namely, that toward active resistance. Both groups of squatters hold and express a mutual commitment to political resentment and resistance toward the rigidity of the socialist state and the capitalist state. Both groups vehemently resist both states' patriarchal kinship systems, the nuclear family unit with its particular-residence rules and accompanying housing practices, and the reproduction of housing inequalities, whether in the market economy of the capitalist welfare state, or within the allocative economy of the rational socialist state. In short, the east and west squatters' political practice of "anticulture" production is directed against all patriarchal states which, for the squatters, reproduce authoritarian habitus
structures that are antithetical to the newly forming democratic structures in urban communities. It is possible that the uprooted tenant residents in eastern Berlin will soon join the resistance and struggle to remain in their old dwellings, especially in light of the growing economic conditions of drastic rent increases, rising unemployment, and a new individual tenant responsibility for the economic caretaking of their buildings.

It is my hypothesis that both groups of squatters acquired in their societies distinct 'practical senses' or different 'feelings for the [urban] games' (Bourdieu 1991, 12). The experiences of an East German female squatter, "Jette," reflect and represent a pattern of eastern German views which demonstrate the eastern German perception that western Germans do not understand, or do not seriously try to understand, the dramatic sociocultural experiences of former East Germans. To the extent that the "invited colonizers"--the term used by my informants for the West German political society--do not acknowledge the different social and historical contexts of east German actors and their differing habitus, German unification will be impaired for many years to come by the resistances among politically overpowered--and at the same time culturally disempowered--people in eastern Germany. For the German unification process to carry out its political and economic goals there must be a vast sociocultural look back into the time and space of former East Germans who now are located in a unified state which recognizes only one habitus as legitimate. German unification actions which hesitate to allow for the sociocultural transition of a society which taught and
inculcated different ways of dealing with people and problems—such as needs for adequate, safe, and affordable housing—will have to undertake parallel actions of addressing the social turmoil in eastern (at least) Germany that is growing out of the initial policy failure to incorporate, transitionally, a people's different ideological and societal "practical sense."
ENDNOTES

1. Throughout this report I refer to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) as it was before the 3 October 1990 unification by using the capitalized country name "West Germany." The terms "West German" and "western German," respectively, refer to the FRG before unification, and to differentiated sociocultural qualities of the FRG in contrast to eastern sociocultural qualities of the unified Germany.

For the German Democratic Republic as a separate country I use the fully capitalized name "East Germany," or its formal country name (or GDR) when referring to it up until its period of transition and transformation. Thereafter I distinguish the social actors and their system of the former GDR from those of the FRG by using the lower-case spelling "eastern German."

In situations where the above usage might not be explicit I use additional terms, e.g., "former East Germans, or former GDR tenants" now residing in Hamburg, or--as is common in everyday usage--the "Ossies and Wessies," which are indigenous, mutually distinguishing terms for "eastern Germans" from the perspective of "western Germans," or vice-versa.

2. In October 1991 the government established and raised eastern German tenants' rent according to a calculation whereby the tenant should not be charged more than 10% of her or his earned salary. However, according to the Association of Eastern German Tenants, tenants in eastern Berlin now pay an average of thirty
per cent of their income for basic rent, i.e., rent which does not include additional distinctions of "warm" (hot water, heating) or "cold" (sewage, elevator usage, building superintendent's fees, property taxes, garbage and trash collection fees, yard-gardening maintenance, chimney-sweep service) services. In the former GDR all of the above were included in one's rent costs; tenants protest that for the same apartment or dwelling they now have to pay over 100% more in rent than before.

Today in eastern Germany, of dwellings or apartments in multi-family housing units, 11% are beyond repair, 40% are in severe condition and in need of complete renovation, another 40% are in need of basic renovation, and 9% are considered to be in good condition. Outside or unattached toilets are found in 30% of eastern German housing. Among all seven million dwelling units in eastern Germany, 30% are unsafe for living. The estimated need for apartments is one million. However, because of the empty budgets of cities, towns, and villages, an unforeseen housing crisis is developing.

Even though political attempts have been made to solve the problem via a privatization process through which tenants could buy their dwellings, most tenants have shied away from such arrangements because they are not eager to buy an apartment in such great need of future repairs and renovations. Through early summer 1992, 80% of all housing remained communally owned.

So far, most private investors have refused to buy former GDR housing since property relations and property rights are both confusing and legally complicated; additionally, many towns and villages have hesitated to transfer property rights to
free-market housing companies. There have been some positive signs of interest in private development of family housing construction. However, because of the insecurity of the labor market and of unemployment conditions, this development might soon come to a halt.

Given the above developments since unification, eastern German tenants say that they are overburdened with housing shortages and rent increases. During my fieldwork I participated in several tenant-protest demonstrations, and through these observations I found that many tenants are seeking assistance from rent counselors for providing immediate help with the new situation; however, the counselors also are overburdened with requests for assistance and only able to address the problems of those who are most needy. These counselors forecast new social conflicts, protests, and demonstrations with regard to housing. Many tenants charge that the government has committed a breach of faith ("Wortbruch") and rent fraud ("Mietenbetrug"), and has led the people astray ("Irreführung").

According to the Bundesministerium für Frauen und Jugend (1991), housing needs and poor living conditions constitute the greatest day-to-day concerns expressed among women between 16 and 60 years old in the former GDR. From all areas in eastern Germany an average of 53% of these women said their greatest concern was for housing, most of all the rising rents. Among women in cities with over 100,000 inhabitants, 64% of the women identified housing needs and rising rents as their greatest concern and as a source of anger with the economic and political unification. The random-sample questionnaires were
conducted during October and November 1990.

3. I am following Silverblatt's (1991) construction of Hall's definition of 'conjunctural analysis' as "the analysis of what can only be grasped as it is produced in history (Hall 1986a: 7-8)."

4. *Round table* is the name for the regular conventions comprised of women and men representing a wide variety of political parties and organizations and generally chaired by a church person. Round tables were established at the end of 1989 during the intermediate government of Hans Modrow (which followed the fall of Honecker's government) to control and assist the GDR caretaker—the last elected—government, and subsequent local governments. Round tables discussed controversial issues such as the reports of parliamentary committees or proposed legislation, and issued a joint statement which then was handed over to the executive group for its decisions.

5. "Kieze" is the East Berlin term for urban districts. After unification Berlin was organized under 23 *Bezirke*: twelve are in western Berlin (Charlottenburg, Kreuzberg, Neukölln, Reinickendorf, Spandau, Schöneberg, Steglitz, Tempelhof, Tiergarten, Wedding, Wilmersdorf, and Zehlendorf) and eleven are in eastern Berlin (Friedrichshain, Köpenick, Hellersdorf, Hohenschönhausen, Lichtenberg, Mahrzahn, Mitte, Pankow, Prenzlauer Berg, Treptow, and Weissensee).
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