A 'Call to Tools': DIY between State Building and Consumption Practices in the GDR

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Abstract

This article discusses state attempts to politicize do-it-yourself activities in order to strengthen the regime of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) in East Germany. To be sure, for many East Germans DIY practices were a hobby and a pastime. Given the notorious shortage of consumer goods and the slow progress in improving standards of living in the GDR, however, it was also a strategy to overcome the shortcomings of the socialist society. The SED attempted to make a virtue out of this necessity by reinterpreting DIY practices as a personal contribution to the building up of the GDR and socialist society. Performed in the right way, practices of DIY were supposed to contribute to both the material and the ideological consolidation of the GDR. In order to direct DIY activities towards undertakings defined as most important by state and party officials, the regime developed particular organizational structures. The annual competition 'Join in!', on which this article focuses, addressed the housing situation and therefore one of the most pressing problems of the GDR. Calling upon the East German population to devote their leisure time to the creation of housing spaces, the renovation of state-owned apartment blocks, and the erection and preservation of parks and playgrounds, however, caused new problems. While the East German state tried to generate pride in communal facilities and in public goods rather than in private possessions, this ideal competed with practices of DIY where citizens used their handiwork to improve their private standard of life.

Keywords: consumption, do-it-yourself (DIY), German Democratic Republic (GDR), housing, socialism

Introduction

Many former citizens of East Germany characterize themselves and the society they used to live in as shaped by inventiveness, skilfulness and a talent for improvization. 'That's a characteristic feature of the *Ossi* [East German]', a woman stated a few years after the German reunification in an interview on housing conditions in East Germany, 'he's resourceful in any situation, because he has learned to improvize'.[1] Many scholars agree that 'do-it-yourself, altering and improvising rank among the best virtues of citizens of the GDR [German Democratic Republic]'.[2] A recent exhibition in Jena confirmed this image of East German resourcefulness. More than 250 people enthusiastically followed the curator's plea to lend the museum self-built items for display, and more than twenty-five years after the GDR had ceased to exist, the city museum displayed a selection of around 700 items that showed what the population of the Jena region had crafted, ranging from coffee pump pots and lawn mowers to hand-knitted fan merchandise in support of the local soccer club Carl Zeiss Jena.[3] A considerable section consisted of self-made tools such as drills, saws, tile cutters and grinding machines, indicating that their constructors planned to use them for further tasks in the future.

Engaging in do-it-yourself (DIY) activities was by no means an East German peculiarity. On the contrary, particularly regarding work around the house, the rapid growth of a DIY industry from the late 1950s to the 1980s had made West Germany 'a nation of home improvers'.[4] Yet while DIY in the Federal Republic as well as in other Western societies such as the United States and Great Britain predominantly appeared as a business and a fast-growing market, the DIY boom in East Germany in some ways took on a different shape.[5] Focussing on work in and around the house as an example, this article discusses state attempts to politicize DIY activities in order to strengthen the regime of the Socialist Unity Party (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, SED) in East Germany which governed from 1946 to 1989. True, Western social reformers, politicians, and companies also frequently attempted to co-opt practices of DIY in pursuit of their social, economic and cultural agendas.[6] Yet under the conditions of a 'participatory dictatorship' such as the GDR, attempts to utilize such practices for securing power and social engineering went much deeper.[7] State and party

organizations had unrestricted power to enforce their agenda in a more sustained fashion and on various levels simultaneously, ranging from school education to the distribution of resources.

To be sure, DIY practices were widespread in the GDR and needed no government encouragement per se. State and party organizations, however, tried to exploit them for their own benefit. The urgency with which they worked on this task resulted from two distinct but related problems which the East German state suffered from: first, the notorious shortage of consumer goods and slow progress in improving standards of living in the GDR, a shortcoming which was felt even more sharply in contrast with the ever-present abundance of Western consumer societies. Secondly, there was need for 'building up socialism', as the common phrase went, and which was of absolute priority to the SED. DIY practices added an individual and tangible dimension to this ideological agenda. They drew upon the 'socialist spirit' and stressed a personal contribution to the material and intellectual building up of the GDR. Performed in the right way, practices of DIY were thus supposed to contribute to both the material and the ideological consolidation of the GDR.

