CARFAX

Placed Selves:
The Spatial Hermeneutics of Self and Other
in the Postunification Berlin Police

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ABSTRACT: *On the basis of ethnographic data gathered during 11 months of field study in two east German police precincts, four processes of identity construction are analysed which link selves to space and thereby to one of the main aspects of material culture. These processes are (1) the tropic (as opposed to literal)* reading of space, *producing a complex web of identifications through a play of metonymy, synecdoche, metaphor, ellipsis and hyperbole; (2) the* writing of space *as a material inscription of self in small spatial contexts such as neighbourhoods, cities and regions; (3) the* placement *of self into larger spatial wholes such as neighbourhoods, cities and regions; (4) the anchoring of life-stories and narrated life experiences in significant time-space combinations or* chronotopes. *The paper argues that identities are not only constructed in interaction with other actors but also in 'dialogue' with material culture and spatial practices. It argues also that the spatial dimension of identity brings to the fore the fact that identities are not only knowable, but that they can be experienced. Through space, identities become sensualised.*

Introduction

The main hypothesis of this paper is that processes of identity formation can have an important spatial component, that identity is not only constructed in dialogue with other human beings, but also in a kind of dialogue with the physical environment in which human beings live. In particular I will show how space plays into the other and self identifications of east and west Berliners as 'easterners' ('*Ossis*') or 'westerners' ('*Wessis*'). I will show that space is thus actively employed to construct and de-construct social identities. While time, due to its prominent role in phenomenological writing (e.g. Heidegger, 1986; Schütz and Luckmann, 1979), has been of considerable significance in theorising identity, lately most notably in the literature on narrative (e.g. Linde, 1993; Ricoeur, 1992; Bruner, 1990; McIntyre, 1984) as well as in the post-colonial critique (Said, 1979) and in critical, reflective ethnography (e.g. Fabian, 1983; Herzfeld, 1987 and 1991) spatial aspects of identity have played at best a minor role in works on regional or national identities, and remain surprisingly undertheorised.[1] Next to understanding the role of the experience of space in boundary creation, boundary maintenance and transcen-

dence between east and west Germans, it is the theoretical purpose of this paper to characterise three important processes through which the experience of space influences identity formation. I will call these three processes *reading space*, *writing space*, and *placement*. Taken together, they form an attempt at spatialising the concept of identity. With the help of Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) concept of chronotope, I will then start to outline the important connections between time and space in their relation to identity.

Before I can proceed to a discussion of the ways in which space is used in processes of identify formation in post-unification Germany, I have to outline first how I propose to approach the study of identity. A few fundamental definitions are in place. Taking my departure from the early Heidegger (1986), I define identity as the meaning of a self to itself or to others. My identity to me is what I mean to me, my identity to you is what I mean to you. Following most contemporary theories of meaning, I take meaning creation to consist basically in an act of contextualisation, i.e. an act of linking. The meaning of a word in a text is, for example, created by the linkages of this word to other words in the text (Benveniste, 1971); the meaning of an act is created by contextualising it into a whole sequence of acts (Mead, 1962; Wittgenstein, 1984); the meaning of a historical event is created by its narrative (i.e. temporal) contextualisation (Danto, 1985). Selves too are made meaningful by contextual-isation, by connecting them to something else. I call any act of linking self to something else 'identification'. This something else a self is linked to in identification can be this very self at another point in time, or it can be anything other, such as persons, groups, ideas, or, the topic of this paper, spatial arrangements, spatial practices, buildings, and places (Ricoeur, 1992, pp. 2–3).[2] If identifications are repeated and sustained in agreement with other persons, and thus stabilised, they congeal into parts of identities.

The focus on identifications rather than on identities has three immediate advantages: unlike identities they are readily observable; identifications allow for a dynamic analysis in terms of process; and perhaps most significantly, the concept of identification is substantively open, i.e., the important substantive dimensions of identity formation can be derived from the social arena under investigation. Thus, substantive concerns of identity beyond sex/gender, class/status group, race/ethnicity, kinship and nation, the concepts which have dominated the social science literature on identity, are allowed to emerge from the social field (see Appiah and Gates, 1995). One of the salient dimensions of identity formation which has surprisingly emerged from the social arena which I have studied is space.

The social arenas I have chosen to study identity formation through acts of identification are two police precincts in what used to be East Germany. The first is Precinct 66 (southern Köpenick) in the southeastern corner of Berlin, the second is Potsdam in the state of Brandenburg just outside Berlin. The ethnographic material on which this paper is based was collected during 11 months of ethnographic fieldwork, consisting chiefly in participant observation of all sorts of police practices (patrol car shifts, neighbourhood beat patrols, administrative work, social events, etc.). Another important source of data was open-ended tape-recorded biographical interviews. The rationale for choosing

the Berlin police is that identity is a hotly contested issue between former West Berlin and former East Berlin police officers, who have had to cooperate after the unification of Germany into one unified All-Berlin police corps.[3] The second fieldsite was primarily chosen to establish a backdrop for Berlin, which is in many ways a special case.

The movement of the officers from both sides from potential/actual opponent to potential/actual partner has thrown easterners and westerners into a situation in which some of their most basic assumptions have been questioned. Their identity conflicts arise from minute everyday circumstances: a well-functioning or non-functioning piece of equipment readily identified as either western or eastern, a word dropped, a form of argument voiced that is not part of the vocabulary or rhetorical repertoire of the respective other. But they also derive from debates over collaboration with East Germany's secret police (STASI), the morality of states, and the meaning of democracy. As I will show in the following sections, these debates frequently arise from the experience or perception of space and are anchored in space.

Before I turn to detail it is also important to remember that policing itself is essentially a spatial practice. It is the operational conjunction of three of Weber's definitional characteristics of the state: territory, legitimacy, and the claim on the monopoly of physical violence (Weber, 1980, p. 29). The police is organised along spatial principles into precincts, boroughs, and districts within a state.[4] Thus, every police officer has a clear sense of territorial responsibility, of rights and duties tied to space. Within their territory, police officers have to enforce the law of the state, on the state's behalf. The police usually assist the legal system primarily, but also other state agencies without their own enforcement capacities to enforce state rule in a given territory. In this sense, therefore, policing *is* the state in action, and police officers are a synecdoche for the state.

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that police officers connect space, e.g., the condition, shape, odour and colour of houses (which they see, unlike most other passers-by, from inside and out), the layout, size, condition or uses of roads, to the state, society or organisation which has produced or sanctioned the production of these houses and roads. But they also connect these spatial features in manifold ways with their own selves and that of their fellow human beings. In other words, police officers — by reading space — identify themselves and others. In sum, my experiences in the field have led me to study space as a significant aspect of identifications. In the next section I want to show how Berlin and Potsdam police officers read the space in which they work and live, in an attempt to understand themselves, their new compatriots from the respective other side of the former iron curtain and the social world in which they live. What follows therefore is my reading of their reading of spaces.

Reading Space/Identifying Self and Other

Temporal and spatial arrangements are, perhaps, those aspects of life worlds, which are most taken for granted, constituting the deepest core of the 'unques-

tionably given' (Schütz and Luckmann, 1979). Thus, spaces are not usually read, but they are rather — literally — overlooked. They are read, however, once spatial features stand out of the smooth surfaces of everyday assumptions, thwarting expectations, challenging the habitual vista. Construction sites, repainted buildings, suddenly closed-off thoroughfares will not fail to be noticed. Also, encounters with new, so far unknown spaces are typically characterised by intensive spatial reading, an experience captured in ordinary language by expressions like 'trying to find one's way around'.

I will distinguish two different kinds of spatial readings. The first interest in reading these spaces is often (but of course by no means exclusively) pragmatic, literally concerned with the space as space: *finding* the next super-market, *locating* the most proximate post-office, *orientating* oneself to find a way home. In what follows, I call these readings of space as space 'literal'. Spaces are also intensively read, for example, when people plan to make a space their everyday habitat. Before such a move is decided, people will frequently try to assess a 'fit' between the spaces they look at and themselves, trying to gauge whether they would feel comfortable in a particular environment. These intensive spatial encounters give rise to readings beyond space itself, they are concerned with more than orientation to find one's way. These readings are preoccupied with atmosphere, beauty, social relations, wealth, power, etc. I call these readings, for reasons I will elucidate further below, 'tropic'. After persons have 'settled in' and especially after they 'know their turf', home spaces will be consciously read only after longer periods of absence. The return home will be noted as immersion in familiarity, no matter whether this familiarity will be evaluated positively as comforting and reaffirming, or negatively as stifling, suffocating, or just plain boring.

