

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Institution of Communications Research

On Unregulated Markets and the Freedom of Media

The Transition of the East German Press after 1989

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Mandy Tröger M.A.

2018

“Under pressure everything becomes fluid.”

“Onder druk wordt alles vloeibaar.”
Dutch proverb

ABSTRACT

On Unregulated Markets and the Freedom of Media

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This thesis fills a gap in research, literature and our understanding of transitioning media in post-socialist countries. It tells the fascinating and complicated story of a press moving from state control to a Western free press model. The focus lies on the German Democratic Republic (GDR) between the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 until after German unification in October 1990. It is a story untold in English-language literature, and it is a largely ignored part in contemporary German media history. Being written for an international readership while engaging largely with a unique moment in German and international media history, this thesis bridges a gap between national, continental and academic disciplines. Its primary question is in how far the democratic *potential* that existed in the moment of revolutionary change in 1989/1990 found its institutional and/or political manifestation in the post-socialist East German press. Contrary to current research, it answers this question by approaching it from the perspective of an expanding Western democratic, and market economic order. It is, thus, not concerned with case studies or one press-related sector but looks at structural change on various levels; its focus lies on the simultaneous battles fought over a free press. Core concern is the intersection between the normative role the press holds in a democratic society and that of a newly developing, or rather established expanding Western market economy.

This thesis analyzes three press-related sectors within a transitioning political setting: first, the opening of the GDR to (and *sale* of) West German print media; second, the reform and building of *distribution* infrastructures, and, third, emerging East-West joint ventures and subsequent changing newspaper *ownerships*. While closely interlinked, reforming distribution became the point of conflict over which issues of a “free press” were being debated. This thesis shows that *nothing* that happened in the GDR before, during and after the transition happened in isolation nor was it an exclusively East German problem. Instead, East Germany became the battle ground for various interests groups, East and West, but with clear and all-overshadowing interests of West German political and economic groups. These groups generally expanded and continued their long-established interests and disputes onto the newly opened political arena and economic market. Aiming for power at different levels, all had an interest in influencing media and its policies to their own advantage or, by simply circumventing them, created situations on the ground that, once put into place, were hard to change.

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2018

INDEX OF INSTITUTIONS

Abteilung Literaturverbreitung- und propaganda (GDR) (Department of Literature Distribution and Propaganda)

Amt für Wettbewerbsschutz (GDR) (Office of Competition Protection)

Berliner Verband der Zeitungs- und Zeitschriftenverleger (Berlin Association of Newspaper and Magazine Publishers) (GDR)

Bundesministerium des Inneren (BMI) (Federal Ministry of the Interior)

Bundesministerium für innerdeutsche Beziehungen (Federal Ministry of Intra-German Relations)

Bundespresseamt (Federal Press Office)

Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie (BDI) (Federation of German Industries)

Bundesverband des werbenden Buch- und Zeitschriftenhandels e.V. (Federal Association of the Advertising Book and Newspaper Trade)

Bundesverband Deutscher Zeitungsverleger (BDZV) (Federal Association of German Newspaper Publishers)

Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB) (German Federation of Trade Unions)

Deutsche Journalistinnenbund (German Association of Female Journalists)

Deutsche Werbe- und Anzeigengesellschaft (Dewag) (German Association for Advertising)

Deutscher Journalisten-Verband (DJV) (German Journalists Association)

Förderverein unabhängiger Pressevertrieb in der DDR (Association Supporting an Independent Press Distribution in the GDR)

Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (FDGB) (GDR) (Free German Trade Union Federation)

Gesamtdeutsches Institut – Bundesanstalt für gesamtdeutsche Aufgaben (All-German Institute – Federal Office for All-German Tasks)

Gesamtverband Werbeagenturen (GWA) (Association of Advertising Agencies)

IG Druck und Medien (Industrial Union Print and Media)

Informationsgemeinschaft zur Feststellung der Verbreitung von Werbeträgern e. V. (IVW) (German Information Association for Ascertaining the Distribution of Advertising Media)

Ministerium für Betrieb und Verkehr (GDR) (Ministry of Operation and Traffic)

Ministerium für Medienpolitik (MfM) (GDR) (Ministry of Media Policy)

Ministerium für Post- und Fernmeldewesen der DDR (MPF) (Ministry of Posts and Telecommunication of the GDR)

Ministerium für Finanzen und Preise (GDR) (Ministry of Finances and Prices)

Postzeitungsvertrieb (PZV) (GDR) (Postal Newspaper Distribution)

Presse- und Informationsdienst der Regierung der DDR (Press and Information Service of the Government of the GDR)

Saarländischer Journalistenverband (SJV) (Saarland Journalists Association)

Sachverständigenrat zur Begutachtung der gesamtwirtschaftlichen Entwicklung (German Council of Economic Experts)

Treuhandgesellschaft / Treuhandanstalt (Trust agency) was in charge of privatizing East German enterprises (namely Volkseigene Betriebe (VEBs)) in public or people's property (Volkseigentum)

Verband der Film- und Fernsehschaffenden (VFF) (GDR) (Association of Film and Television Professionals)

Verband der Journalisten der DDR (VJD) (GDR) (Association of Journalists of the GDR)

Verband der Lokalpresse (Association of the Local Press)

Verband der Zeitungs- und Zeitschriftenverleger der DDR (VZZD) (Association of Newspaper and Magazine Publishers of the GDR)

Verband Deutscher Buch-, Zeitungs- und Zeitschriften-Grossisten e.V. (Presse-Grosso) (Registered Association of German Book, Newspaper and Magazine *Grossisten*) (Press Grosso)

Verband deutscher Zeitschriftenverleger (VDZ) (Association of German Magazine Publishers): West German trade association of magazine publishers

Verband der unabhängigen Zeitungs- und Zeitschriften-Großhändler (Association of Independent Newspaper and Magazine *Grossisten*)

Verein Berliner Zeitungsverleger (GDR) (Association of the Berlin Newspaper Publishers)

Vereinigung organisationseigener Betriebe (VOB) (GDR) (conglomerate of plants and enterprises owned generally by an political organization)

Verein zur Förderung eines unabhängigen Vertriebs von Presseerzeugnissen in der DDR (Association for Supporting an Independent Press Distribution in the GDR)

Vertriebs-Vereinigung der Berliner Zeitungs- und Zeitschriften-Grossisten (GDR) (Association of the Berlin Newspaper and Magazine Distributors)

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INTRODUCTION

“No one had expected that after the end of command journalism in the GDR, the structure of the press market ... would copy [former] SED demarcations – of course, not for political but for economic reasons.”

Walter Mahle, *Pressemarkt Ost*, 1992¹

On May 8, 1990, the theologian and newly elected East German Media Minister Gottfried Müller sat down to write in his minister's diary. With a sense of satisfaction he noted, the four major West German publishing houses Heinrich Bauer (Hamburg), Axel Springer (Berlin), Gruner+Jahr (Hamburg), and Burda (Offenburg) had just experienced a “slap in the face.”² Representatives of the “Big Four,” joined by a representative of the Association of (West) German Magazine Publishers, had once again met at the Ministry of Media Policy (Ministerium für Medienpolitik, MfM) to lobby for their country-wide press distribution system in a still sovereign German Democratic Republic (GDR). Just when the meeting was about to start, however, they were handed the “Resolution on Press Distribution” that had been passed a few days earlier and had been made public just hours before. After having carefully studied the document, the publishers were in outrage. While the Springer representative spoke of a “massive infringement of press freedom,” others doubted that the resolution was at all democratic, and all jointly threatened to stop investments and to leave the GDR at once (see Chapter IV).³ Why?

The Berlin Wall had fallen six months earlier, on November 9, 1989, and the Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschland, SED) had lost its power. The first free elections on March 18, 1990, had brought a new (conservative) government and its newly created Media Ministry was to ensure a “cultivated transition to media freedom” in the GDR.⁴ In early March, however, Bauer, Springer, Gruner+Jahr, and Burda had independently divided the territory of the GDR among each other. They had started to build their own press distribution infrastructures and began distributing and selling largely their own publications. Though Müller generally aimed for a

1 “Denn niemand hatte nach dem Ende des Kommandojournalismus der DDR erwartet, daß die Gliederung des Pressemarkts ... den Grenzziehungen der SED nachgebildet sein würde – natürlich nicht aus politischen Gründen, sondern aus wirtschaftlichen Gründen.” Mahle, Walter A. (ed.), *Pressemarkt Ost*, Nationale und internationale Perspektiven, Munich: Ölschläger 1992, p. 13.

2 “die Folgen des Eindringens in die Grauzone DDR.” “Ohrfeige ... Gottfried Müller, minister diary (April-May 1990), May 8, 1990, sent to author on January 12, 2017.

3 “massiven Eingriff in die Pressefreiheit.” Internal note, Aktennotiz über ein Gespräch mit BRD-Verlagen, May 8, 1990, pp. 3-4, private archive Ralf Bachmann (file was handed to author).

4 “kultivierten Übergang in die Medienfreiheit ... durch die Hintertür die Medien [zu] beherrschen.” Cited in “Anwalt der Länder, die es noch gar nicht gibt,” Jens Brüning, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 4/27/90, BArch DC 9/1033 (1/2).

small government in media matters, he now made clear that this single-handed act of the publishers endangered universal equal market opportunities, which made necessary state regulations. During the meeting on May 8, Müller made clear that by having built their own, exclusive distribution system, the publishers “had consciously pushed into a grey zone, a legal vacuum. It seemed,” he continued, “that after the fall of the 'real existing socialism,' [the publishers] wanted to demonstrate 'real existing capitalism'.”⁵ A developing free press in the GDR, Müller added, could further be suffocated by an overflow of Western print media, and he pointed to “dubious forms of cross-border production by naming a place of production in the GDR even though production itself took place in the Federal Republic.”⁶ All of these market methods had far reaching consequences for a transitioning domestic press that was disadvantaged on many levels. “The resolution,” Müller concluded, “is not directed *against* but is to *secure* press freedom” [emphases added].⁷

The Big Four were not amused. During the previous months, they had put considerable efforts into importing publications into the GDR and by now, had made significant investments into distribution infrastructures. Not only had they started operations “from scratch,” but with a 70 percent market share in the newspaper and magazine sector of the Federal Republic, they had successfully established a similar percentage in the sale of West German print media in the East.⁸ If the resolution was to be applied, months of negotiations and work, it seemed, had been for nothing. Gottfried Müller, on the other hand, like most other officials of the new government, had taken over office just weeks earlier. The former chief editor of the church paper *Heimat und Glaube* had little idea of prior negotiations and no experience in media policy.

What he did see, however, were the massive problems faced by his ministry. In his minister's diary, he outlined the most pressing issues: “Postal [press] Distribution is failing” (April 23), which made necessary fast and effective actions of the government (April 16/May 23) while the position of the MfM was going to be a difficult one (April 11) in that it would need to explain its role to various interest groups and would very likely face constant criticism (April 27/May 10).⁹ Most importantly, two days before taking over office, Müller noted that after having studied the

5 “bewußt in eine Grauzone, in rechtsfreie Räume, vorgestoßen seien ... Man habe hier nach dem Scheitern des real existierenden Sozialismus wohl den real existierenden Kapitalismus demonstrieren wollen.” Internal note, Aktennotiz über ein Gespräch mit BRD-Verlagen, May 8, 1990, p. 2, private archive Ralf Bachmann (file was handed over to the author).

6 “zweifelhafte Formen einer grenzüberschreitenden Produktion, wobei ein Herstellungsort in der DDR genannt wird, obwohl die wirkliche Produktion in der Bundesrepublik erfolgt.” Internal note, Aktennotiz über ein Gespräch mit BRD-Verlagen, May 8, 1990, p. 2, private archive Ralf Bachmann (file was handed over to the author).

7 “Die Verordnung richtet sich nicht gegen, sondern schützt die Pressefreiheit.” Internal note, Aktennotiz über ein Gespräch mit BRD-Verlagen, May 8, 1990, p. 4, private archive Ralf Bachmann (file was handed over to the author).

8 “Start aus dem Nichts,” *Springer Aktuell*, No. 1, March 1990, p. 12, Corporate Archives of Axel Springer SE; Deutsche Presse Agentur, “Hintergrund. Pressemarkt der DDR – Dezember 1989 bis Juli 1990,” August 10, 1990, pp. 1-17, p. 2, BArch DC9/1050.

9 “der PZV versagt.” Gottfried Müller, minister diary (April-May 1990), sent to author on January 12, 2016.

current situation, it was clear that the issues of the press were first and foremost economic ones. This related in particular to the “cut-throat and destructive competition of West German *Grossisten* [press distributors].”¹⁰ Unfortunate for Müller and the MfM: both entered the scene *months* after the fall of the Berlin Wall, a time during which various interests groups had already begun exploring new territories and markets. They had created a situation on the ground that required and allowed for corrective measures only. Müller added in retrospect, “above all, everything had to go very, very, very fast.”¹¹

This thesis tells the story of this “very, very fast” transition by looking at multiple levels of the structural transition process in the press sector. Grounded in historical methods and based on the theoretical foundation of a critical political economy of media and communication, this thesis works at the intersection of what political scientist call “institution transfer” and what economists might call a “natural experiment.” While the former looks at the expansion and subsequent takeover and/or rejection of West German institutions and norms in East Germany, the latter might view this thesis as case study of a unique historical moment in time providing empirical evidence of what happens in an emerging unregulated market.¹² The primary question of this thesis, however, is normative. It asks to what extent the democratic *potential* that existed in the moment of revolutionary change in 1989/1990 found its institutional manifestation in the post-socialist East German press. It answers this question by approaching it from the perspective of an expanding democratic, and market economic order. Contrary to current research, this thesis, therefore, is not concerned with biographies, specific case studies or the developments in individual press-related sectors. Instead, it provides insights into the complexity of structural shifts and their underlying dynamics in different sectors, and the simultaneous battles fought over a free press. It, thereby, fills a gap in research, literature, and our understanding of the transition of media and the development of media markets in transitioning countries. Since the GDR only set the precedence for a broader Eastern expansion of a Western political-economic order, this study provides detailed insights into the workings of such expansion.

It does so by focusing on the time period, as the East German paper *Junge Welt* put it,

10 “Verdrängungs- und Vernichtungswettbewerb der Westgrossisten.” Gottfried Müller, minister diary (April-May 1990), sent to author on January 12, 2016.

11 “vor allem musste alles ganz schnell, schnell gehen.” Personal communication with author, Gottfried Müller, Email, January 19, 2017.