Analyzing the interplay of material realities, political visions and notions of a good life reveals a multi-layered and highly dynamic interrelationship between politics, materiality and practices. Accordingly, recent scholarship has suggested to focus on this nexus in order to adequately understand agency in historical contexts.[8] In this perspective, the roles of both things and practices appear multifaceted. 'Things', historian Frank Trentmann reminds us, 'recruit us into politics as much as we recruit them'.[9] The material desires of the population, evoked as much by the ever-present Western standards as by the SED's promise of a comfortable future, dragged the state into politicising practices of DIY just as much as politicians attempted to utilize such practices for strengthening their own position and their agenda.

Likewise, DIY practices are revealed by the analysis of this nexus as being situated at the 'interface between public and private',[10] a quality that proved to be useful but also unfavourable for East German officials who aimed at transferring practices of DIY from a private matter to the realm of politics. Their assertion of a close interconnection between practices of DIY, the materiality of the GDR and politics meant that the state and party organizations had a vested interest in both advancing

and channelling such practices. Yet practices 'have a dynamic force of their own, creating sensations, competencies and plans of doing more or doing things differently. They are entangled in a creative interplay with materiality'.[11] Located between 'repetition and the unlocking of new potential', practices, once embodied, can 'trigger new projects' that might not comply with the intentions of those who had encouraged others with specific ideas in mind of how skills and knowledge should be exerted.[12] For a state so short on resources and so afraid of individuality it proved to be hard to draw the line between politically desirable and undesirable DIY projects. The focus on practices of DIY therefore contributes to our understanding of 'the political' by analyzing 'spaces of participation in the SED dictatorship', where various expectations of state officials and the population met in a local context, a dimension that has been neglected by scholars so far.[13]

By politicizing practices of DIY, state representatives aimed at both the spiritual and physical construction of a socialist society, which concerned attitudes as much as the material surroundings, in the hope of eventually fulfilling the SED's promise of a prosperous socialist state. This approach came along with an interest in providing an interpretative framework that put DIY in perspective. East German officials and media were eager to point out that DIY in the GDR was fundamentally different from what West Germans did in their leisure time. The magazine *practic* explained the alleged difference, claiming that 'in West Germany, even the "hobby" (to use this nice German phrase) is part of the business and the hectic hunt for money*,* whether as a means to securing one's livelihood or as a means for representation', whereas East Germans used their free time to work collectively 'on improving their apartment buildings, building playgrounds for children, or small sports areas. Others tinker with colleagues in their leisure time and try to solve technical problems in their company, or search for inventions that benefit the whole economy'.[14] In contrast to West Germany, DIY activities in the Eastern part of the country resulted neither from poverty or a desire to show off, the article stressed, but were born out of internalized socialist values and served the higher purpose of jointly advancing the socialist society and reach a higher standard of living for all.

The terminology of the article mirrors the author's desire to dissociate East German from Western practices by denying any similarities

in motives and conduct. To support their interpretation, East German authors used a specific terminology for describing the practices carried out in East and West which were presented as an expression of different social and political attitudes. The term 'do it yourself' was only used to describe practices of West Germans, as for example in an article on 'do-it-yourself bunkers' that mocked West Germans who allegedly had built such bunkers as stupid, commercialized and warmongering.[15] GDR citizens, by contrast, were described as 'tinkerers' and 'puzzlers' (*knobeln*, *basteln*) who enjoyed nothing more than tirelessly working on solving problems and on the advancement of the state and the society. Irrespective of its ideological usage in the GDR, this article uses the term 'DIY' as an analytical category to describe tasks performed by amateurs instead of them hiring professional handymen or buying ready-made consumer goods.[16] Such products and services were not always available in GRD everyday life. However, they still served as points of reference, thus making people perceive such practices as 'DIY' accordingly.

Since the standard of living left much to be desired for the East German population, however, the official East German narrative carried the risk of relating DIY to a failed economic and consumer policy rather than to the successful establishment of socialism – not least since in the GDR the state claimed responsibility for housing and consequently was to blame when housing standards did not live up to the promises made.[17] Against the backdrop of the Cold War, which was also fought over standards of living, this was a connection GDR officials wanted to avoid by all means.