Seen from the perspective of the phenomenology of life worlds, it is not surprising to find east and west Berliners particularly engaged in reading spaces. During the cold war divide of Berlin, East Berliners of working age had virtually no legal possibilities of visiting the west; while West Berliners'[5] visits to the east were made unpleasant by arduous border controls, costly manda-tory currency exchanges and the generally entertained notion that it is not worthwhile visiting the east anyway.[6] So, when the Wall came down, the other half of the city was to most Berliners virtually unknown space, *terra incognita*, which they eagerly went out to explore once a hassle-free opportunity oc-curred. While easterners first ventured to the glitzy shopping centres in the west, westerners flocked into the country for recreation. For both sides this was the fulfilment of long held dreams: 'shopping according to desire rather than to availability, on the one side, and weekending in reasonable driving distance from home 'just like any other normal big-city-dweller in Europe, on the other. In addition to that, the work space of many Berliners was moved to the respective other side of the city.

This encounter with alien space was also a shock to many Berliners. They experienced it as threatening, especially since they were asked, through politi-cal unification, to take that other space on as their own, to consider that other side as a part of *their* Berlin too.[7] After the frenzied party celebrating the demolition of the Wall, Berliners withdrew into their respective halves. Shop-

ping was moved back to the east at the same rate that stores of all kind opened there; and the weekending of many west Berliners was shifted back to their favoured places in northern Bavaria and eastern Lower Saxony, i.e., to places within the borders of the old Federal Republic which lie in shortest driving distance from Berlin. Both easterners and westerners have described extensive stays in the respective other half of the city as a thoroughly depressing experience. While easterners mainly complained about the pace of life in the west, westerners experienced the east as polluted, some even complaining about symptoms of disease such as rashes and nausea after more extended visits to the east.[8]

While home and work spaces of many west Berliners have stayed the same, the changes facing east Berliners are considerable due to the opening of countless shops, restaurants and banks as well as the demolition, construction, or renovation of many buildings and roads. But it is not only the space itself that changes at a revolutionary pace in the east. The very way in which easterners *look* at space in many cases has undergone a transformation too. Some of my informants have pointed out that they see space today with completely different eyes than only five years back, meaning both that they see things today they would not even have perceived before and that they read a different meaning into spatial features. Buildings they had seen in the GDR as signs of progress are reported to be seen all of a sudden in a changed light: the flaws in their construction and design become apparent (where they had seen none before), and their aesthetic wisdom is questioned (where this didn't occur to them earlier). One police officer reported that only after the fall of the wall did he start to *perceive* churches, and thus only then did he get interested also in visiting them. He claims to have never set foot into a church during GDR-times, and that he would not even have known the names of the churches, in his own words, 'they simply didn't exist for me'. Since unification, however, he not only started to visit churches, but he undertook weekend outings to churches and long defunct monasteries in the surroundings. What he started to discover in these churches is what he took to be *his own* history. In other words, he started to produce identifications which were markedly different from those he had made in the GDR. Thus, on the basis of the experience and thus on the basis of the use of space, his identity has started to shift. In sum, the confrontation with alien space has created a host of identifications for Berliners. Visits to the respective other parts made them feel who they are.

The readings of space which captured my special interest in the field employ spatial features to point to something beyond space itself. There are a few highly interesting sociological studies in which space is also read in an attempt to understand something else. Benjamin (1983) begins his analysis of an entire epoch, the nineteenth century, with an interpretation of the shopping arcades of Paris which he takes to epitomise the important features of the city of Paris which in turn is taken by Benjamin to summarise life in the nineteenth century in general. Thus, Benjamin reads the arcades of Paris in a *pars pro toto* fashion. In the language of rhetoric, he reads a very limited space as a synecdoche for an entire historical period. In similar fashion Norbert Elias

(1983) has provided a brilliant analysis of the architectural structure of seventeenth and eighteenth century palaces to understand court life in Baroque France. Lately post-structural critics have provided readings of space in order to analyse the 'late-capitalist' condition (e.g. Jameson, 1991; Soja, 1989; Zukin, 1991).

Such readings of space which reach beyond space itself are by no means the prerogative of social scientists, however, but they are very much a feature of everyday life. The beyond that interests me here concerns an identification of self or other. I found the everyday of Berlin police officers replete with spatial readings, used to make statements about the quality of self or the character of others. The violation of a life-world assumption is frequently just the occasion for such a reading. An example may illuminate that. The question of a western police officer as to the whereabouts of his new precinct on his first trip to his new work place in east Berlin was not just simply put to rest in finding it (literal reading), but upon arrival triggered a comment to the effect that in the west the precinct building would never have been built at such a place, because it would have been completely foolish to construct a police precinct at a location without easy access to traffic in all directions, but that this is precisely what was to be expected of a state like the GDR. This observation voiced to another western officer is an invitation not only to identify with the thus postulated good sense of the western police organisation as well as one's own sharing in it, but it also suggests fraternisation against the supposed stupidity of a system that is still found to linger in the police officers who have been trained and worked in it.

Space is thus not read only as space, and in this sense readings like the one in the preceding example are not literal. Since tropes are defined as non-literal uses of speech, I suggest calling these readings of space tropic, rather than textual. The classical canon of rhetoric knows three principal tropes: metaphor, synecdoche and metonymy.[9] What is characteristic of all three tropes is that they create and/or invoke and emphasise the relationship between two different entities, which are not habitually associated in this way. Metaphors create a relation by invoking similarity; metonymies highlight contiguity, and synecdoches establish relations between a part and a whole. While the classical canon of rhetoric focuses on metonymy, metaphor and synecdoche, I will extend this list by adding ellipsis and hyperbole to the ways of reading space. As will become apparent in the subsequent discussion, these forms of tropic readings are not neatly separable from each other, but in actual speech, in linguistic performance, they shade into each other, giving rise to what has been called 'the play of tropes' (Fernandez, 1991; esp. Turner, 1991). What is meant by the play of tropes is best illustrated by discussing several examples of tropic readings in the light of their pertinence to identity.

A Few Illustrative Examples

The play of tropes in the above example of the officer's reading of the relative location of the precinct building can be analysed in the following way. The placement of the precinct building in relation to several access roads is read as

a metonymy for its supposed creator, East Germany's People's Police. The People's Police is thus identified as rather careless in placing its buildings into the context of the space it was supposed to police, thereby reducing its effectiveness. But the peculiar location of the precinct is also used in turn as a synecdoche for the whole of the socio-political system of state socialism, understanding its very failure in terms of the mindlessness which can be observed in the very parts which make up the whole. By yet another synecdoche, the failure of the organisation is bestowed on its constituent parts, the individual police officers, who are thereby identified in a derogatory way, while the same figure is used to extend the foresight of the West Berlin police organisation to the speaker. Finally, by still another metonymy, the addressee of his words is gracefully included in the self-identifying praise. Thus, a few sentences about the reading of space spin a whole complex web of identifications of persons and institutions.

Before the background of decades of cold war rhetoric with its totalising juxtapositions of capitalism and socialism, peace and war, slavery and humanism, it is understandable that synecdochical readings of space, in which spatial features are read as microcosms of a social system, enjoy considerable popularity with both east and west Germans. During my first visit to my fieldsite in east Berlin, the chief of the precinct (a westerner) accompanied me back through the front door of the building. Thus we passed through the reception area which he described as a vital interface between the police and the general populace. Apparently slightly embarrassed, he pointed to the unfriendly, unwelcoming set-up of the entrance area, begging me not to mistake it for the way in which a western precinct is laid out. Directing my attention to the long narrow aisle at the end of which there is just a small window through which all inquiries have to be voiced to the officer on duty, he described the entrance area to a typical western precinct as totally different, namely wide and open, such that police officers and citizens would only be separated by a counter, at which people would be able to write comfortably as well, if need be. He insisted that both set-ups reflected the relationship between the state and its citizenry: authoritarian in the east and service-orientated in the west. One of his colleagues later pointed to the exact same features while adding to the scheme of the precinct chief that the infamous window was purposefully inserted too low, so that everybody had to bow down in front of the state. Again, the situation is densely packed with identifications and self-identifications, which involve at least three different levels: a metonymic reading of the space as characteristic of the institution that built the space, leading to a comparison of the characteristics of the police-citizen relationship in east and west, a synecdochical reading comparing aspects of both political systems, and another metonymic reading personally owning and disowning spatial arrangements.

On a neighbourhood patrol in which we were talking about the differences between being a citizen of the GDR and of the FRG, an eastern officer pointed to a huge pile of rubble. He explained that until recently this had been a wonderful day care centre, adding that people in the GDR were proud of the social accomplishments of their state. Again, space, in this case the demolition of a building with a special social service function, is used as a convenient

synecdoche for the state, which is identified as much less caring than the state it replaced (day care being an acute problem in the FRG, while the GDR did have a fairly comprehensive day-care system). However, this instance of spatial reading is also used as a metaphor for the way in which an east German, and by metonymic extension all east Germans, feel treated by their new government: they see their pride destroyed, that what they thought they had worked for (another metonymy) in shambles. This does include, of course, the progress of their own careers, which in most cases came to an abrupt halt after unification. Most officers taken over into the unified police organisations were demoted by several ranks. In this juxtaposition of career and building, the officer managed to launch the demolished building as a metaphor for his own self. He thus identified himself as victim, while pointing to the ruthlessness of his victimisers.