12 Note: “A natural experiment occurs when some feature of the real world is randomly changed in a way that allows using the exogenous variation due to this change in order to study causal effects of an otherwise endogenous explanatory variable.” See Sauter, Wolf Nicolas, “Essays on Natural Experiments in Behavioral Finance and Trade, dissertation.” PhD Dissertation, Ludwig-Maximilian-University Munich, 2009, p. 3. For definition and discussion of institution transfer see: Seibel, Wolfgang, “Erfolgreich gescheiteter Institutionentransfer.” *Transformation der politisch-administrativen Strukturen in Ostdeutschland*, edited by Wollmann, Hellmut et al. Opladen: Leske + Budrich, pp. 473-494, 1997, p. 476. Bogumi, Jörg, and Werner Jann, “Transformation der Verwaltung.” *Verwaltung und Verwaltungswissenschaft in Deutschland*, 2nd ed., Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, pp. 261-262, 2009.

between the “old muzzle” of political censorship falling off and new market structures setting in.¹³ Gazing into this short but fast-changing time period reveals condensed struggles over *all* matters of a free, democratic media and press: arguments over the role and rights of the state and industries, debates over the role and rights of journalists and citizens, and the definition of a “free press” itself. These stories are untold in English-language literature, and they are largely ignored in contemporary German-language media history.

Journalist Joachim Nölte, who spent these months of transition at the documenting division of the MfM, compiled a chronological overview of the changing press landscape between Fall 1989 and Fall 1990.¹⁴ He described three transitional stages: First, the time of departure (Aufbruch) and awakening defined by an atmosphere of optimism and liberation from state patronage closely interlinked with damage control of an old system in dispair. Second, the phase of political and structural reshaping. Here, new publishers and publications were being founded, and democratic structures in journalism were being debated. Third, the market penetration of West German companies that brought along the transformation of the press to a market economic system. Along came the fight for existence of East German publishers, and the beginning of a restructuring process of the media according to federal principles.¹⁵

The first phase roughly started with the precipitating events around the fortieth anniversary of the GDR, the second began in November/December 1989, and the beginning of the third, Nölte defines by a specific date: April 1, 1990, the day press subsidies for East German publications ceased to exist. Not only did newspapers drastically increase their prices, but they also introduced advertising as a revenue stream while still working within old structures of centralized resource allocation.¹⁶ At the same time, as the West German business paper *Handelsblatt* put it, they needed to compete with a “flood of West German publications [that] after the opening of the border” likewise aimed to capture market positions at East German newsstands.¹⁷ While none of these phases were clearly separable, and were defined by breaks and turmoils, it is legitimate to claim that the press was never to be as free as in its immediate transitioning period (stage two), breaking free

13 “alte Maulkorb.” Pressefreiheit adé, Frank Schumann, *Junge Welt*, May12, 1990, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35a-b, DSC07754.

14 Personal communication, Joachim Nölte, Email, February 26, 2018. Nölte, Joachim, “Oktober 1989 bis Oktober 1990. Ausgewählt und kommentiert von Joachim Nölte,” in Claus, Werner (ed.), *Medien-Wende, Wende-Medien? Dokumentation des Wandels im DDR-Journalismus, Oktober '89-Oktober '90*, Berlin: Vistas, pp. 17-116, 1991.

15 Nölte, Joachim, “Oktober 1989 bis Oktober 1990. Ausgewählt und kommentiert von Joachim Nölte,” in Claus, Werner (ed.), *Medien-Wende, Wende-Medien? Dokumentation des Wandels im DDR-Journalismus, Oktober '89-Oktober '90*, Berlin: Vistas, pp. 17-116, 1991, p. 19.

16 Nölte, Joachim, “Oktober 1989 bis Oktober 1990. Ausgewählt und kommentiert von Joachim Nölte,” in Claus, Werner (ed.), *Medien-Wende, Wende-Medien? Dokumentation des Wandels im DDR-Journalismus, Oktober '89-Oktober '90*, Berlin: Vistas, pp. 17-116, 1991, p. 20.

17 “nach der Öffnung der Grenze eine Flut von Titel.” Die Post und private Grosse-Firmen sollen Chancengleichheit am Lesermarkt bieten, *Handelsblatt*, p.8, 5/10/90, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35a-b, DSC07777.

from a former party monopoly over information and still free of future market demands.

This thesis gives insights into the initial concepts, negotiations and lobbying strategies that allowed West German firms to not simply adapt better to shifting playing fields but to, in fact, become major agents that largely defined these shifts. In particular early market pressures exercised by major, but also smaller West German publishing houses influenced media policies and reform initiatives in the GDR early on. Several East German institutions, in particular those consisting of reform- and civic groups that had initiated the democratic movement in the GDR, pushed for their visions of reform from within. They had, however, little to counteract early political influences and market interests fostered by an “increasingly faster pace to unify both German states,” which was largely based on the “stimulating effects” of the Deutschmark pushed by the federal government (see Chapter II).¹⁸

However, just as there was not *one* cohesive interest of East German publishers and/or institutions, there was also not *one* political or economic West German agenda. Rather, *various* interest groups in East and West Germany (ministries, publishers, associations, and parties etc.) had their own interests at stake and struggled for power on various levels. More successful and overshadowing, however, were those pushing from the West to the East. East German media policies largely *reacted* to situations on the ground partly by adopting West German legislative measures. These regulative attempts were generally ineffective. But since ineffectiveness does not equal irrelevance, a closer look at the dynamics of domestic reforms and their early succumbing to Western influences are just as revealing as the analysis of the latter.

West German interest groups, even those with similar agendas in one aspect, did not necessarily follow a consistent line of cooperation. For instance, while the “Big Four” temporarily and selectively joined efforts for matters of distribution (see Chapter IV), they simultaneously started a fierce dumping price competition on the newly opened Eastern market (see Chapter III) and fought rigorously over the re-distribution of ownership shares of East German publishers (see Chapter V). It was, as the East German TV guide *FF dabei* wrote in a letter to its readers, a “rampant fight between media corporations, in which neither East nor West German law applies.”¹⁹ In particular the issue of distribution, however, was, as the *Berliner Zeitung* put it, the “key issue for the future structuring of the market in the GDR.”²⁰ Therein lay the root for questions of import and

18 “immer schneller werdende Tempo der Vereinigung der beiden deutschen Staaten.” Protocol, “Protokoll über die Beratung der Arbeitsgruppe 'Grundsatzfragen' der Gesetzgebungskommission 'Mediengesetz' im Ministerium für Medienpolitik am 26. Juli 1990,” p. 3, Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis / B.V.3 – Grüne Partei DDR; Box 27-30, File 30.

19 “zügelloser Kampf der Medienkonzerne, bei dem weder Ost- noch Westgesetze gelten.” Mit dem Fuß in der Tür, Alfred Wagner, *FF dabei*, 5/22/90, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35c, DSC08036.

20 Full quote: “Kernfrage für die künftige Gestaltung der Verhältnisse aus dem Medienmarkt ist das Vertriebssystem.” Neue Vertriebsverordnung wirkt auch keine Wunder, K. Bischoff, *Berliner Zeitung*, 5/11/90, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35a-b, DSC07780.

sales, and subsequently, ownership changes.

The head of the Federal Ministry of the Interior (Bundesministerium des Inneren, BMI), Erich Schaible, held a different view. During a meeting on the issue of distribution in the GDR on February 14, 1990, he made clear that contrary to current East German rhetoric, one needed to distinguish between “the direct, uncontrolled import of print media into the GDR and their respective logistics.”²¹ Both were separate issues and needed to be approached as such. Schaible spoke out of the federal context, within which their institutionalization had been set for decades. His statement with reference to the GDR, however, not only showed an insufficient understanding of the workings of a planned press economy, within which matters of media production, import and distribution were economically interdependent, but also a (willful?) disregard for the West German market interests at work in it. And here, distribution was the key.

Already by February 14, 1990, the growing “legal vacuum” of a media landscape in transition was being filled increasingly by the joined market interests of major West German publishing houses; they, as the West German union magazine *Publizistik und Kunst* pointed out, “take advantage of the circumstance that currently there exists no particularly efficient distribution system [in the GDR].”²² These insufficient infrastructures initially endangered the import and sale of West German publications in the GDR, and West German major publishers aimed at closing potential market obstacles. Further, with an estimated total annual revenue of about 1 billion DM in distribution, looming profits were high.²³ Other effects, however, were immediate: the success of about one million sold copies of Springer's *Bild* in the GDR by June 1990, for instance, would not have been possible without the respective distribution infrastructures. It required the latter to allow for sales, and along with the distribution concepts of the major publishers came initiatives for sales, marketing and joint ventures. They were based on common federal practices, interests and market logic. Schaible's statement, therefore, only exemplified a more general self-righteous approach of the BMI towards press matters in the GDR, potentially because of its own close relations to the major publishing houses (see Chapters III, IV and V).

Closer to the historic reality of a transitioning press in the GDR was a declaration drafted by the newly created, reformist Media Control Council (Medienkontrollrat, MKR) on March 28, 1990.

21 “der unmittelbaren, unkontrollierten Einfuhr von Presseerzeugnissen in die DDR und der danach dort zu erbringenden Logistik.” Protocol, Protokoll einer Besprechung im Bundesinnenministerium am 14.2.1990 in Bonn zum Thema Pressevertrieb in der DDR, Klaus Wagner, Bonn, February 16, 1990, p. 2, BArch DM3/21121 (1/3).

22 “Zunutzen machen sich die BRD-Verlage den Umstand, daß in der DDR bisher kein sonderlich leistungsfähiges Vertriebssystem existiert.” Marketing in ausgehungerten Märkten, Günter Herkel, *Publizistik und Kunst*, 5/90, pp.50-54, p.52, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35a-b, DSC07921.

23 Stern und Geo für Suhl und Gera. Vier westdeutsche Verlage wollen ein Vertriebssystem in der DDR aufbauen, Andreas Kühner, *Horizont*, January 26, 1990, attachment V to letter, Thomas Ganske, Jahreszeitenverlag et. al. an Runden Tisch, Hamburg, February 3, 1990, BArch DA3/34.

Underlining that the media situation “in our country has changed drastically” and that current legislation offered “barely a basis for solutions,” the MKR urged the East German government to step in and close legislative loopholes.²⁴ This referred, first, to the massive sale of West German print media in the GDR and the “extremely uneven competitive chances between West German major publishers and the domestic press.”²⁵ Second, it pointed to issues of press distribution, and, third, it urged for “[e]conomic and legal regulations over ownership changes of newspapers and magazines to safeguard the independence of the press and to prevent a too great concentration of capital and market dominance.”²⁶ The MKR, thereby, drew a close relation between all three press-related sectors, and underlined that they were mutually dependent if the goal was to establish a free, independent press in the GDR. Following these political developments and market shifts, Joachim Nölte, in his chronology of the transformation of the press, documented their *outcome*; he claimed that it was for future historians to make out the closer and more complex developments behind subsequent events and policies.²⁷ This thesis takes up this challenge.

It does so by looking at all three interrelated sectors of an emerging press market within a transitioning political setting. Chapter I gives an overview of the literature, theoretical frame, methods, and sources. Chapter II provides the historical context of German-German relations during the transition period in general and introduces the main policy institutions and actors of a transitioning media in particular. Chapter III documents the fast increase of West German print media in the GDR. It analyzes different market strategies employed by West German publishers to secure a future readership, and it shows the different interests and strategies of East German publishers and institutions to deal with the changing market situation. Chapter IV is the central chapter of this thesis. It tells the complicated story behind what the trade journal *kressreport* called the “secret diplomacy of the four major publishers with the Postal Ministry of the GDR over the building of a functioning press distribution system in the GDR – a pact of a state monopoly with big

24 Full quote: “unseres Landes [hat sich] drastisch verändert. Dabei sind eine Reihe von Problemen entstanden, auf die unsere Gesellschaft nicht vorbereitet war ... kaum eine Grundlage, die entstandenen Probleme zu lösen.” Draft, Entwurf - Erklärung des Medienkontrollrates an die Regierung, Berlin, March 28, 1990, p. 1, Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis / B.V.3 – Grüne Partei DDR; Box 27-30, File 30; also in Medienkontrollrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, ID-Archiv-Sammlungen, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, Box 1-4, File 1.

25 “extrem ungleichen Wettbewerbschancen zwischen westdeutschen Grossanbietern und der einheimischen Presse.” Draft, Entwurf - Erklärung des Medienkontrollrates an die Regierung, Berlin, March 28, 1990, p. 2, Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis / B.V.3 – Grüne Partei DDR; Box 27-30, File 30.

26 “Wirtschaftliche und rechtliche Kontrolle der Eigentumsveränderungen bei Zeitungen und Zeitschriften zur Wahrung der Eigenständigkeit der Presse und Verhinderung zu großer Kapitalkonzentration and Marktbeherrschung.” Draft, Entwurf - Erklärung des Medienkontrollrates an die Regierung, Berlin, March 28, 1990, pp. 2-3, Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis / B.V.3 – Grüne Partei DDR; Box 27-30, File 30.

27 Full quote: “Die Chronik ... muss es zunächst dem Leser, bzw. einer späteren wissenschaftlichen Aufarbeitung überlassen, sich daraus ein Gesamtbild zu formen.” Nölte, Joachim, “Oktober 1989 bis Oktober 1990. Ausgewählt und kommentiert von Joachim Nölte,” in Claus, Werner (ed.), *Medien-Wende, Wende-Medien? Dokumentation des Wandels im DDR-Journalismus, Oktober '89-Oktober '90*, Berlin: Vistas, 1991, pp. 17-116, p. 20.

business.”²⁸ This chapter gives insights into the various and competing interests of East and West German interest groups involved in it and holds that a focus on the “Big Four” alone is a too narrow frame to sufficiently understand developments on the ground. Chapter V then moves to early cooperation and joint venture agreements between East and West German publishers, and the eventual “wave of mergers ... so massive, yet unparalleled in international media history.”²⁹ Eventually administered by the East German trust agency *Treuhandgesellschaft*, the subsequent “massive buy-out” of East German publishers was the third cornerstone of a complex accession process preceded by an appropriation through market interests on various levels.³⁰

The spectrum of problems documented and analyzed in this thesis, namely the transition of the press, represents only a fraction of larger transitional shifts, similar pressures and interests that affected all socioeconomic sectors during the early transition period, and the more general westward expansion of a democratic and market economic order across Eastern Europe. Though different by sector and in respective outcome, in particular the insurance sector, the aviation, the energy, and the automotive industry, early on, showed, for instance, an “alarming density of coalitions” similar to those of the press presented in the following chapters.³¹ By reassessing post-socialist history through the lens of a changing media and press system in East Germany, this project, therefore, aims to trace the broader social, economic and political realities of this unique historical moment and its lasting ramifications for post-Wall Germany. Laying open the close connection between political and economic interests in the exploration of new Eastern markets, it shows that *nothing* that happened in the GDR before, during and after the transition happened in isolation nor was it an exclusively East German problem. Instead, East Germany became the battle ground for various interests groups, East and West, but with clear and all-overshadowing interests of West German political and economic groups. These groups generally expanded and continued their long-established interests and disputes onto the newly opened political arena and economic market.

28 “die Geheimdiplomatie der vier Großverlage ... mit dem DDR-Postministerium zum Zwecke des Aufbaus einer funktionierenden Pressevertriebssystems in der DDR – ein Pakt des Staatsmonopols mit dem Großkapital.” Alles ohne Gewähr, *kress report*, no.3, February 1, 1990, p. 2, attachment III to letter, Thomas Ganske, Jahreszeitenverlag et. al. an Runden Tisch, Hamburg, February 3, 1990, BArch DA3/34 (see Chapter V.IV).