Any practice requires a body which performs it and artefacts with which to carry it out.[18] In the first chapter I will therefore outline how the state tried to create the prerequisites for the East German population to perform DIY tasks by providing the necessary framework, resources, skills and knowledge. For a state that claimed to know best what people wanted and how to meet their needs and that accordingly controlled infrastructures and resources, however, this created new problems: such a state could appreciate practices of DIY only as long as they met the current criteria of what was necessary in order to 'build up socialism'.[19] The state did not approve of DIY in all circumstances, but was interested only in what was considered supportive of political goals as laid down by the party. Claiming to know people's needs and how to

provide for them required constant efforts in justifying the state's call on people to spend their free time creating living space or building and maintaining public infrastructures. The second chapter thus discusses the limits to this politicized approach towards DIY activities. In the final section, I attempt to briefly contextualize the GDR's call on its citizens to engage in DIY activities within the broader history of consumption by interpreting these efforts as a strategy to educate socialist 'citizen consumers'.

'The GDR is our House'. DIY and the 'Building up of Socialism'

During the Cold War, the built environment was one of the many features that served as an indicator of economic and political superiority and, in societies of the Eastern bloc, as a visible expression of progress in the building up of socialism.[20] Despite all construction efforts, however, housing conditions were notoriously poor throughout the history of the GDR. Bad planning, inflexible administrative structures and a shortage of building materials and trained professionals made housing the dominant topic of *Eingaben*, petitions by citizens to various state organs.[21] East Germans complained about long-overdue renovation of state-owned apartment blocks, rejected building permissions, the lack of building material, unacceptable sanitary installations, crumbling structures in which no one could safely live and, not least, a major housing shortage and an inefficient system of allocation of housing that frequently forced parents and adult children, couples and in-laws and even divorcees to share houses or apartments against their wishes.[22]

The combination of material and organizational shortcomings led to persistent discontent and to intensified efforts of political functionaries and administrators to improve the situation. GDR officials praised achievements of housing under socialism: the low rent level that was due to high state subsidies, guaranteed housing for all citizens, the allegedly just allocation of housing and the legal protection of tenants.[23] Yet when housing conditions in West Germany started to improve a few years after the end of World War II, enduring difficulties in East Germany frustrated efforts to appear as the 'better' Germany and questioned the legitimacy of the socialist government. Only after

Erich Honecker replaced Walter Ulbricht as the General Secretary of the SED in 1971 did housing become a priority and an important part of GDR social policy. But the triumph of the newly erected *Plattenbauten*, buildings made of prefabricated concrete slabs, also entailed the further decay of the old buildings in the city centres and proved to be of inferior quality. The housing situation remained difficult if slightly less tense.[24]

As early as 1951, the SED started to systematically call upon the population to help with the construction works by removing the rubble of buildings destroyed in the bombings of World War II. They also asked to devote leisure time to the erection and preservation of apartment buildings, parks, playgrounds and other facilities.[25] The *Nationale Aufbauwerk*, the 'national development project', carried its twofold purpose in its name: developing the socialist nation along with the material environment.[26] The successor program, initiated in 1967, called for citizen participation in an even more straightforward manner: 'Join in! More beautiful our cities and communities' was organized as an annual competition and asked citizens to engage in voluntary work for the benefit of their country and, more specifically, their neighbourhood. Coordinated by the National Front (*Nationale Front*, NF), an SED-dominated alliance of all political parties and mass organizations of the GDR, the initiative called on citizens to help renovate state-owned apartment blocks, paint classrooms, build schools and kindergartens, collect recyclable materials or look after public parks, playgrounds and sport areas.[27] While the focus during the 1950s was on overcoming the consequences of the war, 'Join in!' aimed at 'improving the life' of GDR citizens on a more general level.

Most important for state officials was the creation of new housing space by fixing up empty or ramshackle rooms into apartments or by building new family homes. The most important task was, as the National Council of the NF stated in 1974, 'to activate all citizens to help with the improvement of housing conditions and social facilities', claiming that the solution of the housing problem demanded greater initiative through the 'Join in!' program.[28] Local project catalogues usually listed goals related to housing as a top priority and newspapers frequently reported on recent achievements as well as on urgent tasks in this field.[29] The tasks included everything from equipping apartments with sanitary installations to fixing attics into living space to installing windows, painting doors and rendering walls.[30] Administrators

preferred that residents of a building would sign a contract with the municipal housing administration that managed the large housing stock in 'public ownership' in order to put down in writing the tasks the house community committed themselves to.[31]