In another incident east German officers were poking fun at the temporary aluminum structure, housing a municipal theatre company, which was erected after demolition of the edifice planned and still under construction at the time the GDR was dissolved. The GDR-building, however, was deemed too ugly to be completed by the new authorities. The police officers not only expressed the view that the temporary structure was just as ugly as the demolished one, but they voiced the expectation that the new building that would eventually replace the temporary one would in all likelihood be no more beautiful than the — admittedly — ugly GDR project. Again, the reading of space provides the basis for a handy metaphor rejecting western pretensions to make everything better (metonymic identification), and thus also to *be* better.[10]

There is one important metaphoric reading of space, in which I have found eastern and western officers to concur. This is the metaphoric use of an inside/outside distinction. Since it is used by virtually everybody, and since it is implemented in narrations of events in the former People's Police as well as in stories about the west Berlin police, there is much reason to assume that this distinction is highly scripted and an active part of the culture of both organisations. The inside/outside distinction gives rise to identifications across hierarchies rather than across the otherwise omnipresent east/west divide. A patrol car team leaving the precinct usually announces this very fact by telling the shift leader and the radio control centre that they are driving *out*. Outside is accordingly the place where the action is, the place where a self-respecting police officer is supposed to 'stand his man'. The outside is the real life, in which a man can prove himself. Inside by comparison is the locale of boring paper work. Inside is also the place of hierarchy, the place of supervision, whereas outside is the place of freedom and agency, where actions are undertaken at the discretion of the police officers themselves. Therefore inside is the place of vain theory, the place of those who don't know what is really going on outside, which is the practice in touch with life. Going in doesn't only imply a return to the precinct, but it is also used to denote a talk with a superior. However, the inside/outside metaphor is not as unambiguous in expressing evaluative preferences as it sounds at first. Inside is also the place where there is food and coffee, TV and company; inside is a place of relaxation when there is no paperwork to do. Moreover, superiors do have an interest in

sending people out to patrol duty, in which case trying to stay in is an act of resistance against the demands of superiors. Finally, advancing in hierarchy, something almost everybody strives for, inevitably means more and more time inside. Elders have the right to stay inside. In fact, every level of hierarchy uses the same inside/outside dichotomisations in speaking about the next higher level, including the president of police himself who characterises the political leadership in this way. The inside/outside distinction is also the basis for fraternisations on the same level of hierarchy fuelled by derogations along hierarchical lines.

There is a whole genre of spatial readings making considerable use of ellipsis and hyperbole, the two forms of tropic reading I have not yet touched.[11] Stories about vacations spent at other places account for a substantive portion of all narrative performances among the police officers I have observed.[12] While these stories definitely make use of metaphoric readings of space (invoking ideal life-styles, *savoir vivre,* etc.), and also employ synecdoche and metonymy in interesting ways, they direct attention to reading spaces as ellipsis; for what seems to matter more at times than what is present in any vacation space is what is absent. In other words, the vacation space is read for the comfort or the threats of home. The flip-side of this elliptical reading of the vacation space is the hyperbolic reading of home: space which is usually scarcely taken note of at all is suddenly read as the epitome of everything one has ever hoped for, or as that which couldn't be worse, or any mixture thereof. Both, ellipsis and hyperbole are the basis for strong affirmations of a particular self, which seems to gain in discernability through a simple change of places and intensive spatial reading.

Emplotting Readings of Space

It is important to consider a further dimension in the readings of space. So far I have discussed different means through which selves can be identified with space, and I have found rhetorical figures of speech to be a good guideline for the characterisation of these means. However, each of these means, i.e., the diverse forms of a tropic reading of space, can be cast in different *modes,* qualifying the relationship between the readers of space, their spatial readings and potential listeners of these readings. Following the literary critic Northrop Frye (1957), the triangle of relations between author, text and reader has been analysed in terms of emplotment (see White, 1973; Borneman, 1992). The main forms of emplotment used and discussed in literature are tragedy, romance, comedy, and satire. Once these forms of emplotment are interpreted as ideal types in the Weberian sense, they also form a good starting point for the analysis of everyday readings of space.

Emplotment emphasises the stance the speakers take towards the connections they have created between spaces, institutions, ideas and selves. The difference between western and eastern emplotment strategies will become apparent by analysing some of the examples given above. In the first instance of spatial reading I have discussed (the one in which a western officer comments on the situation of the precinct building in relation to major access

roads) the satiric undertones can scarcely be overheard. According to Frye (1957, pp. 34, 223),[13] one of the primary characteristics of satire is the identification of the principal character of the satire as irretrievably below the capacities of author/reader or speaker/audience. Therefore, in satire (as Frye points out), there can not be any reconciliation between the characters and the world. Thus, it is not surprising that western officers most frequently use emplotment in terms of satire in their readings of eastern spaces and thus in their identifications of east German institutions. The second spatial reading of the entrance hall of the Köpenick precinct is a case in point. With the help of satirical emplotment, western officers stress an unbridgeable gap between western and eastern institutions. Eastern institutions are cast as beyond repair, and remedy can only be found in their complete replacement. Western officers thereby also express the need for radical change and acquisition of western ways by their eastern counterparts. Contrary to political rhetoric, there are almost no romantic readings of eastern spaces by westerners. Tragic emplotments are used almost exclusively in descriptions of the decrepit state of westerners' former eastern home spaces, and comic emplotments of western readings of eastern spaces are completely absent.

Eastern readings of space show a much wider variability in emplotment, reflecting a much more multifaceted view on the various spaces they encounter. Especially right after the opening of the Berlin Wall, readings of western spaces did — and at times still do — have the ring of romance. Romances, according to Frye (p. 186), are stories of positive transformation in the direction of an affirmed telos. In this sense, many aspects of western space are accepted as positive, attainable 'repro-topia' (rather than what they used to be before, unattainable u-topia). At the same time, eastern spaces are frequently given a tragic reading. Tragedy is characterised by a dramatic loss of agency (p. 207), which many easterners have experienced twice in their own life-time: first in their inability to create spaces which could compete with the admired western models due to their forced participation in the Soviet realm of centrally planned economies; and second in the destruction of many eastern buildings which have for a variety of reasons become dear to easterners by the new western authorities. The plot-structure of the torn-down day care centre's reading is tragic; here, the reader at least partly takes the blame for the failure of the GDR and/or the unquestioned adoption of the western model.[14]

Finally, as the example of the makeshift structure housing the Potsdam theatre makes clear, easterners have also started to use comic emplotment. The outstanding characteristic of comedy is the rejection of presumed superiority, while allowing for reconciliation between conflicting parties (p. 165). This comic reading betrays the cunning of the reader *vis-à-vis* those who have the privilege, in de Certeau's terms, to have strategic command over space.[15] In the end, 'the big ones will do whatever they want regardless of what the little man thinks', as one officer said in this context, and herein lies the criticism of the easterners: in situations like this they insinuate that there is no difference between the socio-political regimes of capitalism and socialism, despite either's claim to represent the common human being. And herein also lies an invitation to reconciliation from the common human being east, to the common human

being west, an invitation that westerners usually reject in eager identification with the advantages of their own system.

So far, comedy is only initiated by easterners, westerners remain adamantly satiric. Worse, westerners sometimes suggest that they are comic, while in fact they are satiric. The fine line between the two is the difference in power created by the inequality of the unification process itself, and this is the reason why a derogatory phrase on a western building by an easterner is not the same as the same phrase used by a westerner in response to an eastern building. Due to the imbalance of power, westerners can initiate comedy only in response to their own buildings, which would require a humility which still is indeed very rare.

In sum, then, police officers in Köpenick and in Potsdam proved to be avid readers of space. Sennett (1990) has argued that inhabitants of modern cities can not, unlike the inhabitants of Ancient Greek or Medieval cities, read their cultures by moving through space. The reason for this, according to Sennett, is a rigid division between public and private which is also inscribed in space. Sennett's argument, I think, requires qualification. Especially in comparison between spaces, a possibility enhanced by global mass tourism, people come to understand complex aspects of societies by experiencing space, today, as two thousand years ago. Of course, the codes have changed and what one might have to look for today is not what one might have had to look for in Classical Athens.

Writing Space/Presenting Self

Some of the spatial readings I have presented above invoke a product-producer relationship. Space is seen as the product of an institution, a whole social system or even an epoch. There is a high awareness of the fact that space is socially produced, that shaping the form of space is a matter of power. As the satiric reading of the temporal structure for the theatre illustrates, police officers know that writing space in any big way is beyond their purview. Still they are ardent critics of the strategies of those who do have the power to write larger chunks of space, the government and big companies. Their criticism prepares their own tactics in the use of this space, thus preserving a degree of agency in an environment which is largely determined by others. Thus, the police officers I encountered take routes homeward not envisioned by city planners, or they choose their shopping places not in accordance with the hopes of these suppliers of goods and services, *en bloc* and in proximity to home, but in keeping with their own idiosyncratic preferences, even if this entails considerable deviations from the usual routes travelled.