29 “Die Konzentrationswelle rollt in so gewaltiger Form, wie dies in der internationalen Mediengeschichte bisher einmalig ist.” Wolfgang Mayer, *Publizistik und Kunst*, 5/90, p.53, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35a-b, DSC07921.

30 Full quote: “Bundesdeutsche Verlage überrennen die DDR nicht nur durch den Vertrieb ihrer Zeitungen und Zeitschriften – sie kaufen sich in der DDR auch ganz massiv ein.” Wolfgang Mayer, *Publizistik und Kunst*, 5/90, p. 53, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35a-b, DSC07921.

31 “bedenkliche Kooperationsverdichtungen.” “Die Fusionskontrolle soll in der DDR nur in einer abgemilderten Form gelten,” *Das Handelsblatt*, June 7, 1990, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, 35d, DSC08071. See Czada, Roland, and Gerhard Lehmbruch (eds.), *Transformationspfade in Ostdeutschland: Beiträge Zur Sektoralen Vereinigungspolitik*, Frankfurt am Main [u.a.]: Campus-Verlag, 1998. Kreiss, Sylvia, *Ausgleichsforderungen im Rahmen der deutschen Wiedervereinigung*, Hamburg, 2003. Nägele, Frank, Strukturpolitik wider Willen? Die regionalpolitischen Dimensionen der Treuhandpolitik, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*. Beilage zur Wochenzeitung Das Parlament. B 43-44, 1994. Seibel, Wolfgang, *Verwaltete Illusionen – Die Privatisierung der DDR – Wirtschaft durch die Treuhandanstalt und ihre Nachfolger 1990-2000*, Frankfurt a. M., 2005.

Aiming for power at different levels, all of them had an interest in influencing media and its policies or, in simply circumventing them, they created situations on the ground barely changeable once put into place.

CHAPTER I: THEORY, METHODS, SOURCES, AND PROBLEMS

Theory in International Perspective

This thesis fills a gap in research, literature and our understanding of the transition of media in transitioning countries. While concerned with contemporary, post-socialist German media and press history, it is positioned in the US American tradition of what Dan Schiller calls “radical” and others call “critical” political economy of communication (PEoC) and its corresponding paradigms, theoretical and methodological premisses, and normative assertions about communication and media in (expanding) Western market economies and democracies.³² Vincent Mosco defines the “central qualities” of PEoC as an overall concern with social change and history, social totality, moral philosophy and praxis.³³ More specifically, research in the PEoC tradition provides studies “of the social relations, particularly power relations that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources, including communication resources.”³⁴ While research based on this definition of PEoC can be found also in German-language literature, the difference between both lies in their methodological outlook. Situated in the applied social sciences, PEoC in German-language communication research (CR) greatly differs from the kind of qualitative historical research presented in this thesis.³⁵ More importantly, however, with the almost complete absence of the political economy paradigm in German CR, with it being underrepresented in literature and produced mainly outside of Germany, PEoC is a forgotten academic tradition in research and teaching in Germany.³⁶ This thesis aims to make a contribution in reviving this tradition. By presenting a historically informed study on a topic concerned with contemporary German media history, it further offers a methodological alternative to more readily available PEoC

32 Schiller, Dan, The Legacy of Robert A. Brady. Antifascist origins of the political economy of communications, in: *Journal of Media Economics*, 12/2, pp. 89-101, 1999. See Mosco, Vincent, *The Political Economy of Communication*, 2 ed., Los Angeles: Sages Publications, 2009. Mosco, Vincent, and Janet Wasko (eds.), *The Political Economy of Information*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.

33 Mosco, Vincent, *The Political Economy of Communication*, 2 ed., Los Angeles: Sages Publications, 2009, p. 26.

34 Mosco, Vincent, *The Political Economy of Communication*, 2 ed., Los Angeles: Sages Publications, 2009, p. 2.

35 See for instance the work of Manfred Knoche: Knoche, Manfred, *Medienkonzentration als Macht- und Legitimationsproblem für Politik und Wissenschaft. Kritisch-empirische Konzentrationstheorie versus apologetisch-normative Wettbewerbstheorie*, in Ahrweiler, Petra, and Barbara Thomaß (eds.), *Internationale partizipatorische Kommunikationspolitik. Struktur und Visionen. Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag von Hans J. Kleinsteuber*, Münster/Berlin et al.: Lit, pp. 117-140, 2005. Knoche, Manfred, *Kommunikationswissenschaftliche Medienökonomie als Kritik der politischen Ökonomie der Medien*, in Siegert, G. (ed.), *Medienökonomie in der Kommunikationswissenschaft. Bedeutung, Grundfragen und Entwicklungsperspektiven. Manfred Knoche zum 60. Geburtstag*, Munster: Lit, pp.101 – 109, 2002. Knoche, Manfred, *Kapitalisierung der Medienindustrie aus politökonomischer Perspektive*; in: *Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft*, 49/2, pp. 177 – 194, 2001. Available online: http://www.medienoekonomie.at/pdf/pubdown/kapitalmedindustrie_01.pdf [09-10-2012]

36 On the history of PEoC in Germany, see Scheu, Andreas, *Ardornos Erben*, Köln: Harlem Verlag, 2012. Meyen, Michael, “Die konservative Wende der Kommunikationswissenschaft,” conference presentation at the Founding Conference of the Network of Critical Communication Research Germany, University of Munich, Munich, Nov 30 – Dec. 1, 2018.

approaches in German-language literature.

The major aim of this thesis, however, is to lay open to a non-German speaking audience a deeply fascinating part of German and international media history, and a unique example of and detailed look into the political economy of a post-socialist media transition. The German Democratic Republic (GDR) offers a rare-to-find case study for such transition in that it provides a condensed microcosm of Cold War alliances in close relation to German-German dynamics. Existent throughout forty years of division, German-German economic and political relations allowed for immediate cross-border activities during the early reform period. The East German context, therefore, offers a rich repertoire of competing interests in domestic reform activities *and* early external market interest and political influences, all in close alliance with broader political German-German agendas. Further, East Germany was to become the entrance door for Western media corporation to other Eastern European media markets.

The transition period is still a highly politicized and culturally loaded topic in Germany; its analysis through the lens of a critical political economy approach might lead to attempts to delegitimize its findings due to its theoretical outlook, its qualitative methods or the subjectivity of the author. All potential charges are serious and need to be addressed:

The assumption of this thesis is that while PEoC might be an absent field in Germany, it still holds a legitimate and important place within the broader spectrum of different academic traditions. To disregard the findings of this thesis based on reservations regarding its theoretical outlook, therefore, not simply limits our understanding of history but of social reality. This thesis, in analyzing the competing interests of various political economic groups, grounds its findings in meticulous archival work and an almost exclusive reliance on (semi-)primary sources. It, thereby, offers a unique look into the complexity of historical reality, integrates the German case into international media markets, and applies PoEC to issues specifically relevant to German media history and its current media system.

This thesis further holds that writing of history is never objective or neutral but a reflection of past convictions and present conditions. The latter change how we approach history, how we narrate stories and the kinds of questions we asked. That is the beauty of it, history never gets old. In writing this history, however, my own intersubjectivity becomes part of the story. Having grown up in East Berlin during the transition period, I have experienced the consequences of the stories unfolding in this thesis. The questions asked and the perspective taken, are, thus, influenced by personal experience. Further, it can be expected that being from East Germany and being identified as an East German allowed for different dynamics in the communication with (mainly East German) interview partners (see below). It does not follow, however, that the events outlined in this

thesis are skewed or less accurate than others. The often cited and well-known media researcher Gunter Holzweißig, for instance, an expert on media in the GDR, was also the director of the All-German Institute – Federal Office for All-German Tasks (Gesamtdeutsches Institut – Bundesanstalt für gesamtdeutsche Aufgaben). As the name suggests, the office found its task and purpose in the legal statute of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) that the GDR was an illegitimate state, and that Germany was, indeed, *one* nation that was, for the time being, represented by the FRG. It is not surprising that Holzweißig's research, based on these premises and convictions, was and is deeply influenced by it (see below).

Holzweißig is one example among many. The question whether or not the GDR, indeed, was an illegitimate state influences how German-German history is being written, and the answer to this question affects all others. While most historical accounts in German language research work on the premise (upheld by the Federal Republic) that the GDR was *not* a legitimate, sovereign state, and that everything that happened during the transition period and thereafter was an inevitable process, this thesis takes international law and domestic reform initiatives as its starting point. The recognition of the GDR by the United Nations in 1973, officially gave it domestic autonomy, though the GDR was never truly independent from the Federal Republic on material, political or social terms. This thesis acknowledges, however, that throughout forty years, the GDR developed a different social order as part of a broader Cold War international political economic order. It views the reform movement in the GDR as an attempt to bring down a dictatorial government as part of a wider international movement that had started with Michal Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika.³⁷ Contrary to often dominant conceptions, however, the end goal of this reform movement in the GDR had *not* been German unification. Rather, writing history in the service of such narrative gives legitimacy to, for instance, questionable state regulations in this process of unification (see Chapter II).³⁸

This thesis does not present *the* story but *a* story of the transitioning of the press in the GDR. It does not claim exclusivity, and acknowledges the fact that history writing requires a selection of facts and a subsequent construction of events that serves a specific purpose; it is done with an intention and is framed according to certain predispositions. As stated earlier, the leading question of this thesis is in how far the democratic *potential* that existed in the moment of revolutionary change in 1989/1990 found its institutional and/or political manifestation in the post-socialist East German press. Having laid out the assumptions upon which this thesis is written and acknowledging its limitations does not undermine its overall contribution to literature in general and our

37 Bahrmann, Hannes, and Christoph Links, *Chronik der Wende*, Berlin: Ch. Links, 1994-c1995.

38 Note: This argument was made by Wolfgang Ullmann in: "Niederlage der deutschen Demokratie," Wolfgang Ullmann, *DVZ*, May 25, 1990, Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis / B.V.3 – Grüne Partei DDR; Box 27-30, File 26.

understanding of “media transitions” specifically. Instead, in offering an analysis of structural political economic shifts in the transition process, this thesis fills a gap English and German-language literature and theory.

Scope, Sources, and Methods

The scope of this thesis is the transition of the press in the GDR from November 1989 until after mid-1991. This includes the production, circulation, sale and ownership of print media and its respective publishers. The focus lies not on a specific publisher or one press-related sector but on the structural preconditions and shifts within which publications were being produced and distributed. General attention is given to the *Zeitungspress*e or (newspaper) press.³⁹

The findings are entirely based on primary and semi-primary sources; secondary literature has been used only if and when primary sources left gaps in the overall narrative or when needed for contextualizing specific findings within a broader context. Archival work was done in eleven public and non-public (publishers, association etc.) archives.⁴⁰ Valuable material was added by the holdings of seven private archives, and seventeen non-biographical interviews.⁴¹

Archives and Interviews

In various ways, archives are places of institutionalized “politics of memory.”⁴² In Germany, and with specific relevance to this thesis, the policy of national archives is such that all files classified under “GDR” are generally open to the public (even if they contain material from *after* 1990). The National Archive in Berlin (BArch) holds the majority of “GDR” records. Files of the same time period labeled “FRG” are closed for at least thirty years to protect individual rights and potentially sensitive information of economic and political interest groups. The consequences of this imbalance for historical research are serious and well-known among archivists and historians, not the least because they relate to a broader political agenda to the writing and construction of German history. They partly explain the often one-sided and GDR-centric approaches in current German-German history writing. The GDR, before but especially in 1989/90, however, *cannot* be thought of without the political, economic and social relations, pressures and affiliations to the Federal Republic. Not having had access to these files, made necessary different strategies:

First, the filing of “requests to shorten the term of file protection” (Antrag auf

39 For a discussion on definitions and categories of press matters see Erdmann, Georg, and Bruno Fritsch, *Zeitungsvielfalt im Vergleich. Das Angebot der Tageszeitungen in Europa*, Cologne: Hase & Koehler Verlag, 1990, pp. 13-14, Corporate Archives of Axel Springer SE.

40 Guidelines for archival work can be found in Gunn, Simon, and Lucy Faire (eds.), *Research methods for history*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.

41 For a complete list of all archives and interview partners, please see Sources and Bibliography.

42 Brown, Richard Harvey, and Beth Davis-Brown, The making of memory: the politics of archives, libraries and museums in the construction of national consciousness, in *History of the Human Sciences*, 11/2, pp. 17-32, 1998.

Schutzfristenverkürzung) to be granted access to classified federal documents in the National Archives in Koblenz and Berlin - Koblenz holds the files of the Federal Ministry of the Interior (Bundesministerium des Inneren, BMI) that was responsible for media related issues; Berlin holds, for instance, those of the trust agency *Treuhandgesellschaft* (see Chapter V).⁴³ The issue of classified access made more important the archives of political foundations affiliated with individual parties (Stiftungsarchive). These archives, in general dispute with the national archive over new acquisitions, at times, hold files of politicians who worked on a federal level. For instance, the Archive of Liberalism of the Friedrich-Naumann Foundation for Freedom, affiliated with the liberal Free Democratic Party (Freie Demokratische Partei, FDP), holds the record of several members of the FDP's federal media commission, and the Green Memory Archive (Grünes Gedächtnis) of the Böll Foundation and the Green Party in Berlin holds the estate of Gerhard Bächer, former media representative of the Green Party (East) at the Media Control Council (Medienkontrollrat, MKR).⁴⁴ The Archive of Democratic Socialism (Demokratischer Sozialismus, ADS) of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation and the leftist party DIE LINKE in Berlin holds the estate of interim prime minister and later member of the German Bundestag, Hans Modrow.⁴⁵ These archives have individually negotiated classified periods, and are generally easier to access.

The third way around the issue of access lay in the “GDR” files themselves. Since classification matters, *not* content, detailed communication between various East and West German interest groups can, if traced thoroughly, be found in these files. In particular Chapter IV, telling the complicated story of early market interests in the building of a monopoly-like press distribution in East Germany, is based on files found in the holdings of the East German Ministry of Postal and Telecommunication (Ministerium für Post- und Fernmeldewesen, MPF). Labeled “GDR,” they are open for research, even though, as will become clear, some federal interest groups might have good reasons for wanting to keep this communication off record.

Other important archives were the ID-Archive at the International Institute for Social History (IISH/ID-Archive MKR) in Amsterdam that holds an extensive collection (forty-two boxes) of the MKR, and the extensive library on media (policy) books in the corporate archive library of Axel Springer Publishers.⁴⁶

43 Note: These requests are generally complicated and can take up years. I was granted access to files of the BMI at the National Archive in Koblenz; two requests for the trust agency *Treuhandgesellschaft* in Berlin are still being processed with the prospect of access in the summer of 2018.

44 More information on the archive holdings in Becker-Schaum, Christoph, *Der Archivbestand Gerhard Bächer und die Grüne Partei in der DDR, Grünes Gedächtnis*, pp. 71-76, 2009.
http://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/uploads/2014/06/jb_2009_-_cbs_archivbestand_gerhard_baecher.pdf [May 25, 2016].