By getting citizens to take on work that usually fell under the responsibility of local authorities and the municipal housing administration, the program pursued several goals. First, as Jan Palmowski has shown, 'Join in!' aimed at ingraining a 'deeper love of *Heimat* and the socialist fatherland'.[32] Taking responsibility for their residential areas and thus for the benefit of all was supposed to enhance patriotic feelings and to deepen the identification with the socialist society of the GDR. Joint work and shared responsibilities would deepen the sense of community and common financial resources such as premiums for completed tasks would allow for the organization of cultural and sports events which would further consolidate the community.[33] Albert Norden, leader of the Agitation Committee of the *Politbüro* and member of the presidium of the NF, expressed this notion when referring to Pasewalk, a small town in the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern region whose city council meeting and local NF chapter had launched a call to institutionalize 'Join in!': 'Now Pasewalk has risen again – and not only in terms of architecture, but first and foremost because a new spirit has emerged. It is manifest in the conviction of an overwhelming majority of the population: the GDR is our house'.[34] In this perspective, building or renovating a house was more than taking care of one's housing needs, but part of the construction of an even greater structure: the socialist society. A tenant who had helped create the outdoor facilities of his new home in East Berlin described how 'Join in!' helped raise his sense of community and responsibility. Through working with others for the common cause he felt he had turned 'from "I" to "we"', which was just as the state had intended.[35]

Second, the competition served to make up for delays in the long-term economic plan that governed GDR economic life in every detail. As the state started taking consumer wishes more seriously in order to gain legitimacy and to prevent social unrest, the fulfilment or over-fulfilment of the plan became increasingly important. 'Join in!', therefore, aimed to create additional economic value outside official working hours and outside the state-owned enterprises. Like in many cities, the city council of Erfurt supported the continuation of 'Join in!' the following year. In a report on the initiative, the council argued that 'with

this competition we managed to direct the initiatives of the citizens of our towns and communities more closely to the tasks described in the economic plan'.[36] The contest, the report went on, 'enabled us to reach conformity between individual, collective and overall economic interest better than before, to further develop democratic centralism, and socialist democracy'. Ideally, the authorities hoped, 'Join in!' would create a win-win situation, reconciling the demand for better housing not only with the state's promise to arrange for it, but also with the SED's political goals and with the material shortages that caused so many complaints and *Eingaben*.

Yet a program as far-reaching and multi-layered as 'Join in!' required far more than an ambitious plan and social or political pressure; it also depended on the skills of those who were supposed to help carry out the work as well as on the provision of materials and tools. In order to make the program work, the state had to equip its population accordingly. Apart from including the collection of recyclable materials into the 'Join in!' agreements and making Publicly Owned Enterprises (*Volkseigene Betriebe*, VEB) support the contest with materials, tools and know-how, in many municipalities so-called *Reparaturstützpunkte* (supply depots) were set up. These centres provided the local population with everything necessary to conduct repairs and maintenance work. Following a resolution of the Council of Ministers in 1960 that aimed at supporting the 'self-help' of house communities in state-owned apartment blocks, such depots already existed all over the GDR when 'Join in!' was first announced. The competition drew on this infrastructure, advanced its expansion and opened additional 'Join in!' centres.[37]

To be sure, home improvement stores existed in the GDR, too, and their staff was supposed to be mindful of the importance of mass initiatives such as 'Join in!' when advising customers.[38] The plan to more closely involve citizens in the construction and maintenance of housing units and neighbourhoods, however, led to the state-driven establishment of a new infrastructure. Here, access to resources was not regulated through cash and the availability of goods, but through certificates that made sure that these precious goods were only given to those who would use them for the greater good and according to the plan. By distributing scarce materials and tools, the supply depots served as yet another site that interrelated individual citizens or house communities and a state that aimed at reaching into the home as far as possible.[39]