Conversely, much policework consists in enforcing the use of space envisioned by the strategists of public roads and places. Police officers must try to thwart the tactics of the users of roads which are in conflict with the official rules. Thus they are busy ticketing admittedly short-cutting but still prohibited left-turns, parking violations, speeding and the like. As far as the traffic-flow is concerned, individual police officers have even some, albeit limited, influence on strategy by addressing and sometimes even struggling with the officials who are responsible for the strategising. There are, however, also instances

where police officers side with the tacticians of the street against the strategists of space by using their legal discretion in isolated cases, or even by systematically turning a blind eye against certain violations by pointing to possible contradictions in rules.[16]

The agency of the police officers with respect to space is, however, not restricted to the tactical use of space confronting the strategies of others. Most of the police officers I got to know see themselves as writers of space on a smaller scale. Many of them aspire to build or to buy a house sooner or later, and almost all of them are passionate 'renovators' of the spaces they inhabit. A fair number of them also own or rent little weekend or summer cottages in one of the many cottage colonies in or around Berlin.[17] Actually, stories about buying new furniture, about wall-papering, painting, repairing this and that feature of the apartment, house or cottage, are probably even more frequent than vacation tales. The police officers are not only involved in the 'beautification' of their own private spaces, but some of them also tried to 'improve the appearance' of their offices. Privately 'organised'[18] furniture in designer black or chic mahogany is used instead of the trite, officially provided steel furniture in uniform grey; plants are set up, posters hung, lamps exchanged, floor mats and table-cloths placed, and shelves moved around to embellish the work space.

The writing of space is also not only confined to setting up the office, but it also involves much more work related activities. The patrol cars are correctly lined up in the court-yard, the filing of documents is done in a very particular way, the supplies of forms and other material is organised neatly in shelves, keys are kept in particular places. Any disruption of these orders will be immediately recognised and complained about. Nothing is more of an embarrassment than a supposedly filed form that can not be found anymore, because this shatters the self-understanding of bureaucracy, which is partly inscribed in orderly spatial practices of record keeping.[19] One day, the weapons officer of the Berlin precinct showed me his magazine. Pistols, rifles and sub-machine guns, sticks, shields, tear gas containers, masks, and ammunition all neatly parading in orderly rows, minutely spaced, almost measured, on immaculately clean shelves. Even the work-bench top was kept in fastidious order, the wipe-cloth draped right next to the vice. He told me that he would know immediately if somebody had been in the magazine without his knowledge, he would just be able to tell. He said that he was an orderly person, and that this was just what made a good armourer. After all, he was accountable for any single piece of equipment, any single shot of ammunition.

The motivations which are given by the officers for their writing of space point to a close association between their own selves and the space which they mould and form into a desirable shape. 'I just didn't feel at home here, I couldn't stand this desk of mine, it just wasn't me.' Another frequently used expression justifying the embellishment of offices makes use of the term '*gemütlich*' (cosy): 'well, we also want it a little bit cosy in here too (*wir wollen es doch auch ein bischen gemütlich haben*)'. Expressions of this kind point to a particular state of being they want to achieve in the spaces they inhabit: they are thriving to achieve a fit between themselves and their space. If this fit is

achieved in a very good way (which is rarely the case in offices, and is said most frequently to be true for their garden-plots and cottages), both eastern and western officers use an expression which is taken to be a good old hearty Berlin idiom. They will say: 'here you can let your soul swing freely (*hier kannste de Seele so richtig baumeln lassen*)'.

Therefore, I found the police officers in the precinct where I did my fieldwork busily involved in writing their home and work spaces. This writing is done with much care and attention, renovations at home, or rearrangements in the offices are serious projects which will be thoroughly discussed before hand with friends and relatives, they involve a weighing of alternatives, trips to vendors, etc. The metaphor of writing is in place here, because a reading of these spaces is invited. At home or in the garden, friends and relatives will be shown around, improvements will be pointed to, or else it is expected that the visitors will be perceptive enough to realise for themselves that the make up of the space has changed. These showings or invited readings usually will be accompanied by comments like 'I had to do something about it, the old wall-paper really started to bug me', compliments about neatness will be registered with additions like 'well, I am an orderly person'. Frequently, renovations will also be motivated with the possible readings of these spaces by others: 'it was about time to repaint the bathroom, or else what would people think about me'.

The expected readings of these spaces are therefore metonymic, the space is taken to represent its writer. Police officers read the spaces they know as created by a particular person as extensions of this person. They will identify persons by reading their space. In the same vein, they write their spaces in order to find these spaces, and therefore themselves, read in a particular way.[20] In all cases in which the writing of space was narrated to me, a visit to that space was taken as an opportunity to give me a grand tour of it. People do have, and are assumed to have, some agency in their writing of space, and the writing of space is one of the most significant actions they can undertake. People who have lost agency for writing spaces they would be assumed to have written will try to avoid outside reading of these spaces, lest there be drawn unwanted, 'misleading' interpretations about themselves. People, for example, would try not to invite potential misreadings of their home-spaces, by not inviting the potential mis-reader home. Eastern police officers have stated this as a reason why, at least at the beginning, they did not want to invite westerners into their home; they feared that westerners would do to their home-spaces what they have watched them do to their old office spaces and to public spaces in the east in general: derogating them as manifestations of an inferior political system.

The writing of office space, since it is much more restrained (because there is less agency), has an added quality: it displays the inhabitant's capacity to 'organise', i.e., his or her ability to improvise with limited resources. Particularly far-reaching forms of beautification can also demonstrate willingness to do so against the directives of the organisation, i.e., there is an element of daring involved, a readiness to test limits. There is a further aspect to the work-related writing of space which needs to be mentioned here. Keeping

order in filing documents, or in storing equipment, conforms to the scripted ideal of a bureaucrat or armourer. The metonymic writing and invited metonymic reading, therefore, set up a three way relationship: the written space conforms to the ideal of its writing, which in turn falls back on its actual writer; through the writing of space, the writer tries to present himself also as a good incumbent of a role.

The significance of writing home spaces is further underlined by the very size of financial as well as of time resources that are put into it. Home development is perhaps the foremost material goal in the lives of both eastern and western police officers. Also, few things stir up such violent negatively valued emotions about the former GDR among the east German officers I got to know as the shortage in building supplies and furniture. Some tell long stories about what they tried to do to get bricks, tiles or cement, the connections that were needed to get something at all. In the end, despite all the effort, things frequently didn't match, wallpaper, wall-to-wall carpet and furniture didn't add up to an aesthetically pleasing whole. One officer commented on the patchwork of tiles adorning his kitchen wall, completed, after much trouble, just before the fall of the Wall: 'When I look at it today, I get so furious that I could just tear it down. Nothing matches. And today I just need to drive to the next lumber yard to buy whatever I want'.[21] Most eastern officers, therefore, started to undertake thorough renovations of their apartments, room after room, as money permitted, soon after unification.

Just as the police officers are quite conscious of their writing spaces, so is the government. Every single construction site, for which (especially federal) government money is used to build, reconstruct or renovate new roads, railway links, telephone switches, administrative buildings and more, is employed on occasion for self-advertisement of the government's involvement in remodelling the former GDR. For all of these sites marshal huge billboards announcing what exactly it is the government is building here for the people. Public relations managers have invented zippy campaign slogans for these construction efforts. One such series is heralded as 'Upsurge East',[22] while all sorts of improvements on traffic infrastructure are marketed as 'Traffic Projects German Unity (*VerkehrsprojekteDeutsche Einheit*)'. In television advertising clips the government uses cranes crowding the Berlin airspace to insinuate metaphoric readings of construction sites likening them to change, renewal and economic boom. People have their own readings, though. The crane touting the imminent opening of yet another shopping centre was by no means read as a sign of progress by one officer. He remembered that it was erected on the site of a former factory for locomotives. To him, the comparative loss of jobs in conjunction with an invitation to consume sounded like a bad joke.

In sum, the writing of home space has to be understood especially in extension to what Goffman had to say about space as the background setting of performances (Goffman, 1959), as a formidable self-performance in its own right, i.e., the written space is not only the stage *for* performance but *is* performance itself. Nothing makes that clearer than the construction-site tourism that has developed in Berlin to celebrate the reconstruction of the city. Not only do Berliners go construction sight-seeing on the weekends, but major

sites such as the 'heart' of the pre-War Berlin, the Potsdamer Platz, has become a must-see for all visitors too. Much more than with the purchase of any other set of durable consumer goods, where only the choice of the product can be seen to reflect agency, the writing of space is a process which involves many more degrees of freedom, and thus involves a considerable degree of agency, reflecting taste and life-style, leading to something like the inscription of self in space.