45 More information on the archive holdings see ADS, Bestände/Findbücher, Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung.
<https://www.rosalux.de/stiftung/historisches-zentrum/archiv/bestaende-findbuecher/> [January 10, 2018].

46 Note on IISH/ID-Archive MKR: The collection was transferred to the IISH/ID-Archive MKR in 1997, and contains

In particular the private (personal) archives took a central role in the original research. During the transition period, with fast institutional changes, it was common for those working at ministries, newspapers, publishers or in civic groups to take files home once the job was done and no archive was in charge of storing documents. In particular the private archives of Wolfgang Spickermann (newly elected editor-in-chief of *Neues Deutschland*), Ralf Bachmann, and Hans-Jürgen Niehof of the MPF were invaluable for this thesis.⁴⁷

Hans-Jürgen Niehof's and Gottfried Müller's background knowledge further greatly contributed to this thesis. The communication with both, as well as all other twenty interview partners were non-biographical. Questions related to the specific subject matter at hand, such as the specific dealings of a ministry, a newspaper or media policy institution during the transition.⁴⁸ The driving goal was to fill gaps that could not have been filled based on archival material alone. This is important because during the fast-paced transition period, much of the communication happened verbally and/or was not documented systematically but noted by hand on pieces of paper. This was partly due to the grass-roots like character of reform institutions such as the Round Table or the MKR and the often non-professional background of their members, as well as to institutional shifts more general. Thus, archival holdings generally contain numerous pieces of hand written notes and papers that require context to make sense of them, and this context can often only be provided by those who worked on the spot.

Semi-Primary Sources

It has been established by several scholars that there is no objectivity in the news. In Western based models of journalism as well in a centralized socialist settings, journalism always operates within specific social systems defined by context-related values, interests and material conditions.⁴⁹ This becomes particularly apparent when dealing with a transitioning press from one political economic system to another and the simultaneous clashing of both.

The press, next to broadcasting, was *the* most important source of information during the transition period that was defined by fast-paced change and little transparency. Newspaper demand in the GDR rose exponentially, and while several battles on all levels of society were being fought

minutes of the meetings of the Media Control Council in 1990, correspondence and documents regarding the reshaping of the media landscape (radio, television, newspapers and publishing houses) in the German Democratic Republic in 1990, and an extensive collection of press clippings 1989-1990.

47 See also Bachman, Ralf, *Ich bin der Herr. Und wer bist Du? Ein deutsches Journalistenleben*, Edition Reiher, Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1995.

48 Note: interview were, thus, from "timeline" or biographical interviews. See Adriansen, Hanne Kirstine, Timeline interviews. A tool for conducting life history research, in *Qualitative Studies*, 3/1, 2012, pp. 40-55.

49 Bennett, Lance, *News. The Politics of Illusion*, 3rd ed. Washington D.C.: Longman, 1996. Nerone, John, The Historical Roots of the Normative Model of Journalism, in *Journalism*, 14/4, 2012, pp. 446-458. Nerone, John (ed.), *Last Rights: Revisiting Four Theories of the Press*. Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

simultaneously, especially those relating to media developments found their way into the daily press. This was not the least because, as the East German paper *Neue Zeit* admitted, the press itself was “most interested in it.”⁵⁰ Here, newspapers served as informants, agents, and platforms of debate. The discussion whether or not the former propaganda paper *Neues Deutschland* had any legitimacy in continuing circulation, for instance, was first and foremost debated in different newspapers, via open letters and editorials.⁵¹

More importantly, newspapers served as the main and often *sole* source of information for policy makers. Several surveys of the newly established Ministry of Media Policy (Ministerium für Medienpolitik, MfM) on the fast changing situation of publishers and newspapers in the GDR, for instance, were based solely on press material. The archival holdings of the advisory MKR or of the MfM are, therefore, filled with an abundance of press clippings on press-related issues.⁵² Consistent references to newspaper articles in letters of various interest groups bear proof that they too relied on the press as a major source of information. All learned from the press about the struggles of East German papers, planned or executed mergers, and the media policy goals of East and West German political and economic groups.

Newspapers, however, did not merely document, but – with newspaper publishers themselves having had vested interests in these developments – they too became key actors in policy campaigns, such as Jahreszeiten publishers with regard to distribution practices of major West German publishers, or Tagesspiegel with regard to consolidation issues of Springer and the paper *Der Morgen* (see Chapter IV). While these two West German publishers mainly focused on the dealings of the West German major publishing houses in the GDR, also East German publishers became relevant actors and used their publications to make their own concerns heard. Thereby, they were not necessarily in agreement; former SED party papers claimed their independence but still held various privileges, while newly established newspapers pointed to the continuation of former monopoly structures. All of them, however, faced a growing competition and made their struggles public by addressing their readers for feedback or help. This was true also for other interest groups, such as media unions and publishers' associations. They too made use of their own publications to push for their ideas of press and policy change in the GDR. Press coverage was, thus, defined by the

50 “am meisten daran interessiert.” Friedrich Eismann, “Einheitlich definieren,” *Neue Zeit*, July 6, 1990, BArch DC9/1033 (1/2), folder 2.

51 See for instance: Hans Christoph Buch, “Ein Feigenblatt verdeckt die Blöße nicht. Warum an die Vergangenheit des 'Neuen Deutschland' in Erinnerung behalten sollte,” *FAZ*, August 31, 1990; Karl-Heinz Jakobs, “Weder Feigenblatt noch Blöße. Die Vergangenheit des 'Neuen Deutschland' ist vergangen,” *FAZ*, September 14, 1990. Also in “Die Sonntagsgeschichte – Briefwechsel Nr. 2,” *Neues Deutschland*, September 19, 1990, p. 8., archive Vistas Publishers.

52 Here in particular the holdings of the IISH/ID-Archive MKR, Boxes 34-36 (Media Control Council); Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis / B.V.3 – Grüne Partei DDR, Box 27-30 (Gerhard Bächer, member of the Media Control Council); BArch DC9.

respective situations, interests and affiliations of specific publications. They all revealed different perspectives in a puzzle that contains many pieces.

It is not the scope of this thesis to analyze in detail the kind of coverage generated by different publications. Though such project would be highly interesting, this dissertation draws from print media as semi-primary sources in the acknowledgment that all were conditioned by structural shifts and were simultaneously agents of change. Given this background, newspaper accounts offer valuable insights into the battles fought and the interest at stake. They all became media battles and press coverage stood exemplary for bigger interests at stake.

In short, since newspapers not simply documented change but were actively involved in it, their coverage must be seen as significant historical sources of information. They spoke out of the very context of interest they aimed to push. And though the general tendency in research literature is to focus on ideological content in East German papers, this thesis shows that also West German papers had clear political and economic agendas based also on assumptions that were not self-evident in a country in transition. All perspectives are equally valid during the transition period in the GDR.

Language

Language is political and confers deeply rooted systematic belief, inequalities and/or assumptions about the workings of a specific social order.⁵³ In the German-German context, this refers to how both German states were being made sense of and to the language that developed in the service of those beliefs.⁵⁴ While these language issues pose a general challenge, translation issues add to it. For instance, the words “in- und ausländisch” are generally translated into “national and international.” Since, according to federal law, the GDR was part of the German *nation*, its territory was “national.” The term, thus, undercuts geographies and jurisdictions of states and cannot be applied easily to one or the other. Put differently, while to the GDR the Federal Republic was “foreign” territory, the language used in the federal context (and its respective concepts applied) made the GDR part of the “national” context. The term “bundesdeutsch,” therefore, commonly referred to the Federal Republic in East German language, but it simply translates into “German,” which again purports the idea that West Germany stood for *all* of Germany. Whenever the word “bundesdeutsch” has been used, it was translated into “West German.”

53 For a discussion of issues of language see: Part Four - Deciphering Meanings, in Gunn, Simon, and Lucy Faire (eds.), *Research methods for history*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.

54 Hellmann, Manfred W., Zur Sprache vor und nach der „Wende“: Ost-West-Kulturen in der Kommunikation in Casper-Hehne, Hehne, and Army Schweiger (eds.), *Deutschland und die "Wende" in Literatur, Sprache und Medien. Interkulturelle und kulturkontrastive Perspektiven. Dokumentation eines Expertenseminars für Internationale Alumni der Georg-August-Universität Göttingen vom 8.-13. Juli 2007*, Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, pp. 97-116, 2008.

This is one example to make clear the political connotations of language in this specific historical context. Culturally loaded words such as *Wende* (turn-around, transition or transformation period), *Ossi* (East German) or *Wessi* (West German) hold their own challenges. The terms commonly used to describe the *Wende*-period, that is the rapid socio-economic and political changes in the GDR, are “transformation” or “transition.” While “transition” suggests that reform happened from within and out of itself, as a linear process of progress, the term “transformation” aims to break with this linearity by showing how various interests groups were at work.⁵⁵ Seen in historical context, however, the term “integration” is a more useful way to think of it. This is because “integration” points to political-economic agendas and material realities that led this “transition” phase according to well-established norms of an expanding Western political economy.⁵⁶ These norms (and pressures) set new boundaries within which people and institutions could exercise agency. For matters of consistency, and to underline that a transformation process took place according to well a established but expanding Western political economy, the term “transition” is being used throughout this thesis.

In translating German terms and sources, the overall aim of the author has been to translate *meaning* rather than words, a challenge doomed to fail.⁵⁷ A similar problem appears with regard to institutions, terms or concepts that lack compatible terms or counterparts in a non-socialist context (i.e. “Valuta,” “Planvorgaben,” or “Organ”).⁵⁸ Non-German readers might, therefore, find some translations dense or unfamiliar sounding. To allow for the contextualization of text passages, background information of political, economic and social terms, actors or institutions was included whenever possible and to the best knowledge of the author. And while all quotes have been translated into English, the original quotes in German can be found in the text or the respective footnote.

The dynamics of language certainly also played into the interviews led with (mainly East German) interview partners and should, therefore, not be omitted. Being identified as an East German and speaking East Berlin dialect certainly created communication dynamics that were partly based on a shared East German identity. While such interpersonal dynamics are part of *every*

55 Siebert, Horst (ed.), *The Transformation of Socialist economies. Symposium, 1991*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1992; Otte, Hans-Heinrich, *Experiences from the privatisation of the East German economy*, Allendale, Mich.: Seidman School of Business, Grand Valley State University, 1994. Spangenberg, Sabine, *The institutionalised transformation of the East German economy*, Heidelberg: Physica-Verlag, 1998. Jovanović, Mica (ed.), *System transformation in comparative perspective. Affinity and diversity in institutional, structural and cultural patterns*, Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2007. Pickel, Andreas, and Helmut Wiesenthal, *The grand experiment. Debating shock therapy, transition theory, and the East German experience*, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997.

56 Pickel, Andreas, and Helmut Wiesenthal, *The grand experiment. Debating shock therapy, transition theory, and the East German experience*, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997.

57 For a discussion of issues of language see Part Four, Deciphering Meanings, in Gunn, Simon, and Lucy Faire (eds.), *Research methods for history*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.

58 Note: to name a few other examples: Planteil, Postzeitungsliste, Sperrzeichen etc.

interview (they are simply different in their assumed objectivity), the author is aware of the underlying issues connected to this intersubjectivity with regard to the content of the interviews. All interview transcripts have been sent to the interviewees; only approved interviews have been used for this thesis.

Literature Review

One difference between research in Germany and the Anglo-American context is the socio-political context within which it is being conducted. Current research on the GDR and its post-socialist history in the Anglo-American context offers a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches increasingly in resistance to still dominant Cold War narratives.⁵⁹ In Germany, this history remains a highly politicized topic, not the least because of lasting socio-economic disparities between different *Länder* (states), which affects also the outlook of research.⁶⁰ Historian and political scientist Martin Sabrow identifies three ideal types of how memory of the GDR is being constructed in Germany: *progress*, *arrangement* and *dictatorship*.⁶¹ The memory type dominant in past and current communication or journalism research is that of *dictatorship*, which only stands symptomatic for the construction of GDR memory in general.⁶² According to Sabrow, this type focuses on the oppressive state structures and its courageous overcoming in the peaceful protests of 1989. He criticizes that GDR dictatorship history, as an institutionalized and publicly funded operation, generally is set into opposition to a self-serving narrative of West German democratic freedom.⁶³ It stands in the long West German tradition of framing the East German experience

59 See for instance: Betts, Paul, The Twilight of the Idols. East German Memory and Material Culture, in *The Journal of Modern History*, 72:3, 2000, 731-765. Betts, Paul, *Within walls. Private life in the German Democratic Republic*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Berdahl, Daphne, and Matti Bunzl, *On the social life of postsocialism. Memory, consumption, Germany*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010; Berdahl, Daphne, The Spirit of Capitalism and the Boundaries of Citizenship in Post-Wall Germany; in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 47:2, Apr., 2005, pp. 235-251. Gumbert, Heather, *Envisioning socialism. Television and the Cold War in the German Democratic Republic*, University of Michigan Press, 2014. Veenis, Milena, Cola in the German Democratic Republic. East German Fantasies on Western Consumption, in *Enterprise and Society*, 12, 2011, 489-524. Veenis, Milena, Consumption in East Germany. The Seduction and Betrayal of Things; in: *Journal of Material Culture*, Mar 1999, 4/1, 1999, pp. 79-112. Willis, Jim, *Daily life behind the Iron Curtain*, Santa Barbara, Calif.: Greenwood, 2013.

60 Pollack, Detlef et al. (eds.), *Political culture in post-communist Europe. Attitudes in new democracies*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003. Berth, Hendrik (ed.), *Einheitslust und Einheitsfrust. Junge Ostdeutsche auf dem Weg vom DDR- zum Bundesbürger. Eine sozialwissenschaftliche Längsschnittstudie von 1987-2006*, Giessen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 2007.

61 Note: The second ideal type, *arrangement*, combines power and the everyday world from the East German perspective. The general frame of self-assertion under rough conditions serves to increase East Germans' pride in 'survival,' which makes this ideal type, according to Sabrow, very vivid in East Germans today. Thirdly, with *progress* the idea remains that socialism is a legitimate alternative to capitalist societies, and is especially cultivated among former GDR elites. See Sabrow, Martin, Die DDR erinnern, in Martin Sabrow (ed.), *Erinnerungsorte der DDR*, München: Beck, pp. 9-27, 2009, pp. 18-19.

62 Meyen, Michael, Mass media and collective memory. The communist GDR in today's communicative and cultural memory, Conference Paper, IAMCR 2012 Conference, Durban, 2012.