Providing tools and materials was one thing, but how could the skills be developed which were necessary to utilize resources most productively and to obtain results that really improved living conditions? Although they were quite widespread, the state did not rely on the individual acquisition of such skills in various private settings, but instead explored strategies to systematically train crafting skills. The staff at the 'Join in!' centres and supply depots offered advice to those who sought help with specific problems. As a preventive measure, these institutions also started to offer courses in which participants learned everything from painting and tiling to brick-laying, woodwork and installation works.[40] In November 1979, the newspaper *Berliner Zeitung* announced that the 'Join in!' centres in the capital alone offered 290 courses during the winter term, mostly taught by professional handymen.[41] The skills and knowledge of these experts were of paramount importance for the contest, not only because they shared their knowledge in class, but also because they lent a hand with the actual construction and renovation work. The gap between plan requirements and capacities, even with 'Join in!', was so big that the NF tried to recruit *Feierabendbrigaden*, a form of legalized moonlighting where organized groups of professional handymen were paid to carry out additional jobs after working hours.[42] The call to 'join in' during their leisure time was aimed at amateurs as much as professionals, making many projects a close cooperation between DIYers and professionals, a constellation that was meant to increase results and help transfer knowledge.[43]

Books and leaflets completed the range of instructions provided by the state. In 1973, the Ministry of Building started disseminating leaflets on various DIY tasks 'for initiatives from individuals and city groups', which were later combined into two volumes and re-published in the 1980s.[44] In addition, several VEBs and associations of VEBs published magazines and a variety of how-to books in large (but still insufficient) numbers, covering topics such as roofing work, tiling, woodwork, stonewalling and painting.[45] Most of the VEB publications were not officially part of the 'Join in!' campaign or other programs, but nevertheless helped to distribute knowledge important for the mass initiatives.

Training citizens on how to carry out various practical tasks fit in seamlessly with an overall pedagogical concept that placed special emphasis on practical education in schooling. The GDR declared

polytechnic education the guiding principle of all secondary schools in 1959. The newly established Polytechnic Secondary Schools (*Polytechnische Oberschule*, POS) which replaced the previous secondary schools laid particular emphasis on subjects such as technical drawing, productive work and handicrafts along with school gardens.[46] The POS was supposed to impart the skills necessary for the East German economy, but also a certain work ethic characterized by diligence, the love of work, accuracy, a sense of responsibility and a willingness to help – skills and attitudes which 'Join in!' was counting on, too.[47] From the beginning, it was expected that polytechnic education would translate into intensified home improvement activities.[48]

West Germany and other Western countries also had competitions that aimed at beautifying or restructuring communities. In the Federal Republic, *Unser Dorf soll schöner werden* (Our village shall be more beautiful) was established in 1961 and continues to this day.[49] Here, too, citizens were called upon to shape and to improve living conditions in their communities, yet under quite different conditions. Although local and federal politicians officially supported the contest, it never followed a party agenda. There was no political pressure to participate and participants were not made agents of political plans prepared by party officials.[50] The contest focused on rural areas and only villages with less than 3000 inhabitants were eligible. Its main goal shifted throughout the 1960s and 1970s from mere beautification to modernization and the advancement of structural change in order to bring rural living conditions closer to urban conditions without destroying the village's character. While many citizens, just like in the GDR, devoted their leisure time in creating, maintaining and renovating facilities such as community halls, parks, or infrastructure, the West German contest was not about creating housing space, collectively building family homes, or compensating for the government's inability to fulfil its promises.[51] Most importantly, participation in the contest was not seen as an expression of the villager's political attitude and love of the fatherland.

Whereas in the United States and Western Europe an ever-growing industry thrived on encouraging people to 'do it yourself' (and to first buy instructions, tools and materials),[52] East Germans similarly were asked to carry out tasks themselves. In contrast to the Western part of the country, however, by completing such tasks themselves East Germans would relieve the state – which was in fact in charge

of providing housing and infrastructure, but now outsourced some of its tasks to private citizens and their leisure time – of pressing obligations. Most importantly, the request to 'do it yourself' was subordinated to the call to 'join in'. To 'join in' meant to adapt oneself to an already existing context defined by others, in this case the state, even if the contest encouraged the input of its citizens to identify problems and to suggest improvements. While 'do it yourself' highlights the individual, 'join in' appreciates the individual only as part of a group. Practicing DIY in the interests of the state never was (only) a private but a collective matter with tasks and goals defined by state institutions. Polytechnics, 'Join in!' and similar mass initiatives all shared the same goal: creating economic prosperity and transforming citizens into true 'socialist personalities' by teaching and stimulating both the necessary skills and what could be called a DIY spirit.[53] Ideally, citizens, starting at school age, internalized both skills and attitudes that enabled them not only to transform the built environment, but also their personalities. By making things themselves citizens were supposed to also 'make' themselves good, socialist citizens and the state a truly socialist society.[54]