Placing Self

In this section, I will discuss various ways by which people link themselves and others to places. I will call these ways of spatial identification placement. The writing of space I have discussed in the previous section is an extreme case of placement. However, writing is, for most people, a technique of limited scope: the places that can be written, or partially written, are normally small, if of extreme importance. In other words, writing is not the technique by which a self can be linked to a street, a neighbourhood, a city, region or a whole country.[23]

One important type of placement is the synecdochical reading of self as a part of a spatial whole. The self-identification 'I am a Berliner' is just such a synecdochical reading of self. The most exclusive spatial level, for which this form of placement is in use, is the street, the most inclusive level is the world; it is most frequently employed on the city, the state and the national levels.[24] Which level is chosen in discourse is highly contingent on the placement of the counterpart as well as on the issue that is discussed. Street placement, e.g., only makes sense *vis-à-vis* a counterpart, who does have intimate knowledge of the neighbourhood (which is typically the case for police officers), and it is chosen in instances in which the street can be meaningfully addressed as a whole, bounded in some respect, as in the case of a socio-economic milieu. Placement at one level is not only the negation of placement at another location at the same level, as 'I am a Berliner' implies not to be a Hamburgian or a Frank-furter,[25] but it also can imply rejection of placement at a higher or lower level, as one officer once said 'we are all Berlin police officers now' rejecting any placement as eastern or western. Another officer said with the same intention 'we are all Germans'. Thus placement stresses the level of local identification which is deemed relevant.

Sometimes, placement also takes on the character of a synecdoche where self is read as an integral part of an organic whole.[26] As self-identification this occurs, e.g., in 'I am a real Berlin plant',[27] or in 'I am a real Potsdam product *(ich bin ein echtes Potsdamer Gewächs)*' where the metaphor of plant is used to describe a self as a product and part of a particular environment, heightened by the authentication of the 'real', also suggesting long duration of presence, in fact, mostly from birth.[28] This kind of synecdochical relationship of self to space is not rarely part and parcel of a whole tropic web of relations in a verbal performance which may illustrate also the interaction between readings of space and placement. 'I have just grown up here' is added frequently as an explanation of feelings attached to the one or the other aspect of the former

GDR; in one conversation, for example, it is added to the 'Palast der Republik', the parliament building cum socio-cultural centre of the GDR. The discussion about the Palast der Republik is in turn an integral part of a discussion of GDR nostalgia. There is a metonymy between space and self as producer and product, a synecdoche between space and state, another between self and emotions and also an important metonymy between the state and the phase of life marked out as sentimentalised. The attachment to the building is also a metaphor for the attachment to the state and, by implication, a metonymy between the GDR state and the emotions of the individual is invoked.

Policework itself is rife with placements along these lines. The entire area to be policed is mentally and frequently also statistically broken up into problem-zones. One neighbourhood patrol officer once explained to me that the problem frequency in any area is inversely proportional to the average intelligence quotient in the area. More specifically, some areas are known to be frequented by illegal cigarette vendors, or to have more than their fair share of car-thefts, still others are ridden by notorious parking violations. Since all precincts seem to have their 'problem children (*Problemkinder*)' (individuals who come into contact with the police again and again), and since these 'preferred customers (*bevorzugte Kunden*)' as they are also known frequently inhabit the same neighbourhood, a new, so far unknown 'client (*Kunde*)' might be introduced as 'just another of these lads from the y-Street'.

The elliptic reading of alien spaces as well as the subsequent hyperbolic reading of the home space find their counterparts in an elliptic reading of self, more commonly called homesickness (its negative form could perhaps be called 'home-loathing'), and a hyperbolic reading of self's well-being (or in the negative form despair) as forms of placement. In this way spatial reading and placement mutually reinforce each other to the degree that a distinction becomes difficult: self and space are on the verge of fusing. From the many narrations of vacation trips I could witness, I gathered that they typically followed as a general plot scheme this elliptic reading of alien space/self and the consecutive hyperbolic reading of home/self. In a way, narratives of holiday trips seem to suggest that re-affirmation of home-placement is, if not the prime reason for vacationing, then certainly one of the more important side-effects of a trip away from home. A frequent summarising comment is that people like being at a vacation spot for a while, but that under no circumstance would they want to live there. This is true for both east and west Germans alike. It is, however, in light of decades of highly restricted travel in the GDR and almost frenzied travelling activity of east Germans after the fall of the Wall, a particularly interesting result for easterners, because it raises the pressing (albeit ultimately unanswerable) question under which conditions the GDR government could have allowed its people to travel freely without risking that too many of them might not return to their work (for this is what mattered). Put differently, the regime might have deprived itself needlessly of the benefits of this reaffirmation of home.

Still the overruling interest in placement in the police precinct in east Berlin is to differentiate between easterners and westerners. In order to place selves, people make use of a wide variety of codes. The police officers I have worked

with were busily finding ever new reliable signs that would permit placement of their own self and that of others. For the time immediately following unification, clothes, shopping bags, posture, and of course cars were quoted as signifiers allowing easy placement. As time passed, and easterners replaced their clothes and cars with western brands, these signs lost at least their unambiguous placing power. Paying attention to dialects is a very effective way of placing selves. Speakers of dialects will be invariably placed by hearers, which is a great asset for those who can shift back and forth between dialect and high-German, thereby manipulating their own placement by others. For all those who can not easily shift modes, dialect is a giveaway.[29] Since the vocabulary of the FRG and the GDR have drifted apart, certain words are also easy markers. An east German using a west German version is making a statement; and so is a west German using an east German one. Needless to say there are substantial differences between much of the organisational and technical vocabulary of the People's Police and the (West) Berlin police. An east German using People's Police terminology is surely inviting placement (unwittingly or purposefully). Also licence plates are used everywhere to place easterners and westerners.[30] West Germans working in East Germany employ them as convenient self-identifying place-ments: they simply fail to register the car at their new work location, thus keeping their old plates with their easily identifiable 'K's for Cologne (German Köln) or 'F's for Frankfurt. Berlin police officers have even found ways to tell east and west Berlin drivers apart, whose plates all begin with a 'B', by scrutinising the second set of letters in their registration number. The fact that this is something that has to be learned specifically, because this knowledge is not readily available, seems to betray a quite deep-seated need for placement.

Placement is, however, not only usable as a technique. In some ways it just happens, since life itself has a clandestine, and therefore all the more effective power to place selves. Living and working in a space creates a wealth of stories, which make up the biography of a person. The memories of these stories are always placed.[31] During my fieldwork it was a very common experience for narratives that I had been told before to be later followed up by showing me the locale in which they had actually taken place. This happened both in passing, i.e., by accidentally travelling past the locale of the story ('oh, by the way this is the spot where …'), but also quite deliberately in making detours to reach the place of a story, and sometimes a trip was undertaken for the sole purpose to see the locale of narrated action. Being at the respective place would then often give rise to a renarration, this time with more care to circumstantial detail, and sometimes even to partial enactment, thus leading the narrator to re-live partially what had happened at times decades ago. These sightseeings of memory are not necessarily sentimental journeys undertaken out of nostalgia (although these do occur as well). The places shown to me were also imbued with bad, uncomfortable memories of unhappy childhoods or times of hardship. And far from being relegated to personal experiences, a good number of them were work related, journeys to sites of spectacular police action, successes and failures. It is also not uncommon at all that police officers

would travel during slack times to the places that were important in the narrative of some colleague just days ago.

Two kinds of places carry special significance in this respect: homes and work-places (including schools). Bachelard is right when he points out that places can collapse whole sections of a biography;[32] and the places that are usually chosen to denote whole phases of life are homes and work-places. Some of the police officers I have interviewed made sure to guide me past all the houses they had lived in. Space in this sense almost does take the role of external memory, and locations of stories are cherished as gate-ways to their own past. The loss of these locations, due to destruction and reconstruction of buildings, streets and places is therefore always also a loss of memory, a loss of a piece of one's own past.

Ultimately, placement is one of the reasons why the restitution of expropri-ated buildings, especially private homes, stirs up very deep emotions among west Germans and east Germans alike.[33] Those who have lost them not only want their property back, but also their memories, the *places* of their *selves*. Usually those who get their property back are appalled about what others have done to it, they bemoan any changes. Those who lose the right to continue to reside in the very spaces they had often inhabited for decades feel, in the true sense of the word, displaced. Few things made the police officers I have worked with in Potsdam more angry than the restitution of real estate not to the old owner, who would have been expected to come back and live again in the house, but to a group of heirs who simply do not care for the building, for whom the place means nothing, and 'who use it merely as an object for speculation'. The very fact that this was possible after unification betrayed to them the venality of the capitalist system.[34]

This conflict over the rights in space as rights to memory, this conflict about who has the right to maintain a placement of self in real, experienceable space, is by no means restricted to private homes. Some west Germans who were born in the former GDR, having fled in the early postwar period, returning after unification to the locations of their youth, often for the first time since they had left, are frequently appalled by 'what the communists have done to their cities'. They scorn the GDR for not having invested in the restoration of the city as they renew it, they scorn it for having erected new structures instead of restoring the old ones. Now they frequently demand the demolition of these GDR buildings, overlooking that other memories are attached to the very buildings they want to tear down.[35] Street names, respectively their changes, are, in the same vein, a hotly contested issue.