63 Sabrow, Martin, Die DDR erinnern, in Martin Sabrow (ed.), *Erinnerungsorte der DDR*, München: Beck, pp. 9-27, 2009, p. 18.

through the lens of offenders, victims, and resistance, in which the “GDR is the contrasting foil for the Western model that emphasizes the rule of law, freedom, and democracy.”⁶⁴ The dictatorship frame finds its expression in media representations, political discourse, and academic research, all of which are dominated by preconceived Western notions of socialist life.⁶⁵ Several content analyses on the former and current coverage of the GDR and East Germans in the (West) German media, for instance, show how, for decades, life in the GDR has overwhelmingly been represented as deeply political, characterized by oppression, decay and material shortage.⁶⁶ And though this frame is increasingly being challenged, for instance, in research on issues of representation, research conducted in the social sciences and/or communication research predominantly follows it.⁶⁷

This institutionalized creation of collective memory is a continuation of the Cold War history and of forty years of division throughout which the FRG never recognized the GDR as a legitimate state but instead claimed to represent the whole of Germany by constitutionally guaranteeing “one German citizenship.” Also in consequence to that, the GDR remains, what Zahlmann calls, a “footnote to history” or, what Meyen calls, the “Opaque Germany” (Dunkeldeutschland); and it relates to complaints of Stuhler that the last and only freely elected East German government seems “to have fallen out of history.”⁶⁸ Examples are manifold.

Konrad Dussel's book on the German daily press in the 19th and 20th century, for instance, though dedicating an entire chapter to the GDR (1945-1989), offers only a brief narrative of post-War press policies that seemed to not have changed until 1989, while also claiming that “[m]ore than fifty years of press history in the Federal Republic cannot be outlined in detailed fashion in one

64 Sabrow, Martin, Die DDR erinnern, in Martin Sabrow (ed.), *Erinnerungsorte der DDR*, München: Beck, pp. 9-27, 2009, p. 18. Sabrow, Martin, *Wohin treibt die DDR-Erinnerung? Dokumentation einer Debatte*, Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2007.

65 See for instance: Weidefeld, Werner, and Karl Rudolf Korte, *Handbuch zur deutschen Einheit 1949-1989-1999*, Frankfurt/M.: Campus, 1999. Ahbe, Thomas, Rainer Gries, and Wolfgang Schmale, *Die Ostdeutschen in den Medien. Das Bild von den Anderen nach 1990*, Leipzig: Leipziger Uni-Verlag, 2009. Zahlmann, Stefan (ed.), *Wie im Westen, nur anders. Medien in der DDR*, Berlin: Panama, 2010.

66 Ahbe, Thomas, Rainer Gries, and Wolfgang Schmale, *Die Ostdeutschen in den Medien. Das Bild von den Anderen nach 1990*, Leipzig: Leipziger Uni-Verlag, 2009.

67 See for instance: Reck, Roland, *Wasserträger des Regimes. Rolle und Selbstverständnis von DDR-Journalisten vor und nach der Wende 1989/1990*, Münster, 1995. Dittmar, Claudia, and Susanne Vollberg (eds.), *Die Überwindung der Langeweile? Zur Programmentwicklung des DDR-Fernsehens 1968 bis 1974*, Leipzig, 2002. Meyen, Michael, *Denver Clan und Neues Deutschland, Mediennutzung in der DDR*, Berlin, 2003. Meyen, Michael, Aufsätze und Berichte – Kollektive Ausreise? Zur Reichweite ost- und westdeutscher Fernsehprogramme in der DDR, in *Publizistik*, 47/2, 2001, pp. 200-220; Meyen, Michael, and Ute Nawratil, The Viewers. Television and everyday life in East Germany, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 24/3, 2004, pp. 355-365.

68 Stuhler, Ed., *Die letzten Monate der DDR. Die Regierung de Maizière und ihr Weg zur deutschen Einheit*, Berlin: Links, 2010; Zahlmann, Stefan (ed.) (2010), *Wie im Westen, nur anders. Medien in der DDR*, Berlin: Panama. Meyen, Michael, *Wir haben freier gelebt. Die DDR im kollektiven Gedächtnis der Deutschen*. Transcript: Bielefeld, 2013. Examples for this paradigm: See Stöber, Rudolf, *Deutsche Pressegeschichte, Einführung, Systematik, Glossar*, Konstanz: UVK Medien, 2000. Schulz, Günther (ed.), *Geschäft mit Wort und Meinung, Medienunternehmer seit dem 18. Jahrhundert*, Munich: Harald Boldt Verlag im R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1999. Dussel, Konrad, *Deutsche Tagespresse im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Münster: Lit Verlag, pp. 187-205, 2004.

chapter.”⁶⁹ The underlying irrelevance and simplicity of East German press history framed according to a distinct political outlook, however, neither captures more interesting questions of internal reform processes, nor make use of this unique historical case study of a socialist press.⁷⁰ Similar concepts and narratives are also being applied to the biographies of those who have lived in the East German “anomaly.”⁷¹

Little to no space is given to alternative perspectives. Any critique or broadening of the dictatorship frame can easily be delegitimized as *Ostlagie* (East German nostalgia), that is a mystification for a socialist past based on communal solidarity, progressive welfare programs, socialist security and full employment.⁷² Some point to this form of muting dissent as one way of securing the material interests for, and increasing the social capital of West German interest groups.⁷³ Ironically, therefore, similar to old times, personal narratives of East Germans deviating from the dictatorship narrative are often told and shared only in private.⁷⁴

The work of earlier mentioned Gunter Holzweißig's on media in the GDR and the transition period, therefore, stands exemplary only for a broader dictatorship paradigm dominant in research on the GDR. Holzweißig's general focus on the strong ideological content of East German news media and the information monopoly of the SED leads him to frame it as a monolithic bloc that stood in opposition to free Western media.⁷⁵ His conclusion on the media transition is likewise rather uniform in its pro-Western perspective: the acceptance of West German structures in the East led to stability and pluralistic parliamentary democracy, which had been withheld from the East

69 “Mehr als fünfzig Jahre Pressegeschichte in der Bundesrepublik sind in einem Kapitel nicht detailliert darstellbar.” See Dussel, Konrad, *Deutsche Tagespresse im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Münster: Lit Verlag, pp. 187-205, 2004, p. 225.

70 For counter examples, see for instance: Meyen Michael, and Anke Fiedler, *Wer jung ist, liest die Junge Welt. Die Geschichte der auflagenstärksten DDR-Zeitung*, Berlin: Ch. Links, 2013.

71 Kuczynski, Rita (ed.), *Ostdeutschland war nie etwas Natürliches. Deutschlandkenner aus Mittel- und Osteuropa, Frankreich, Grossbritannien und den USA über das vereinte Deutschland*, Berlin: Parthas, 2005. Zelizer, Barbie, Reading the Past against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies, in *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 12, 1995, pp. 214-239.

72 Ziegenggeist, Juliane, DDR-(N)Ostalgie in deutschen Nachwende-Spielfilmen von 1990 bis 2006: Zwischen Kritik und Kult, in *Jahrbuch für Kommunikationsgeschichte*, 13, pp. 119-153, 2011. Bach, Jonathan, The Taste Remains. Consumption, (N)ostalgia, and the Production of East Germany, in *Public Culture*, Oct. 2002, 14/3, pp. 545-556. Cook, Roger F., Good Bye, Lenin! Free-Market Nostalgia for Socialist Consumerism, in *Seminar. A Journal of Germanic Studies*, 43/2, 2007, pp. 206-219.

73 Beckmann, Christopher, Die Auseinandersetzung um den Vergleich von ‘Drittem Reich’ und DDR vor dem Hintergrund der Diskussion um Möglichkeiten und Grenzen vergleichender Geschichtsforschung, in *Deutsche Studien*, 38, 2002, pp. 9-26.

74 Cooke, Paul, *Representing East Germany Since Unification. From Colonization to Nostalgia*, New York, 2005. Berdahl, Daphne, and Matti Bunzl, *On the social life of postsocialism. Memory, consumption, Germany*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

75 Holzweißig, Gunter, Wandel der DDR-Medien durch die Wende, in Casper-Hehne, Hehne, and Irmy Schweiger (eds.), *Deutschland und die "Wende" in Literatur, Sprache und Medien. Interkulturelle und kulturkontrastive Perspektiven. Dokumentation eines Expertenseminars für Internationale Alumni der Georg-August-Universität Göttingen vom 8.-13. Juli 2007*, Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, pp. 141-160, 2008.

German population during the six decades of National Socialist and SED rule.⁷⁶ While such perspective stands in its own right, it does not follow that it is more true than others. Instead, it refrains from asking more critical and meaningful questions with regard to the complexity of social reality and must be read as being deeply engrained in a federal political agenda. This type of research, therefore, exemplifies how value statements, basic beliefs and particular occupations made for a different kind of subjectivity.

Other examples can be found in those few studies that have analyzed aspects of a transitioning print media landscape in the GDR. Thematically closest is a ground work study on the changing press structures in the former GDR, which was commissioned by the BMI in fall of 1990, and was announced by the Minister of the Interior Wolfgang Schäuble in November 1991. This study, under the lead of Beate Schneider, gives a comprehensive overview of the “structural changes, problems of adaptation, and opportunities of development of the press in the new *Länder*.”⁷⁷ It came out in early 1992 and became a regularly cited study on the transition of the East German press.⁷⁸ It was followed by several follow-up publications.⁷⁹ It is the only major study that specifically examines the changing conditions of the press sectors in the former GDR, in particular those of ownership. It found that the high concentration of the newspaper market that had set in by 1992, was the result of the allocation practices of the *Treuhandgesellschaft* (THA) in the sale of former SED regional papers (*Bezirkszeitungen*).⁸⁰ The overall outcome of Schneider's study is that

76 Holzweißig, Gunter, *Die Schärfste Waffe Der Partei*, Böhlau Köln, 2002. Holzweißig, Gunter, *Massenmedien in der DDR*, Berlin, 1983.

77 Schneider, Beate et al., *Strukturen, Anpassungsprobleme und Entwicklungschancen der Presse in den neuen Bundesländern*, *Forschungsbericht für den Bundesminister des Inneren*, 2 Bände, Hannover und Leipzig, 1991/92.

78 See for instance manuscript, “Rede von Bundesminister Wolfgang Schäuble vor dem Kongress der deutschen Lokalpresse in Bonn-Bad Godesberg.” Der Bundesminister des Inneren, Bonn, November 12, 1991, p. 3, BArch B/106/156193. See also Letter and attachments, Lage der Lokalpresse im Beitrittsgebiet, Merk, Bundesminister des Inneren, to Seiters, Bundesminister des Inneren, SM 10 – 344 242-2/1, Dezember 20, 1991, BArch B/106/156193. Also Memorandum, “Notwendige Massnahmen für einen gleichberechtigten Marktzutritt lokaler Zeitungen in einen früher nach den Gesetzen des staatlichen Zentralismus geschaffenen und heute in der Struktur unverändert fortgeführten Pressemarkt in den neuen Bundesländern bis zur Feststellung realer Chancengleichheit,” Verband der Lokalpresse, Bonn, May 21, 1992, BArch B/106/156193. Also Mahle, Walter A. (ed.), *Pressemarkt Ost, Nationale und internationale Perspektiven*, Munich: Ölschläger 1992, Corporate Archives of Axel Springer SE.

79 See for instance Schneider, Beate, *Pressemarkt Ost II. Nur die Konzentration macht Fortschritte*, *Pressemarkt Ost, Nationale und internationale Perspektiven*, Walter A., Mahle (ed.), Munich: Ölschläger, pp. 35-46, 1992. Schneider, Beate, Die ostdeutsche Tagespresse- eine (traurige) Bilanz, in *Media Perspektiven*, 7/92, 1992, pp. 428-441. Schneider, Beate, Nach der Medienwende in der DDR; in *PM*, 411, 2004, pp. 17-22. Available online: http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_4029-544-1-30.pdf?040415182927 [May 5, 2014]; Schneider, Beate, Die Wende auf dem Medienmarkt; in *HPM*, 9, 2002, pp. 217-225. Available online: http://www.kas.de/upload/ACDP/HPM/HPM_09_02/HPM_09_02_14.pdf [May 5, 2014]

80 For the *Treuhandanstalt* see: Böick, Marcus, *Die Treuhandanstalt*, Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Thüringen, 2015. Cassell, Mark, *How Governments Privatize: the Politics of Divestment in the United States and Germany*, Georgetown University Press, 2002. Breuel, Birgit, *Treuhandanstalt: Bilanz und Perspektiven*, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte. Beilage zur Wochenzeitung Das Parlament*, B 43-44, 1994. Breuel, Birgit and Michal C. Burda (eds.), *Ohne historisches Vorbild. Die Treuhandanstalt 1990-1994*. Berlin, 2004. Fischer, Wolfram, Herbert Hax, and Hans Karl Schneider (eds.), *Treuhandanstalt. Das Unmögliche wagen*, Forschungsberichte, Berlin, 1993. Grosser, Dieter, *Das Wagnis der Währungs-, Wirtschafts- und Sozialunion*, Stuttgart, 1998. Jürgs, Michael, *Die Treuhändler*, München und Leipzig, 1997. Kemmler, Marc, *Die Entstehung der Treuhandanstalt. Von der Wahrung*

press concentration had been inevitable due to the workings of the market and the superior market positions of the major West German major publishing houses. Though insightful in documenting shifts in ownerships and the persistence of regional monopolies of former SED regional papers, so far, neither the fact that the study was commissioned by the BMI (with its own close relations to publishers' associations), nor its questionable conclusion of an “inevitable” market concentration have been fundamentally questioned in research literature.⁸¹

Dussel gives a slightly more differentiated conclusion by questioning the “necessity” of developments, stating that “[t]here should be no doubt ... that within this policy framework, leeway existed that was unnecessarily given away. Specific economic interests could, thereby, assert themselves in almost unimpeded ways.”⁸² Though pointing to market pressures and political interests, Dussel provides no research for his claims and leaves it to the reader to explain what those “specific economic interests” were. Instead, his overview narrative focuses on the papers of the SED and on political obstacles in the fight for a free press. In the end, so the suggestion, it was the ending of press subsidies on April 1, 1990 (and the consequent increase in newspaper prices and their decrease in subscription rates) that made for the core economic issue in the struggle of East German newspaper. Why, however, the “broad range of new regional and local publications [established by East German reform groups]” could not reach “economic stability” and soon folded, he does not explain.⁸³

Insightful in this respect, the statistical work of Walter J. Schütz that gives an overview of this process. Schütz documents the German-German press landscape in 1989, the explosion of print media in 1990, the decrease in numbers throughout the next five years and the slow increase of press concentration on the East German market throughout the 1990s.⁸⁴ Also insightful, Haller,

zur Privatisierung des DDR-Volkseigentums, Frankfurt a. M./New York, 1994. *Treuhandanstalt 1994*, Dokumentation 1990-1994, 15 Band, Berlin, 1994.

81 Likewise insightful in documenting the development of the press in East Germany, the publications of the Federal Association of German Newspaper Publishers (Bundesverband Deutscher Zeitungsverleger (BDZV) or the German press Council (Deutscher Presserat), for instance: Bundesverband Deutscher Zeitungsverleger e.V., *Zeitungen '89*, Bundesverband Deutscher Zeitungsverleger e.V. (BDVZ), Bad Honnef: HVZ-Druck, 1989. Bundesverband Deutscher Zeitungsverleger e.V., *Zeitungen '90*, Bundesverband Deutscher Zeitungsverleger e.V. (BDVZ), Bad Honnef: HVZ-Druck, 1990. Deutscher Presserat, *Jahrbuch 1990*, Trägerverein des Deutschen Presserats e.V., 1990. Deutscher Presserat, *Jahrbuch 1991*, Trägerverein des Deutschen Presserats e.V., 1991. Ostergaard, Bernt Stubbe (ed.), *The Media in Western Europe, The Euromedia Handbook*, Euromedia Research Group, London: Sage Publications, 1991.

82 Full quote: “Man mag darüber streiten, ob sich diese Entwicklung nicht mit Notwendigkeit so vollziehen musste, wie sie sich vollzog. Keinen Zweifel sollte es jedoch daran geben, dass innerhalb dieses politischen Rahmens Spielräume vorhanden waren, die ohne Not verschenkt wurden. Spezielle ökonomische Positionen konnten ich damit im Pressebereich fast ungehindert durchsetzen.” See Dussel, Konrad, *Deutsche Tagespresse im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Münster: Lit Verlag, 2004, p. 245.

83 “Fülle von neuen Regional- und Lokalblättern [die vor allem im Umfeld von ostdeutschen Bürgerbewegungen entstanden sind] ... ökonomische Stabilität.” See Dussel, Konrad, *Deutsche Tagespresse im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Münster: Lit Verlag, 2004, p. 245.

84 Schütz, Walter, *Die Zeitungen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und in der DDR 1945-2005*, Welke W and J. Wilke (eds.), *400 Jahre Zeitung. Die Entwicklung der Tagespresse im internationalen Kontext*, edition lumière,

Lugwig and Weßler's study for the BMI on the transition and increasing concentration on the East German *magazine* market until 1994.⁸⁵ These studies are being added by case studies on magazine or book publishers, for example, Jasmin Wiedemann's research on the transition of East German women's magazines or Carsten Wurm's history of the book publisher Aufbau Verlag.⁸⁶ Most relevant in this body of work, due to its broader approach, is the 2008 dissertation of publisher Christoph Links on the “transition of the East German [book] publishing landscape in the process of German unification,” published in the book on *The Fate of GDR Publishers. The Privatization and its Consequences*.⁸⁷ Links founded the first new book publisher in the GDR immediately after printing permissions had been abolished on December 1, 1989. In his study, he shows how of initially seventy-eight book publishers in the GDR, only about a dozen survived the transition, holding a little more than 2 percent of the overall annual book production. These studies on print media are added by research on the development of public broadcasting, most notably, Andreas Rummel's thesis on “the role of party politics in building the Central German Broadcaster” (Mitteldeutschen Rundfunk).⁸⁸ Jörg Becker published several reports on the developing information landscape in East German in the early 1990s more generally and documented growing deficiencies in information infrastructures.⁸⁹ All of these studies document in their own ways the strong

Bremen, pp. 467–482, 2008. Schütz, Walter, *Zeitungen in Deutschland. Zeitungsatlas 2004. Maßstab 1:350.000*, Berlin: Vistas Verlag, 2006. Schütz, Walter, *Zeitungen in Deutschland. Verlage und ihr publizistisches Angebot 1949-2004*, Berlin: Vistas Verlag, 2005.

- 85 Haller, Michael, Johannes Ludwig, and Harmut Weßler, *Entwicklungschancen und strukturelle Probleme der Zeitschriftenpresse in den neuen Bundesländern*, Forschungsbericht für den Bundesminister des Inneren, Band I: Der Zeitschriftenmarkt Ost, Institut für Kommunikations- und Medienwissenschaft der Universität Leipzig, 1994.
- 86 Wurm, Carsten, *Gestern. Heute. Aufbau. 70 Jahre Aufbau Verlag, 1945-2015*, Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2015. Wurm, Carsten, *Jeden Tag ein Buch. 50 Jahre Aufbau Verlag*, Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1995. Wiedemann, Jasmin, *Mitgefangen, mitverkauft. Zur Situation ostdeutscher Frauenzeitschriften nach der Wende*, Band 181, Internationale Hochschulschriften, Waxmann Verlag, 1995. Also, Barck, Simone, Martina Langermann, and Siegfried Lokatis (eds.), *Zwischen Mosaik und Einheit. Zeitschriften in der DDR*, Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 1999. Kapitzka, Arne, *Transformation der ostdeutschen Presse: „Berliner Zeitung“, „Junge Welt“ und „Sonntag/Freitag“ im Prozeß der deutschen Vereinigung*, Band 26, Studien zur Kommunikationswissenschaft, Springer-Verlag, 2013.
- 87 Links, Christoph, *Das Schicksal der DDR-Verlage. Die Privatisierung und ihre Konsequenzen*, 2. ed., Berlin: Ch. Links, 2010.
- 88 Note: Lothar Mahling, media representative of the FDP and an expert sent from Bonn to aid liberal party in the GDR during the transition, refers to Rummel's thesis as a very profound representation of how political interests shaped the broadcast landscape in the East, Lothar Mahling, interview with author, June 28, 2016. See Rummel, Andreas, *Die Rolle der Parteipolitik beim Aufbau des Mitteldeutschen Rundfunks*, Diplomarbeit (Master thesis), University of Munich, 1993. See also Hepperle, Susanne, Durchsetzung des westdeutschen Ordnungsmodells: Rundfunk und Fernsehen, in Czada, Roland, and Gerhard Lehmsbruch (eds.), *Transformationspfade in Ostdeutschland: Beiträge Zur Sektoralen Vereinigungspolitik*, Frankfurt am Main [u.a.]: Campus-Verlag, pp. 191-240, 1998. Bohrmann, Hans, The Amalgamation of East German and West German Media: 1989-1995, and Graf, Andreas, The Dismantling of the East German Media System: Content and Consequences, in Daly, Peter M., Hans Walter Frischkopf, and Trudis Goldsmith-Reber (eds.), *Germany Reunited: A Five- and Fifty-Year Retrospective*, New York: P. Lang, 1997.
- 89 Becker, Jörg, Neue Bundesländer - Ein Prozeß der De-Informatisierung. Oder: Die ostdeutsche Informations-Infrastruktur im Untergang, in Manecke, Hans-Jürgen, Jörg Becker, Willi Bredemeier, and Hans Joachim Samulowitz, *1. Jahresbericht zur Lage der Informationswirtschaft in den neuen Bundesländern*, Hamburg: Hamburger Weltwirtschaftsarchiv, 1994. Becker, Jörg, Die kontinuierliche De-Informatisierung der neuen Bundesländer, in Manecke, Hans-Jürgen, Bernd Markscheffel, Willi Bredemeier, and Jörg Becker, *2. Jahresbericht zur Lage der Informationswirtschaft in den neuen Bundesländern 1995/96*, Hamburg: Hamburger

influences of federal interests and agendas, or as claimed by Dussel with regard to media in the GDR: “Seen in result, [their] end ... could be summarized in one sentence: they were taken over by their West German competitors.”⁹⁰ This process, however, was anything but “self-evident.”

How embattled the memory of it is, becomes clear in the book *How East German Media Found their Freedom*, that (in spite of its title) gives critical insights into the different perspectives, the successes and failures of the transition process.⁹¹ Documenting the “takeover” mentioned by Dussel, and thematically closest to this thesis, are Pürer and Raabe's 1994 study on the press in Germany, Bernd Klammer's study on the economic and political interests in the building of the *Press Distribution in East Germany*, and Schupbach Guzman's dissertation on “East German Journalists and the *Wende*.”⁹²

Pürer and Raabe's book *Media in Germany - the Press* gives a comprehensive history of the press in Germany from 1945 until 1994.⁹³ Different from other studies, both authors put a particular emphasis on German-German relations by sketching a detailed picture of the press developments, legislation and concentration processes in the Federal Republic until 1989, while also offering an insightful narrative of parallel press structures in the GDR. Eventually, they document press developments in the GDR and emerging press market structures during the transition and after German unification. The book succeeds in giving a comprehensive but detailed overview, touching upon critical points and problems of the press in the Federal Republic and consequentially in a unified Germany. The study, however, is only as good as its limited sources, and due to a general lack of literature, few are taken into a distinct analytical perspective. Similarly, Klammer's study gives valuable insights into the competing interests in reforming East German press distribution according to West German models and interests. Limited also by the sources available in the mid-1990s, however, and by its exclusive focus on distribution issues, the study leaves out the more complex interdependencies to other sectors that made for the overall transitional shift of the press.

Schupbach Guzman documents how various journalists, news organizations and media policy institutions experienced the period of transition from domestic reform attempts to the

Weltwirtschaftsarchiv, 1996.

90 Full quote: “Vom Ergebnis her betrachtet, liesse sich das Ende der DDR-Medien in einem Satz zusammenfassen: Sie wurden von ihren westdeutschen Konkurrenten übernommen.” See Dussel, Konrad, *Deutsche Tagespresse im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Münster: Lit Verlag, 2004, p. 243.

91 Haller, Michael, and Lutz Mükker (eds.), *Wie die Medien zur Freiheit kamen. Zum Wandel der ostdeutschen Medienlandschaft seit dem Untergang der DDR*, Köln: Herbert von Halem Verlag, 2010.

92 Klammer, Bernd, *Pressevertrieb in Ostdeutschland. Die wirtschaftlichen und politischen Interessen beim Aufbau eines Pressegroßhandelssystems nach der Oktoberwende 1989*, Dortmunder Beiträge zur Zeitungsforschung, Band 56, München: Saur, 1998. Schupbach Guzman, Morgan Morille, “East German Journalists and the *Wende*: A history on the collapse and transformation of socialist journalism in Germany,” PhD Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2015.

93 Pürer, Heinz, and Johannes Raabe, *Medien in Deutschland*, Presse, Band 1, Munich: ölschläger, 1994, Springer Corporate Archive.

political economic takeover of federal interests. Schupbach Guzman's put these shifts into close relation to changes in the news coverage. She shows how, based on an unprecedented professional freedom in the early upheaval period of 1989/90, reform attempts from within changed practiced journalism in the East German press:

During this period, many news organizations tried to demonstrate their break from the old regime and their commitment to the new democratic process through penetrating investigations into abuses and violations of the past. These reports reflected a general trend during this period of uncovering the full extent of corruption and injustice.⁹⁴

According to Joachim Nölte, journalists argued the best way to make up for the past was to engage in true-to-life reporting that reflected the reality and interests of their viewers.⁹⁵ Gunter Holzweißig, on the other hand, criticizes that these attempts have been either incomplete or insincere and investigative efforts of previous abuses usually degenerated into superficial sensationalism.⁹⁶ Nölte is equally hesitant to readily accept the journalists' sincere efforts. He points out that while some journalists aimed to prove themselves through hard work and honesty, others tried to explain their own failures by pushing the blame on others, searching for and finding a constant supply of new scapegoats.⁹⁷

Schupbach Guzman, in accordance with Michael Meyen, argues that the criticism of the legitimacy and sincerity of the professional and moral transformation of journalists must be seen as part of a broader scholarship that pervades the historiography of the collapse of the Communism in Eastern Europe.⁹⁸ It penetrates the ways journalism and its transition in East Germany is made sense of and upholds accounts of Western models of a “free press” as the ultimate measure of press freedom. This thesis shows how these patterns of legitimizing Western interests and pressures in the GDR were at play also during the transition period.

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94 Schupbach Guzman, Morgan Morille, “East German Journalists and the Wende: A history on the collapse and transformation of socialist journalism in Germany,” PhD Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2015, pp. 193-194.

95 Nölte, Joachim, Oktober 1989 bis Oktober 1990. Ausgewählt und kommentiert von Joachim Nölte, in Claus, Werner (ed.), *Medien-Wende, Wende-Medien? Dokumentation des Wandels im DDR-Journalismus, Oktober '89-Oktober '90*, Berlin: Vistas, pp. 17-116, 1991, p. 66.

96 Holzweißig, Gunter, *Die Schärfste Waffe Der Partei*, Böhlau Köln, 2002, pp. 169–170.

97 Nölte, Joachim, “Oktober 1989 bis Oktober 1990. Ausgewählt und kommentiert von Joachim Nölte,” in Claus, Werner (ed.), *Medien-Wende, Wende-Medien? Dokumentation des Wandels im DDR-Journalismus, Oktober '89-Oktober '90*, Berlin: Vistas, pp. 17-116, 1991, p. 19.

98 Meyen, Michael, Mass media and collective memory. The communist GDR in today's communicative and cultural memory, Conference Paper, IAMCR 2012 Conference, Durban, 2012. See for example: Haller, Michael, Klaus Puder, and Jochen Schlevoigt (eds.), *Presse Ost, Presse West: Journalismus im vereinten Deutschland*, Berlin: Vistas, 1995.

CONCLUSION

“The GDR, however, is by no means the endpoint of the Eastward expansion of West German publishing houses.”

Publizistik und Kunst, May 1990⁹⁹

“Since the press was and is subject to market principles, its role in the service of the public depends on the coincidences of the private sector. ... This is part of the paradoxes of our democratic society.”

European Parliament, April 1992¹⁰⁰

Underlining the intrinsic connection between a free press and a viable democracy, in 1992, the European Parliament made clear that in spite of their “public task,” newspapers were still “subject to the laws of the market.”¹⁰¹ Its assumption was that a free market allowed for all competing voices to take their equal share in a media landscape. Then free media would represent the plurality of opinions that constitute a viable democracy. Acknowledging that market interests did not always go hand-in-hand with those of a democratic society, to the parliament this was a given paradox of the press, and self-regulation and other regulatory means could be applied if needed. This paradox defined the transition of the press in East Germany; lacking sufficient regulatory means, it went one-sidedly in favor of market interests and impeded exactly those voices that had brought about democratic change in the GDR.

What some called “the decade for gold-diggers”¹⁰² that reminded others of “the early days of capitalism”¹⁰³ related to a (media) transition defined almost exclusively by market logic. Little,

99 “Die DDR ist allerdings nicht der Endpunkt für die Expansion bundesdeutscher Verlage Richtung Osten.” Wolfgang Mayer, *Publizistik und Kunst*, 5/90, p. 53, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35a-b, DSC07921.

100 “Da die Presse jedoch den Gesetzen der Marktwirtschaft gehorchte und gehorcht, hängt ihre Rolle vom Dienste der Öffentlichkeit von den Zufällen der Privatwirtschaft ab. ... Dies gehört zu den Paradoxien unserer demokratischen Gesellschaft.” Session document, Sitzungsdokumente, “Bericht des Ausschusses für Kultur, Jugend, Bildung und Medien über Medienkonzentration und Meinungsvielfalt,” A3-0153/91, PE 152.265/eng., Europäisches Parlament, April 27, 1992, p. 13, Archiv des Liberalismus, FDP Medienkommission/24548.

101 “Aufgabe einer öffentlichen Einrichtung ... den Gesetzen des Marktes unterworfen.” Session document, Sitzungsdokumente, “Bericht des Ausschusses für Kultur, Jugend, Bildung und Medien über Medienkonzentration und Meinungsvielfalt,” A3-0153/91, PE 152.265/eng., Europäisches Parlament, April 27, 1992, p. 13, Archiv des Liberalismus, FDP Medienkommission/24548.