Moreover the western police officers I have talked to were acutely aware of this almost natural placing effect. They were talking with quite ambiguous feelings about their own 'easternisation'.[36] The common denotation of '*Wessis*' for westerners and '*Ossis*' for easterners was enriched by a hybridisation of the two, '*Wossis*', for all those who had in some way taken to the other side. Western police officers asked whether they would feel at home in east Berlin, whether the east was now also their Berlin, answered regularly with a very decisive no. But, many of them would rush to add that they would have to exempt the precinct in which they were working. Asked why, one of them

added, 'so much of my life has happened here, you know, the last five years were very exciting'.

Chronotopes of Eastern and Western Life

Time and space are closely intertwined with each other. Every action is simultaneously in time and in space. Moreover, there is in most lives an interesting, regularly recurring overlap between times and spaces, structuring that very life in a fundamental way. Following the rhythm of the shift, police officers leave home at pre-set times, go to the precinct, spend the time together there to return to their homes. As they move up the hierarchical ladder, as they marry, both their home-locations and their work-locations will change, and so will the times during the day on which they go to work and when they come home. Many police officers find it desirable, e.g., to drop out of the shift and to pursue regular day work as they become older. There is also with increasing age a tendency to do bureaucratic work in the precinct rather than 'in the street'.[37]

The Swedish geographer T. Hägerstrand (1975) has pioneered the use of a simple way to plot the movement of persons through a three-dimensional time/space,[38] revealing not only the recurrent patterns of a single individual's movement through space, but also the bundling of several individuals' paths at certain spots at certain times (see Giddens, 1984; Harvey, 1989). Hägerstrand's approach is highly descriptive, ultimately aiming at the social constraints on time/space use. His unit of analysis is not an experiencing, feeling, and reflecting human being but essentially a physical body moving through space in time. This way of analysing the time/space intersection is not particularly useful for attempts at understanding the significance of time/space connections for processes of identity construction, because it offers no means to address the question of how, and in which ways, a person is connected to a particular space and a particular time segment. Put differently, Hägerstrand's method offers no insight into what spending time at a particular place *means* for a *person*. Still, working with Hägerstrand's plotting technique can raise interesting questions about sequencing, duration, and shifts in time and space use.

The Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) offers a quite different and, for studies of identity, much more promising way to study the intersection of time and space and its role in processes of identity formation. His units of analysis are in the first line literary novels, but the concept is easily extendable to narrative in general, as he demonstrates himself by analysing public forms of speech in Ancient Greece. He calls significant time/space intersections chronotopes and defines their function in narrative as follows:

> They are the organising centres for fundamental narrative events of the novel. The chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied. It can be said without qualification that to them belongs the meaning that shapes narratives. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 250)

Bakhtin uses chronotope in two distinct ways. On the one hand he takes the

term to denote single, recurrent time/location couplings which ground a narrative, making time and space experienceable:

> Thus the chronotope, functioning as the primary means of materialising time in space, emerges as a centre for concretising representation, as a force giving body to the entire novel. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 250)

Chronotopes in this sense are the salon in the nineteenth century realist novel, the castle in the English 'Gothic' novel, or the open road as a meeting point for human beings of quite different social strata, a chronotope spanning many genres and epochs. Chronotopes are, therefore, concrete spatio-temporal micro-elements of a novel. The spatial element is at this material level dominant, time is almost collapsed into space. On the other hand, Bakhtin uses chronotope also to denote the spatio-temporal plot-structure of narratives at large, a whole novel, let's say, or even a whole genre.[39] In this sense he can speak of the chronotope of the Greek Romance or of Rabelaisian chronotope. In order to differentiate between these two types of uses, I will, in what follows, call the former 'concrete chronotopes' and the latter 'plot-chronotope'.

Bakhtin's concept of chronotope can be gainfully employed to understand the differences as well as the similarities between east and west German processes of identity formation in time and space. The stories told by the police officers in the precincts in Berlin and Potsdam centre around a handful of concrete chronotopes. The most important ones are stories about work, which can be further broken down into stories of the street and stories of the precinct; they are stories about home (apartment/house and garden/cottage) which can be differentiated into stories about the writing of home-space, and narratives of events that take place at home (birthday parties, marital conflict); they are stories of the road from work to home and back; and finally, they are stories about vacations. While the sheer locales of these stories are the same for easterners and westerners — home and cottage, road to work, work-place, and vacation spot — the ways in which these places are worked out as concrete chronotopes, and especially the ways in which these are woven together into a plot-chronotope, is different for narrations about easterners' past life in the GDR and westerners' life in the FRG.[40]

In order to bring to the fore the differences between the linkages between concrete chronotope and plot chronotope, I will focus on the differences between the GDR and the FRG models. This follows the narrative strategies of my eastern informants who explained features of the GDR-reality as deviations from presently conceived conditions.[41] Stories about life in the former GDR reveal almost in unison that the work-place was a much more encompassing anchor for life in general than is the case for the west. This becomes immediately apparent by considering the fact that vacation-places and apartments were chiefly distributed through the work place. The typical People's Police holiday was spent in a vacation camp owned and run by the Ministry of the Interior, or, if the family was lucky or the officer of higher rank, in an exchange place of a similar institute of one of the other socialist countries in eastern Europe. The People's Police was also much more involved in keeping contact with the retirees than the (West) Berlin police.[42] The work-place served too as

the location for meetings of the various groupings of the Socialist Unity Party (SED), for several voluntary (or quasi-voluntary) organisations such as the Society for German-Soviet Friendship (DSF) and the sports club Dynamo, and thus it was the locale for many social and basically all political activities of the police officers.[43] In this sense, work-place superseded in the GDR the territorial principle of organisation, which characterises most west German voluntary associations.[44] Most west German police officers are members of voluntary associations like sports clubs and political parties which have strong local roots, even though the local connection is vanishing, as people move form one part of the city to another.

Similarly, home for police officers encompassed more than just the apartment in which they lived. The house-community, usually encompassing all inhabitants of all flats centring around one and the same stair-well in an apartment-block was a very important aspect of social life too.[45] In so-called 'Subotniks', volunteer actions, the house community would get together to do the necessary gardening around the house, to repaint common areas such as hallways and basements, or to repair or construct play-grounds.[46] Frequently, these Subotniks were also linked to a social gathering, following the work. Some house communities did have for this very purpose a party room, which of course was itself the product of a common effort. The previously mentioned fact that employees of the GDR Ministry of the Interior were pooled in buildings or parts of buildings implies also that the house communities into which many eastern police officers were integrated were dominated by other members of the People's Police. Thus there was an immediate connection between home and work-place, and therefore a host of common topics which could be discussed amongst each other. While most east German officers seem not to have minded this proximity to other police families, some experienced this intertwining as quite limiting. Despite the fact that both work-place and home also allowed, through the intensive social contact, for many unwanted and sometimes even despised forms of control, many former east German police officers remember the socialising aspect of it quite fondly, and they are actually missing social activities organised through work or in the house-communities which helped to acquaint people with each other easily. Finally, a home was for most citizens of the former GDR not a matter of choice, but a matter of fate. Given the enormous housing-shortage in the GDR, it was next to impossible, above all in Berlin, to choose a neighbourhood, or even a borough in which they wanted to live. Also, the size of the apartment was not so much a matter of taste, or willingness or capacity to pay rents, but it was much more a matter of availability, calculated need, and appropriate connections.

Also, the way from and to work was a quite different experience for the members of the former People's Police and the (West) Berlin police. While most officers of the Berlin police change from plain clothes to uniform only once they have reached the precinct, People's Police officers had to travel from home to work and back again wearing their uniforms. Since many eastern officers did not own a car, in GDR-times, or because the use of public transport was free for police officers while gasoline was very expensive, they travelled on buses,

streetcars and commuter rail to work, while western officers have mostly used their cars. Thus, People's Police officers were recognisable as such on the way to and from work, and many of them tell stories about the reactions of fellow citizens to their presence in uniform. They were asked questions, or were used as soundboards for all sorts of concerns, and at times they were also abused as public symbols, scolded or spat at, to show disapproval of the regime.[47] This means also that police officers felt compelled to intervene as police officers when something called for their attention. Thus, work was only over once a police officer actually reached home. By contrast, the ride to and from work is for the majority of western officers a completely private matter: they are travelling in plain clothes, in their own private cars, listening to their favourite radio station, and their obligations to intervene in anything happening on the road is restricted to that of the common citizen. Thereby, they also avoid any negative comment.