102 “Das Jahrzehnt der Goldgräber” Ulrich Briefs, *Revier*, April 1990, Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis / B.V.3 – Grüne Partei DDR; Box 27-30, File 21. “Medien in der DDR: Vom totalitären Zwang zum manipulativen Kommerz” Ulrich Briefs, *Publizistik & Kunst*, Zeitschrift der IG - Medien, No. 7/90, Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis / B.V.3 – Grüne Partei DDR; Box 27-30, File 21.

103 “Zustände wie im Frühkapitalismus.” Cited in Aschenputtel auf dem Ball. Journalistinnen aus Ost und West diskutieren über Umbruch der Medienlandschaft und ihre eigene Zukunft, *die tageszeitung*, Ulrike Helwerth, April 24, 1990, DC 9/1033 (1/2).

however, happened by “coincidence,” and the continuation of former press monopolies in the service of market oligopolies was no accident. Instead, it was the outcome of aggressive market strategies on various levels employed by West German publishing houses, and the tacit acceptance, if not encouragement, of these strategies by the federal government. The latter did little to nothing to counteract the marketization of the East German press landscape. On the contrary, it explicitly supported the interests of major West German press institutions and gave a helping hand in securing their interests. This is an essential part of the story. It helps to understand that the push of West German publishers onto the East German market did not happen purely on their own account, but it required political will. Thus, while various and competing governmental bodies, publishers and reform groups in the GDR were concerned with reforming a centralized state press into a public institution fostering a transitioning state, early market pressures in close connection to a political federal agenda of a fast unification defined these domestic reform endeavors early on. Both set the principles according to which this media transition was to happen. And while all sides argued for the citizens’ rights of a free press and the freedom of opinion and expression in the GDR, their primary concerns lay with maintaining control over established structures or gaining a head-start in the new markets. A diverse local press and those initiatives that had been founded by various reform movements after the Fall revolution were the first to fall prey to consolidated market forces.

Joachim Nölte pointed to April 1, 1990, the day subsidies ended for East German papers, as the day when market penetration of West German companies set in. By May 1990, the West German public broadcast station Hessischer Rundfunk 2 made clear that regardless of differences in opinion, “one thing cannot be ignored any longer: signs are mounting that our media system is being exported to the East. This already applies to a large extent to the press. And in spite of ... defense strategies in the long run, there will likely be no way around but also the tv sector in the GDR, in one way or the other, will fall in line with West German chains.”¹⁰⁴ This thesis has shown that the penetration of market logic had, in fact, already set in in early December 1989 by means of lobbying, imports and cross-border production. Following Hessischer Rundfunk 2, it further showed that what happened with the media in the GDR can only be understood as an institution transfer as part of a broader expansion of the West German political economic order. The FDP media committee agreed “that the West German media order was imposed upon the East” and

104“Eins ist bei allen Abweichungen [zwischen beiden Mediensystemen]... nicht mehr zu übersehen: die Zeichen mehren sich, daß unser Mediensystem nach Osten exportiert wird. Das gilt in hohem Maße schon heute für die Presse. Und trotz ... Abwehrstrategien ... wird auf längere Sicht wohl kaum ein Weg daran vorbeiführen, daß die DDR im TV-Bereich sich in dieser oder jeder Form den bundesdeutschen Fernsehketten anschließt. Identität und Eigenständigkeit, die wird die DDR, nach allem, was zur Zeit an Informationen über den Mediensektor vorliegt, wohl nur auf einem Gebiet auf Dauer behalten – im Hörfunk.” Transcript, *Hessischer Rundfunk 2*, 6.15pm/1, 5/5/90, Hermann Mein, Uwe Schulz, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35a-b, DSC07799. Also BArch DC9/1033 (1/2).

showed an understanding for resentments on part of the GDR for the subsequent filling of management positions with West Germans personnel, “because also in the old *Länder* it would cause indignation if, for instance, all management positions at the North German Broadcasting Corporation were filled with journalists from Bavaria.”¹⁰⁵ Whether or not individual transfers in the press sector, such as the acquisition of market positions of West German publications, were successful in the long-run is not as important as the immediate strategies put into their service. The latter, if not disallowed, from the offset fundamentally limited the scope of sovereign reform attempts, not the least because they soon made necessary a response to new market pressures rather than a break of old monopoly structures.

This thesis has shown that the East German press became a market in three interconnected ways: shifts in sales, in distribution, and in ownership. While current studies focus on one to explain general transition dynamics and their outcomes (or to look at their consequences for specific publishers), this thesis has looked at all three. It has shown how deeply intertwined issues of massive imports of West German publications and aggressive sales strategies were with those of distribution, creating new dynamics and pressures that fostered ownership transfers. Not without reason did Alexander Jahr (Gruner+ Jahr) in early 1990, when asked about the chances of East German publishers to survive, predict their “death sentence” given their low competitiveness. They were going to “go down,” and it required Western investments to keep them alive.¹⁰⁶ In mid-July 1990, FDP media committee member and lawyer at the legal department of Springer, Renate Damm, agreed. “Problematic were ... the sales difficulties faced by East German publications;” Damm sees, the committee noted, “in joint ventures the only possibility for maintaining the press of the GDR.”¹⁰⁷ Following Damm, it was the drop in sales (conditioned by a lacking interest of East German readers) that made for the struggles of the East German press. And while sales generally did drop, this thesis has shown that the realities behind the numbers were more complicated than that. Likewise, while joint ventures turned out to be the only alternative, this was not inevitably so.

In early 1990, the East German press (still under the limitations of a planned economy) faced increasingly fierce competition and aggressive market strategies employed by (the major)

105“daß die westliche Medienlandschaft dem Osten übergestülpt wurde ... [d]enn auch in den alten Bundesländern würde es Empörung hervorrufen, wenn beispielweise beim Norddeutschen Rundfunk alle Führungspositionen mit bayerischen Journalisten besetzt würden.” Protocol, Protokoll der Sitzung der Bundesmedienkommission am Freitag, den 6.9.1991, in Bonn, p. 3, Archiv des Liberalismus, ÜP 45/2014 - Lothar Mahling/22.

106“Todesurteil.” Cited by Gottfried Müller, Dpa, DDR-Medienminister: Vorrang für öffentlich-rechtliches System, dpa-informationen, 20/90, 5/17/90, BArch DC 9/1033 (1/2). Original quote: “95 Prozent der DDR-Verlage werden eingehen.” Cited in Schlechte Karten, *journalist*, 5/90, p. 40, IISH/ID-Archive MKR 35a-b, DSC07767.

107“Problematisch seien ... die Absatzschwierigkeiten, vor denen DDR-Presseerzeugnisse stünden. Damm sieht in joint ventures die einzige Möglichkeit für den Erhalt der DDR-Presse.” Protocol, Protokoll der Sitzung der Bundesmedienkommission vom 31.05. 1990, May 31, 1990, Archiv des Liberalismus, FDP Medienkommission/25499.

West German publishing houses. In particular the price war, exclusively fought between West German publishers who aimed at securing a future readership, set a deflated 1:1 DM-M price baseline that was impossible to meet, if production and transportation costs needed to be covered. Selling publications for one-third of the original price to win a competitive advantage and to set future claims required a strong, established market position and the respective financial resources, which pushed to the sidelines East German, as well as small and medium-sized West German publishers. East German publishers further lacked in printing and editorial technology, faced high paper prices, if not lacking paper supplies, and simultaneously underwent internal reform processes. By April 1, subsidies ceased to exist and publishers needed to finance themselves by means of higher prices and advertising. This required ad-hoc solutions for building individual marketing infrastructures, often possible only by means of West German investments and expertise; this was the market penetration Nölte pointed to. And while West German publications were superior in the quality of paper, color, print and layout, and exceeded East German standards by far, their initial success cannot be explained by these assets alone. High sales required deflated prices that would have been deemed highly problematic, if not illegal, if held to West German standards.

Publishers admitted to these strategies and to the negative consequences for the East German press, only to continue with them out of market necessity. Self-regulation by means of pleas against unrestrained competition, thus, remained ineffective to the promise of new markets.¹⁰⁸ And while Media Minister Müller urged that “mass media [of the GDR] must not be susceptible to blackmail, economic blackmail” to give into joint venture offers, this is exactly what happened.¹⁰⁹ Ironically, it became the perpetrators of these marketing strategies who then claimed to save the East German press by means of joint ventures, not because of any considerations for a democratic press, but because the initial success of West German publications could not be maintained. Readers showed considerable loyalty especially to former SED regional papers. Those had remained high in circulation and sales. Competition, therefore, soon shifted to the acquisition of these “prime objects” amongst East German publishers even “by means of artifice,” which became the core competitive target.¹¹⁰ And while the *Treuhandgesellschaft* was officially in charge of their privatization, it largely only gave into prior cooperation agreements and already practiced cross-border productions between still dominant SED regional papers and their market-dominating West

108“Die Worte veralten im Mund.’ Eine Dokumentation zum Pressevertrieb in der DDR.” *Textintern*, DDR extra, No. 13, March 21, 1990, pp. 11-14, p. 14, Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis / B.V.3 – Grüne Partei DDR; Box 27-30, File 29, (see Chapter III).

109“Die Massenmedien dürfen nicht erpressbar sein, ökonomisch erpressbar.” Cited in *DFP*, Interview Gottfried Müller, Dr. Peter Gugisch, transcript, 9.40 pm, 6/11/90, BArch DC 9/1033 (1/2).

110“Filestücke ... auch mit Tricks.” Treffer sind Glücksache, *journalist*, Horst Röper, 6/90, pp. 32-35, p. 35, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35d, DSC08087.

German investors. It, thereby, as Schneider's study pointed out, transferred old press monopolies into new private oligopolies.¹¹¹ Smaller publishers aimed for their shares and focused on establishing offsprings of their publications in the East. Facing strong concentration processes, however, they were largely driven out of this new market. Again, this process required the political will of various institutions and was not a market “coincidence.”

And while sales and ownership were the two more obvious transitional shifts, underlying both was the “completely insufficient distribution situation in the GDR.”¹¹² The lack of efficient press distribution infrastructures initially put serious obstacles to the sale of West German print media; it became the backdoor through which major publishing houses entered the East German market, and the key to its structural transition. The individual business proposals from November/December 1989, in particular of G+J and Springer, offered holistic approaches to reforming the import and distribution of West German publications by means of a financing scheme based on advertising revenue. The goal on the side of each publisher was to attain a quasi-monopoly market position as the exclusive West German partner in joint-venture activities with institutions of the GDR. This related to matter of imports, production, distribution, marketing, and the training of journalists. The particular strength of these proposals lay in their adaptation to centralist media structures developed for maintaining a political information monopoly and putting them into the service of monopolistic corporate strategies. Their substantial influence lay, first, in the quick and seamless adaption of an advertising-based free press model and market logic to a planned media economy. They, secondly, offered an easy fix for reform efforts of state institutions whose scope of action was severely limited by the lack of hard currency. All policy proposals on the import and distribution of West German print media on side of the GDR were, therefore, based on these concepts. A reformative East German media (distribution) policy, thus, never developed in its own right but, from its offset, was a blue-print takeover of Western business proposals put into the service of political reform. And while these concepts introduced market criteria and Western concepts of a privately owned press, the legal norms keeping them in check were absent.

With their subsequent building of an exclusive distribution system largely for their own publications – not in cooperation with institutions of the GDR but in opposition to them – the “Big Four” major publishers Springer, G+J, Bauer and Burda disregarded East and West German legal standards and demands for equal market opportunities. Unilaterally established within a weak state,

111 Schneider, Beate, *Pressemarkt Ost II. Nur die Konzentration macht Fortschritte*, in Walter A., Mahle (ed.), *Pressemarkt Ost, Nationale und internationale Perspektiven*, Munich: Ölschläger, pp. 35-46, 1992. Schneider, Beate, *Die ostdeutsche Tagespresse-eine (traurige) Bilanz*, in *Media Perspektiven*, 7/92, 1992, pp. 428-441.

112 “völlig unzureichenden Vertriebsituation in der DDR.” Alles ohne Gewähr, *kress report*, no. 3, February 1, 1990, p. 3, attachment III to letter, Thomas Ganske, Jahreszeitenverlag et. al. an Runden Tisch, Hamburg, February 3, 1990, BAArch DA3/34 (see Chapter IV).

the publishers ignored the protests of various institutions of the GDR and claimed to act on behalf of a free press, pushing the idea of a free flow of information. Small and medium-sized publishers under the leadership of Jahreszeiten, fearing the loss of a potential future readership, went into opposition and appealed to the Round Table *not* because they fundamentally questioned well-known structures, but because it served best current purposes and future interests. And while the Round Table argued for a sovereign East German media, against a domination of *any* West German interest groups, for a plurality of opinion and information, these demands were heard only if they served the respective interests of publishers. With the distribution practices of the major publishers having been illegal also according to federal norms, these protests could have been matched by those of the federal government. The BMI, however, remained largely inactive with regard to GDR interests. It rejected appeals of the government and underlined to have no jurisdiction in any press matters and/or individual actions of publishers; because publishers were not breaking federal law in the FRG, the ministry was in no position to make any adjustments or encourage the publishers to act differently.

Arguing with its own neutrality in press matters, the BMI still held a coordinating function, however, first, in bringing together and giving space to the major West (rather than *East*) German interest and lobbying groups, second, in fostering legal grey zone initiatives, and, third, in setting clear regulatory premises. The BMI pushed the point that *nothing* that was being built in the GDR must endanger well-established infrastructures in the Federal Republic. This set clear guidelines, less so for a free press in the GDR but for long-established interests in the FRG. With these three points combined, the BMI supported and pushed the idea that a “free press” was to *come* to the GDR by means of press imports and gave little to no consideration to reform processes from within. Though East German publishers were given some thought, the immediate measures focused on imports, not the least because of the upcoming elections heavily influenced by West German party politics. The BMI, thus, stood side by side with West German publishers; their interests met in the aim to sell West German print media and information to an East German readership, and to do so fast. This duality of reasoning, pointing to the lack of jurisdiction while being deeply engaged in dealing with (and encouraging) a factual one-German market, defined the BMI's role during the transition. The Federal Cartel Office would step in only shortly before German unification. It took on the methods and practices of the major publishers to ensure that no harm could be done for an all-German distribution system. It is, therefore, fair to say that the German unification itself became a regulatory act that put back in check the actions of West German publishers to comply with federal practices. Unfair distribution and sales methods, however, had taken their toll on a blossoming East German press. What remained were distribution infrastructures still different from

those of the old *Länder*, and a press largely in the hands of Western publishers.

East German institutions, manifold and engaged in their interest in reforming media, were generally ignored in the arguments of West German interest groups, and so were the struggles of publishers. The MfM, the MKR and the Media Commission of the People's Chamber, as well as the Round Table and the government itself, were only left to react to situations on the ground while remaining unsuccessful to set clear regulations. Especially the MfM and the MKR remained inconsequential in their actions, the MKR because of its lack of legislative and/or executive powers, the MfM because of its ambivalent take on media policies owing to market structures on the ground. Though Müller expressed himself in a vigorous tone against the Big Four distribution system, neither him nor his ministry were (able) to stand up to them. On the contrary, the MfM under Müller was a weak, partly ill-informed and generally ineffective institution that focused on problem management rather than on a pro-active confrontation of issues. It lacked the rigorous stand the many issues in the media sector would have required. It was the result of structural circumstances, the lack of resources, information and unclear legislative competences of the ministry. It was also due, however, to the lack in leadership and political experience of Müller, and a consistent change of personnel within the ministry.