The meanings of the concrete chronotopes of work-place, road to work, and home, therefore, were quite different for members of the People's Police from the meanings they hold for officers of the (West) Berlin police. Eastern officers realise this shift in meaning frequently as a *loss* of meaning. They see, e.g., the plain-clothes on the road to work as a backing out of the responsibilities of a police officer, in extreme cases they interpret it even as the apparent shame of *being* a police officer, suggesting that their western counterparts are *acting a role*. Western officers see this much more as a positive affirmation of their right to a private life free of the impingements of work.[48]

While these differences in the gestalt of the concrete chronotopes is already quite significant, the differences get even more pronounced once they are integrated into biographical life stories. While easterners entered the police usually with much more experience in other ranges of work, according to the requirements with at least an apprenticeship in some trade, most westerners entered the police directly after school, affording a significantly longer training in the police (1 year of basic training in the east, 3 years of basic training in the west) with the status of an apprenticeship in its own right.[49] Policework in the west is, at least in the generations below 45, much more seen as a profession whereas easterners describe it more frequently in terms of a calling.[50]

The notion of 'calling (*Beruf, Berufung*)' however, does have a very strong rhetorical tinge to it since it is used in a very formulaic way, mostly left unexplored and mostly employed in situations of confrontation. Directly asked, most east Germans quote very clear career-goals as a reason to enter the police: either they found themselves stuck in a particular company without much hope for financial or career-advancement, or they found themselves stuck in a particular location, a move only possible on the basis of a career change. In the west employment security was a frequently quoted pragmatic goal for entering the police. Another feature of the career-process, however, is perhaps even more striking. The initial suggestion for joining the police is described by easterners as a suggestion coming from the outside, as an idea advanced by a friend's father or by an uncle. Westerners, by contrast, insist that it was their own initiative, that they saw an advertisement of the police and responded to it. This pattern repeats itself in terms of internal schooling and therefore

advancement within the police. The majority of easterners, e.g., narrated their entry into the police-academy to become commissioned officers as induced by superiors. Frequently they insist that at first they did not even want to attend school but were quasi-coerced into it by the combined efforts of direct superiors and party officials, after which they would show understanding that it be a good idea. Accordingly, narratives of thwarted careers are rather seldom. Westerners, by contrast, reverse the relationship between superiors and subordinates. They highlight their own agency in applying for further schooling, actively trying to enlist the support of their superiors for such a move. Also not surprisingly, then, there are many stories in which superiors are described as causes of interrupted or unsuccessful careers. The plot-chronotope of easterners' life narratives is therefore much more one of accidental encounters of persons and circumstances: a frequent interjection in life narratives is 'how life just plays with you',[51] its overall emplotment scheme is, thus, satire.[52] The life narratives of westerners are more frequently cast in terms of pursuit of a career goal and therefore resemble the emplotment scheme of a romance or a tragedy. It is noteworthy, however, that for both easterners and westerners the likelihood of casting career as pursuit rather than as accident is increasing with the achieved rank, i.e., it is much more common among staff officers than among non-commissioned officers.

In sum, then, the ways in which easterners combine space and time in their biographical tales of life in the former GDR are quite different from the narratives of their western colleagues. The spaces in which East Germans lived were in relation to each other used in a different way and therefore carried other meanings for their lives. It would be easy to conclude that, from travel destinations to home locations, space was much more determined for East Germans than for West Germans. This conclusion would be hasty, for determination appears only as such in front of the background of perceived possibilities. Thus, what might appear to the western observer as fate was not necessarily perceived in this way by the easterners themselves because choice was frequently not even thematised, it was culturally out of the question.

Conclusions

In the introduction, I defined identity as the meaning of self to itself or to others. In the four main parts of the paper I have discussed four different ways by which selves are identified with and through space, and thereby endowed with meaning. Derived from, and discussed on the basis of fieldwork material from two east German police precincts, the tropic reading of space, the writing of space, the placement of self and the narrative interweaving of time and space in chronotopes have been analysed as four types of micro-processes of identity construction. All four processes lay bare the fact that selves are connected through a complex, multilayered web with space and therefore with a fundamental expression of material culture.

Taken together, the reading and writing of spaces, the placement of self and chronotope show how identities are formed not only in a dialogue with other human beings, but also in relation to and in dialogue with space, which in turn

gives rise to further interaction with human beings. Spaces are asked for signs of belonging, and they do give answers; spaces are searched for support, and they may give comfort. Through space, people experience their own agency, and in space they can realise their own creativity; but through space, humans also experience their own powerlessness. People see spaces as their mirrors, and they understand themselves as mirrors of space. Spaces ground human activity as well as the narratives about these activities. Social interaction, and with it the construction of identity, are therefore not only to be understood as two-way relationships between ego and alter, but as three-way exchanges between ego, alter and all sorts of readable objects in space.

The recognition that identities have a spatial dimension opens up the view that identities are not only knowable, but that they can be felt, that they can be experienced. Even more, the spatial dimension of identity makes clear that identities may only be partly known, because in part they must be felt. Perhaps, the experience of identity is the ultimate secret of travelling. The encounter of unknown spaces highlights the existing as well as non-existing ties of self to the world by making felt what is missed and what is not, by making felt what is appreciated and what is not. The appeal of travel may lie precisely in the fact that it reveals identity to self in a completely non-intellec-tualised form. But this may also be the reason why spaces too foreign, too strange, can trigger nausea and angst.

As spaces in eastern Germany are remoulded on west German templates, as efforts continue to eradicate the spatial writings of the socialist regime in the GDR, Germans on both sides of the former iron divide will find that spaces in east and west more and more look alike. And accordingly their feelings of alienation will markedly decline on visiting or even moving to places on the respective other side. This is possible on the basis of a gigantic destruction or investment programme in the east. The reading of space in the future, will give rise less to attempts at placements along the east-west fault-line because as more becomes familiar, less is read. The remodeling of space in the former GDR is also an — often quite deliberate — attempt at destroying memory, and with this destruction of memory possibilities of self-placement of easterners as easterners will decline. In part these destructions of memory will lead to further debates. In part, however, east Germans are willing collaborators in it, willing, because some of the spaces created in the GDR have always been found to be deficient, dreaded today as then as signs of a shortage economy. The western models and the possibilities at writing home-spaces are eagerly taken up because they cater to long held desires. The relationship of east Germans to their changing spaces is, then, fundamentally ambivalent.

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Notes

1. Space has altogether remained a marginal field for social theory (Giddens, 1984, chapter 3). While there is increasing interest in the social production of space in critical marxist geography (Harvey, 1989; Soja, 1989; Zukin, 1990), these authors do not directly address processes of identity construction in relation to space.
2. Ricoeur calls the linkages of self with itself at other points in time 'idem-identity'; the connections between self and other elements he calls 'ipse-identity'.
3. The Berlin police is in fact one of the few organisations in unified Germany in which easterners and westerners are actually cooperating on a horizontal level of hierarchy. This is due to the fact that the State of Berlin chose to send half of the western officers east and half of the eastern officers west
4. In Germany, it is principally the level of the states and not the level of the federation which carries responsibility for the police. The highest authorities are therefore state ministries of the interior and not the federal ministry of the interior. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule, but these are irrelevant for the present purposes. The point however is this: much like a German police officer has no jurisdiction in France (although this is changing) a Berlin officer has no jurisdiction in the state of Brandenburg.
5. Throughout this paper I will use the capitalised versions 'East' and 'West' to denote the two politically separate territories of Berlin and Germany. I will use the minuscule versions 'east' and 'west' to denote the two formerly independent parts in now united Germany.
6. On a regular basis only easterners past the age of sixty were allowed visits to western relatives; westerners had to convert 25 DM for 25 marks per capita and day for journeys into the GDR; the border-controls are a lively source of gruesome stories for many West-Berliners, for decades they constituted the only personal contact most westerners had with easterners.
7. Still today, Berliners of both sides continue to talk about the 'true Berlin' and 'the false Berlin'.
8. While some of these complaints were certainly self-serving in the sense that western officers serving in the east had to drive much farther to their new workplace, and therefore sparked the desire to find reasons for reallocation in the west, there was much more to these complaints than rational calculus.
9. Frequently, irony is added here. I would maintain, however, that irony has to be analysed on a different plane since its defining characteristic is not so much on the level of the message itself, but rests on a particular cognitive and emotive relation between the utterance and the speaker. See the discussion of emplotments below.

10. In order to save space I will not give a detailed interpretation of this instance, which the readers, after the example of the two previous ones, will be able to construct for themselves.

11. Although, it should be noted that both, the reading of the location of the precinct as well as the reading of the destructed day care centre, have elliptical elements in them, which I did not discuss above.

12. Vacation stories are in fact so vigorously exchanged that I could not help to think at times that the generation of story material is one of the important aims in vacationing. This is in keeping with a German saying which may be freely translated as 'Whoever takes a journey can come home to tell a tale (*Wer immer eine Reise tut, der kann etwas erzählen*)'.

13. Frye makes the following interesting distinction between irony and satire: 'The chief distinction between irony and satire is that satire is militant irony: its moral norms are relatively clear, and it assumes standards against which the grotesque and absurd are measured' (1957, p. 223).

14. Many persons who had actively held a stake in the GDR, believing in the superiority of socialism, blamed themselves after the break up of the GDR for having kept back their criticisms for so long, for not trying to speak up more vigorously. Moreover, many see the vote of a sizable majority of the GDR voters for the Christian Democrats in the first free East German elections on 18 March 1990, and then again in the first elections to a common Bundestag in a unified Germany, as an all too quick, but voluntary sell out of GDR accomplishments.

15. de Certeau (1984) distinguishes between two kinds of agency: strategies are all those actions which are autonomous *vis-à-vis* a particular domain, in terms of space they are the powers to build a house or a block according to a desired design; tactics, by contrast have to make do with what has been deployed by the strategists, tactics are not autonomous *vis-à-vis* these structures, but they are still free to use them in ways which have not been foreseen by the strategists.

16. In Berlin, a police officer has discretion to follow up on a violation of rules ('*Ordnungswidrigkeit*'); he has none, however, as far as criminal offences ('*Straftaten*') are concerned. Failure to report a criminal offence is a criminal offence in itself.

17. In the west, these cottages are called '*Lauben*' (pergolas) or '*Hütten*' (huts). In the east they are called '*Datsche*' (from the Russian word for cottage). Actually, they are frequently veritable little houses with running hot and cold water, telephone and electricity and mail delivery. They are located in what is called a '*Garten*' (gardenplot) which is part of a '*Schrebergartenkolonie*' (garden colonies named after their founder, Mr Schreber). These colonies are organised by clubs, often running their own little pub or restaurant. These clubs, depending on how active they are, may also organise social activities especially catering to the elderly and to the young. From spring to fall many families spend the weekends in their cottages, occasionally, people move completely to their gardens during summer. Roughly 10 per cent of the territory of Berlin is covered with *Schrebergärten*. There are about 85,000 individual plots, which are hotly desired goods,

frequently not even showing up on the free market, but sold and bought within networks of friends and relatives.

18. Organisation is an important word here, utilised by the police officers themselves. The point is that they do not want to buy anything for work. What is used are things becoming superfluous elsewhere, due to renovations at home, at relatives' or friends' places, or at other workplaces they might know of. 'Organising (*organisieren*)' always implies getting something without paying for it, or at least not paying the full market-price.

19. With computerisation, these practices will very much lose their spatial character.

20. A variation on that theme is the reading of bookshelves by more intellectu-ally inclined people.

21. Of course, this also bespeaks the frustration about the futility of the effort in the first place, since what used to be quite difficult then, even in its less than ideal form, proves so easy today.

22. In German '*Aufschwung Ost*' in which the upward slope of the A is used to support a strong skywards-pointing arrow in the national colours black, red and gold.

23. Writing city quarters or even whole cities is the prerogative of princes, governments and big corporations alongside the city-planners of Corbus-ier's, Haussman's or Pombal's stature.

24. This form of placement lends itself to segmentary identifications: two streets within a borough against each other but with each other for the borough against another borough.

25. The terms 'Hamburgian (*Hamburg-er*)' or 'Frankfurt-er (*Frankfurter*)' might sound contrived in English. However the grammatical form of city plus suffix '-er' indicating being of that city is much stronger as a form of placement than the use of the preposition 'from (*aus*)'. In German, the '-er' suffix is invariably used to emphasise strong identification with a place. The use of the preposition *'aus'* is much weaker and need not indicate more than residence.

26. This can of course also be read as a metonymy if a producer-product relationship is insinuated rather than an organism-biotope one.

27. '*Ich bin eine echte Berliner Pflanze*'. '*Berliner Pflanze*' has the character of an idiom.

28. In this sense placement using the '-e' suffix is also synecdochical, whereas the use of *'aus'* never is.

29. In the context of German unification this is especially the case for people from the Saxon and Thuringian speaking parts of the former GDR. Since these dialects are not represented in the west like Berlin-dialect, or the idioms of the Baltic seashore, Saxon and Thuringian epitomise GDR-dia-lect. This impression is exacerbated by the facts that they are the two largest dialect groups in the former GDR, and that many former officials in the GDR had Saxon or Thuringian accents. Unlike Berliners, Saxons also usually did not have relatives in the West making them sought after personnel for border controls. Thus, many westerners associate negative

border-control experiences with officers speaking with heavy Saxon accents.

30. German licence plates (i.e., the former west German, now all-German) are composed of three blocks: the first block indicates with from one to three letters the county or city in which the car is registered, e.g., Berlin plates all start with a 'B', Potsdam plates all start with a 'P'. Then there is a second set of between one and two letters finally followed by a number of between one and four digits.

31. Bachelard (1994) argues that space takes precedence over time in anchoring memories.

32. Bachelard exhibits a Freudian leaning in emphasising the overall importance of the first house in which a human being has lived. He is especially interested in the refuges this first house has offered for day-dreaming, because he links these primordial experiences with later readings and writings of poetry.

33. In many ways, the restitution of expropriated property has proven to be one of the biggest burdens of the unification process. Since the outcome is by no means clear, it is one of the greatest sources of legal uncertainties for investors, because there is always some risk involved that real estate transactions undertaken in the east will finally be declared void.

34. This is in fact a synecdochical reading of spatial practices.

35. Not that this would not also have happened in West Germany, but since the GDR regime has been de-legitimised, the decisions of the regime in changing the layout of spaces is also delegitimised, and changes can be demanded. The most prominent struggle in this respect is the debate about plans for the Palast der Republik, the GDR parliament building, and to reconstruct the Hohenzollern castle atop the ruins of the original building. Police officers in the precinct are clearly divided along east-west lines on this conflict: westerners favour the destruction of the parliament building, if not necessarily the reconstruction of the castle, and easterners all find the idea of the destruction of the parliament building highly disturbing.

36. The term they have used in German is '*Verostung*', which sounds somewhat more negative than '*Veröstlichung*' the literal translation of 'easternisation'.

37. Compare the metaphoric use of the inner/outer distinctions in the section on 'Reading Space'.

38. Space as the horizontal axis and time as the vertical axis.

39. For Bakhtin it is precisely chronotope which defines genre.

40. The descriptions presented here are reconstructions of the GDR past, and descriptions and experiences of FRG past and present.

41. Of course, this bespeaks already a normalisation of the western model which has been adopted not only as a strategy to communicate effectively with westerners, but it is also, as far as I can tell from overheard conversations, a strategy which is used among easterners. It would be interesting (although extremely difficult) to find out when exactly the change of

normalising practice, i.e., describing the new as a deviation from GDR practice to describing GDR-life as deviation from present practice, has taken place. Also certain situations will probably still invoke a GDR-perspective description. The question then would be under which circumstances each perspective is chosen.

42. About the role of the work-place for life in general in the GDR, compare Martin Kohli (1994), who characterises the GDR as '*Arbeitsgesellschaft*' (work-centred society) because the work-place was, according to Kohli, the single most important socialising institution in the life of GDR citizens.

43. Party-membership and membership in the two mentioned voluntary organisations was expected of all police officers in the GDR. Party-membership was mandatory for all commissioned officers.

44. Territorial means: organisation within the limits of a city, a borough of a city or any further subdivisions based on spatial contiguity.

45. House communities ('*Hausgemeinschaften*')were formally organised, including an elected leadership with several offices: the leader itself, the house book-keeper, and sometimes also a safety inspector. Official figures mention approximately 32,000 house communities in 1986, also mentioning efforts to increase this number substantially by 1990 (Herbst *et al.*, 1994, p. 398).

46. The house communities were also used as a means of control: not only did visitors have to be registered, especially those from abroad, but the leadership of the house community might also watch over regular participation in elections and other political mass activities. The system of house communities was not comprehensive, it characterised especially life in big apartment blocks, the most common form of housing for the police officers especially in Berlin.

47. According to many eastern officers, negative reactions were increasing markedly during the last few years of the GDR.

48. This differentiation plays into different notions of the boundaries of the private and the public.

49. A profession, in Germany, is established formally through the set up of a three-year apprenticeship, usually followed by possibilities for further training in master-schools. Therefore, treating police-training as apprenticeship professionalises it in west German minds.

50. This is, of course, Max Weber's cherished distinction between '*Beruf*' (profession) and '*Berufung*' (calling), which has found its way into German popular culture. The older generation of western policemen is, in this respect, much more similar to their eastern counterparts: they frequently complain about the 'job mentality' (*Job Mentalität*, leaving the English 'job' intact, which has in comparison to '*Beruf*' a very flimsy, ephemeral connotation). Certain conflicts are not just east-west matters but clearly generational too.

51. '*Wie das Leben eben so spielt.*' As an idiom it is not restricted to eastern Germany.

52. The narrations of east-Germans about their lives in unified Germany do, if anything, exacerbate the tendency to satirise biography.

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