This only stood representative for East German institutions at large. All faced reforms processes from within aiming to find new stands on practical and societal issues. Competing institutional interests and centralized structures contributed to lengthily administrative processes that give greater leeway to ad-hoc strategies of publishers. And therein lay the most prominent influence of early market pressures: in the necessity to respond to a new playing field defined by major economic players rather than to exhaust the full variety of reforms options. This, again, stood in the service of the federal government, as any such reforms (i.e. a comprehensive media law, the introduction of *Redaktionsstatute* or the abolishment of *Tendenzschutz*) might have questioned what was well-established in the FRG.

The reasons why it were almost exclusively West German publishers to explore the East German market lay, first, in language ties that made possible immediate sales of West German products. Also, the East German economy had never been able to disentangle itself from West German capital and dependencies had been well-established. Third, and most importantly, it lay in a federal political agenda that fostered these efforts by means of German-German agreements. In the spirit of CSCE resolutions, underlining the importance of a free press for democratic change, East and West German politicians agreed on mutual press exchanges. But while the political will for such trade was expressed clearly, the economic realities behind them were left aside. Press imports into the GDR needed to be bought by a broke state, while exports required additional scarce paper.

With East German publications lacking behind Western standards and with general newspaper demands being higher than their supplies, the East faced an already saturated market of superior products in the West. A *mutual* exchange, therefore, never happened, and the federal government left it to the publishers to take charge of the economic side of this unilateral press trade. This happened according to market rationals, not out of considerations for a democratic press. Still, the bilateral agreements gave the publishers the political justification for their actions. This stood in a longer tradition of international media policy efforts throughout the 1980s, influenced exceedingly by the US and larger media corporations, to push forward liberal regulatory communication frameworks regardless political and/or economic boundaries.¹¹³ The case of the GDR shows that this move benefitted not a diverse press but the economic interests of major publishers in close alliance with those of the federal government.

It is not by coincidence that the European Parliament made its assessment of the paradox of a “free press” in the midst of the post-socialist transition in Eastern Europe. In the GDR, everything had happened immediately following November 9, 1989, but it only set a precedence and became the point of entry into the Eastern European market at large. In April 1990, the newly founded Association of Newspaper and Magazine Publishers of the GDR pushed this point in its plea to publishers across Europe. They needed to take seriously concerns of market domination of the Big Four in the GDR “in their own interest, because in the next months to come, significant decisions are being made in the GDR for a future common Europe.”¹¹⁴ Also in April 1990, Springer announced that it had taken over four out of twenty local newspaper publishers in Hungary.¹¹⁵ Other Western European media corporations (i.e. Hersant) followed.

Ágnes Gulyás shows how, in a process frequently described as “self-privatization,” most newspapers in Hungary were sold to multinational investors such as Bertelsmann, Hersant, and Springer. By the end of 1991, foreign ownership had reached 70 percent, and especially tabloid newspapers skyrocketed.¹¹⁶ Similar to Nölte, also Gulyás distinguishes between three processes or phases in this transition: first, “the changing political functions of the media with a general aim

113Harcourt, Alison, *Transnational Media Regulation in Central and Eastern Europe*, in Downey, John, and Sabina Mihelj (eds.), *Central and Eastern European Media in Comparative Perspective: Politics, Economy and Culture*, pp. 137–155, London: Ashgate, 2012.

114“in ihrem eigenen Interesse, denn auf dem Boden der DDR werden in den nächsten Monaten wesentliche Entscheidungen für ein künftiges gemeinsames Europa getroffen.” Open letter, Verband der Zeitungs- und Zeitschriftenverleger der DDR, April 22, 1990, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, Box 1-4, File 1.

115Wolfgang Mayer, *Publizistik und Kunst*, 5/90, p. 53, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35a-b, DSC07921.

116Gulyás, Ágnes, *The development of the Tabloid Press in Hungary*, in Colin Sparks and John Tulloch (eds.), *Tabloid Tales. Global Debates over Media Standards*, pp. 111-127, Lanham, Boulder, New York and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000. Also Sükösd, Miklós, *Democratic Transition and the Mass Media in Hungary: From Stalinism to Democratic Consolidation*, in Gunther, Richard, and Anthony Mugham (eds.), *Democracy and the Media. A Comparative Perspective*, pp. 122–164, Cambridge University Press, 2000. Bajomi-Lázár, Péter, Aukšė Balčytienė, Alina Dobрева, and Beata Klimkiewicz, *History of the Media in Central and Eastern Europe, Handbook of European Communication History*, Wiley, forthcoming [2018].

toward pluralism and democratization,” followed by the “introduction of a market-driven press system,” which culminated in the “commercialization and commodification of the media.”¹¹⁷ And similar to the narratives of East German journalists, many Hungarian journalists look back on the initial transition period as the “golden age” of media freedom, when the old political elites “were no longer powerful enough to control media, while the new ones did not yet have the will or the power to do so.”¹¹⁸ Similar narratives are given by journalists in Bulgaria, where “[t]he media market underwent a rapid process of ownership concentration and many of the small outlets fell victim to economic pressure.”¹¹⁹ In particular the West German WAZ Group managed to become so influential that, as Dobрева, Voltmer, and Pfetsch claim, “it forced local authorities to turn a blind eye at its obviously illegal monopoly on the market (owning a share of over 70%, whereas regulation puts a cap on 35%).”¹²⁰ Also in Lithuanian and Estonia, it were “economic logics” that became the driving motives in press production and in matters of representation. A liberal market soon replaced concerns of liberation from censorship and political control with “rapid financial gains and 'new criteria'” of news production.¹²¹ This gave little chance to the development of an effective system of self-regulation. In Poland where, in February 1989, round table negotiations had started an unprecedented political transformation, privatization was administered by state institutions. Policies, however, lacked anti-trust legislation and set no limitations on foreign ownership. The foreign acquisitions of papers and their mergers followed quickly, and in particular Springer found a strong foothold on the Polish market. Generally, foreign owners “tended to 'clone'

117Gulyás, Ágnes, The development of the Tabloid Press in Hungary, in *Tabloid Tales. Global Debates over Media Standards*, edited by Colin Sparks and John Tulloch, pp. 111–127, Lanham, Boulder, New York and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000, p. 113.

118Bajomi-Lázár, Péter, Aukšė Balčytienė, Alina Dobрева, and Beata Klimkiewicz, History of the Media in Central and Eastern Europe, *Handbook of European Communication History*, Wiley, forthcoming [2018].

119Dobрева, Alina, Katrin Voltmer, and Barbara Pfetsch, “Trust and Mistrust on Yellow Brick Road. Political Communication Culture in Post-Communist Bulgaria.” In *Making democracy in 20 years. Media and politics in Central and Eastern Europe*, edited Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska and Michał Głowacki, pp. 171–191. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2001, p. 179. Available online: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Barbara_Pfetsch/publication/261640532_Trust_and_mistrust_on_Yellow_Brick_Road_Political_communication_culture_in_post-communist_Bulgaria/links/5661892c08ae15e7462c5473/Trust-and-mistrust-on-Yellow-Brick-Road-Political-communication-culture-in-post-communist-Bulgaria.pdf [December 14, 2017].

120Dobрева, Alina, Katrin Voltmer, and Barbara Pfetsch, Trust and Mistrust on Yellow Brick Road. Political Communication Culture in Post-Communist Bulgaria, in Dobek-Ostrowska, Bogusława and Michał Głowacki (eds.), *Making democracy in 20 years. Media and politics in Central and Eastern Europe*, pp. 171–191, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2001, p. 179.

121Balčytienė, Aukšė, and Lauk, Epp, Media Transformations: The Post-Transition Lesson in Lithuania and Estonia, *Informacijos mokslai*, 33, pp. 96–110, 2005. Available online: <http://etalpykla.lituanistikadb.lt/fedora/get/LT-LDB-0001:J.04~2005~1367153234451/DS.002.1.01.ARTIC> [December 14, 2017]. Balčytienė, Aukšė, *Mass Media in Lithuania: Changes, Development, and Journalism Culture*, Berlin: Vistas, 2006. Also Balčytienė, Aukšė, Lithuania: Mixed Professional Values in a Small and Highly Blurred Media Environment, in Trappel, Josef, Hannu Nieminen, and Lars Nord (eds.), *Media for Democracy Monitor: Leading News Media Compared*, pp. 175–203, Gothenburg: Nordicom, 2011. Available online: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320322666_Lithuania_Mixed_Professional_Values_in_a_Small_and_Highly_Blurred_Media_Environment [December 14, 2017].

and bring to Poland products that had met commercial success in their respective countries.”¹²² This was true also for other Eastern European markets, and the results could be seen already in 1992, when Beate Schneider stated that “[a]lso with respect to a common European market, there is a tendency towards standardization. In the West, the dominant competitor liked to keep a smaller competitor, but this was more for cosmetic reasons.”¹²³ In the East, no such cosmetic reasons were needed. And though the specifics and outcomes differed in each country (with regard to privatization, the sustainability of press markets, and levels of media corruption), common to all were the institutional and regulatory implementation of Western free-press models, the overall penetration of Western market interests and their products, and a considerable foreign ownership and high market concentration.¹²⁴ This contributed to demise of several media organizations that had been created during the first few years of democratic transition.¹²⁵ And *this* is, where the paradox of a free media on a free media market, pointed at by the European Parliament, worked *against* the interests of competing voices that make for a viable democracy. In the case of post-socialist countries, it did not break monopolies but only changed their political justification.

Additional Notes of Future Research

Follow-up research, expanding on the issues presented in this thesis, is in the making.

While initially also “unions” were to be part of the scope of analysis as an interest group in its own

122Bajomi-Lázár, Péter, Aukšė Balčytienė, Alina Dobrova, and Beata Klimkiewicz, History of the Media in Central and Eastern Europe, *Handbook of European Communication History*, Wiley, forthcoming [2018]. Also Jakubowicz, Karol, Rude Awakening: Social and Media Change in Central and Eastern Europe, in *the public*, 8/4, 2001, pp. 59-80. Available online: <https://www.dlib.si/stream/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-R7PMGORA/d3ba274f-d52d-488c-8baa-3e490cb9257e/PDF> [January 2, 2018].

123“Auch im Hinblick auf den gemeinsamen europäischen Markt sei eine Tendenz zur Vereinheitlichung zu verzeichnen. Im Westen hielte sich zwar der überlegene Wettbewerber gern einen kleineren Konkurrenten, aber dies mehr aus kosmetischen Gründen.“ Protocol, Protokoll der 4. Sitzung des F.D.P. Medienbeirats am 20./21. November 1992 in Halle, November 20/21, 1992, p. 4, Archiv des Liberalismus, FDP Medienkommission/24548.

124Jakubowicz, Karol, Rude Awakening: Social and Media Change in Central and Eastern Europe, in *the public*, 8/4, 2001, pp. 59-80. Available online: <https://www.dlib.si/stream/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-R7PMGORA/d3ba274f-d52d-488c-8baa-3e490cb9257e/PDF> [January 2, 2018]. Note: Current comparative studies, therefore, document concentration processes and strong commercialization tendencies on different East European media markets and their difference with regard to political cultures. See Peace Institute, *Media Ownership and Its Impact on Media Independence and Pluralism*, edited by Sandra B. Hrvatin and Brankica Petković, Ljubljana: Peace Institute, 2004. Available online: <http://www3.mirovni-institut.si/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/media-ownership-and-its-impact-on-media-independence-and-pluralism.pdf> [December 10, 2017]. Also Jakubowicz, Karol, and Miklós Sükösd, *Finding the Right Place on the Map. Central and Eastern European Media in a Global Perspective*, Bristol, UK and Chicago: Intellect Books, 2008. Balčytienė, Aukšė, and Aušra Vinciūnienė, Older and Newer Media in Transitional Democracies: Similarities and Differences in Media Functions and Patterns of Use, in Reifova, Irena, and Tereza Pavlickova (eds.), *Working Title: CEECOM 2012 conference papers*, pp. 14–20, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014. Available online: <http://www.cambridgescholars.com/download/sample/61936> [December 13, 2017]. Dobek-Ostrowska, Bogusława, and Michał Głowacki, *Making democracy in 20 years. Media and politics in Central and Eastern Europe*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2001. Klimkiewicz, Beata, Structural Media Pluralism and Ownership Revisited. The Case of Central and Eastern Europe, in *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 6/3, pp. 43-62, 2009.

125Klimkiewicz, Beata, Structural Media Pluralism and Ownership Revisited. The Case of Central and Eastern Europe, in *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 6/3, pp. 43-62, 2009.

rights, it fell out of the picture for reasons of space. In a follow-up project, I analyze the influence of media unions (i.e. IG Medien, IG Druck, or DJV) and their own “expansion motives” in close relations to those of publishers. While March 1990 was defined by the first free elections, in May 1990 collective bargaining in the Federal Republic kept unions and publishers busy, and their agendas were likewise pushed onto the GDR. East German unions, representing the interests of journalists and other media sector workers, were soon to become the target of information campaigns and inter-union competitions over membership. The situation by mid-1990 was such that West German unions faced West German investors in the struggle for workers' rights in the GDR.

A similar study as has been presented in this thesis should be done on the broadcasting sector. While individual studies (i.e. on *Länder* legislation) do exist, a broader approach on the dealings of public and private broadcasters, their lobbying strategies and policy measures in the allocation of frequencies, the “defense strategies” (as Hessischer Runderfunk 2 called them) of East German reformers and officials, such as Lothar Bisky, for a sovereign media and a third public channel in the FRG, and the eventual transition to federal structures would be a highly informative study. Similar debates on how to reform media happened later with regard to broadcasting, but they were even more forceful. Similar patterns of a “run” for frequencies started as soon as German unification stood at the horizon. Public and private institutions battled over policy influence at a time when private broadcasting as part of a “dual broadcasting system” was fairly new also to federal structures, and the Eastern market promised new territories to put into practice and manifest new broadcasting norms. Next to commercial pressures, party politics became a defining feature in the transition of broadcasting by means of *Länder* jurisdiction, the building *Länder* broadcasting stations and the clear and more aggressive stand of the federal government on broadcasting issues.¹²⁶

¹²⁶Examples: Zukunft der Rundfunkanstalten nach Bundesrecht: Medienpolitische Korrekturen, *Das Parlament*, no.22, 5/25/90, BArch DC 9/1033 (2/2); Report, CDU Bundestagsfraktion, Eckwerte für die Medienordnung in einem vereinigten Deutschland, Bericht, Bernd Neumann, pp.1-8, 5/14/1990, Bonn, BArch DC 9/1033 (2/2); Wirtschaftliche Planspiele allein genügen nicht, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 6/28/90, BArch DC 9/1033 (2/2). Recommended files BArch DC9/1058; Archiv des Liberalismus; IISH/ID-Archive MKR.

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