'Transformation' is therefore the keyword to describe DIY in the GDR and particularly state attempts to politicize such practices. On a basic level, the shortage in tools and materials fostered a perspective on things that focused on their transformational potential. Asked about their DIY activities, former GDR citizens frequently explained how they had used their creativity to turn something they possessed into something they wanted: remains of industrial production into fences, a fridge compressor into an electric saw, a hair trimmer into an electric drill.[55] The state tried to encourage and to take advantage of this habit, since it corresponded very well with the socialist assumption that people and societies could fundamentally be shaped according to political ideas and by the material environment they lived in.[56] In order to do so, state organizations set up an organizational and material infrastructure of institutions that distributed knowledge and materials, thus relating access to resources with a political purpose. Compared to the attempts to transform East Germany into a socialist society by force, however, 'Join in!', just like other contexts of participation, allowed for 'far more open[ness] and genuine debate about how to improve the basic conditions of everyday life'.[57]

'Do it Yourself' Instead of 'Joining in'. Scopes and Limits of DIY in East Germany

Skills and knowledge can hardly be restricted to a certain scope. For the East German state, the unpredictability of how much valued technical and manual skills were actually put to use proved to be problematic. In a state that put public above individual interests and that claimed to direct the use of manpower and resources down to the last detail, independent decisions easily conflicted with the political agenda. Beyond the narrow limits set by the state, the use of material resources, skills and knowledge quickly were considered misuse – at least in theory. In everyday life, East German authorities struggled to uphold these seemingly clear principles.

A first example of how practices of DIY created tensions between principles and reality relates to the widespread habit of people taking resources, tools and machines from the workplace or using the equipment of publicly-owned enterprises for private means during working hours.[58] That people took the term 'the people's property' (*volkseigen*) quite literally was no secret. Many contemporary cartoons addressed the issue, for example portraying owners of weekend houses proudly presenting their cabins, which would have been impossible to build or improve without materials and tools stolen from the workplace.[59] Erich Honecker's famous (and unintentionally ambiguous) remark that there was 'much more to get out of our companies' was used tongue-in-cheek to legitimize the fact that many citizens took what they needed from the workplace in order to advance their private endeavours in building or renovating houses, repairing cars or conducting other DIY tasks.[60] Such ways of overcoming scarcity further weakened the economic potential of the publicly-owned enterprises. Despite a few scandalized cases, however, stealing from the workplace was rarely prosecuted. Turning a blind eye to the 'organization' of material at the workplace was more or less inevitable for the authorities. Colleagues usually covered up for each other and in the face of the overwhelming extent of administrative misplanning silently tolerating such habits was hoped to keep frustration at bay.[61]

Despite its explicit call for DIY, 'Join in!' itself is an example of how state and private interests could collide in this field. Due to the ubiquitous lack in manpower, resources, tools and machines, local

authorities and the NF tried to correlate the yearly economic plans and 'Join in!' projects as closely as possible. Yet rallying citizens behind tasks designated by the plan was not always easy because the residents of a house or neighbourhood often had their own ideas about what they found desirable and necessary to do.[62] Thus, coordinating official plans and private wishes without losing sight of resources or undermining the commitment of those who participated in the contest remained a balancing act for the organizers of 'Join in!' Moreover, efforts to encourage citizens to identify problems and to develop creative solutions were easily frustrated because the lack of material and tools prevented even approved projects from being carried out.[63] Participation in 'Join in!' was often motivated less by enthusiasm for the contest but by expectations of gaining extra resources that would not have been available otherwise. According to Jan Palmowski, citizens engaged in the competition 'because it was able to encompass activities that [they] were already engaged in anyway', meaning that people did not change their behaviour through 'Join in!' but used the contest to follow their own interests.[64] Rather than building up infrastructure and public buildings, citizens frequently diverted materials and tools to further their private DIY projects, many of which would later be 'accounted for as value created' through the contest, even if they had not been a plan priority or not even been on the list.[65] In the end, citizens who deployed skills and resources in their leisure time, even if at variance with political priorities, were still more useful to the state than inactive citizens, who might express growing discontent over the lack of services and supplies in the GDR.

My third example highlights the intertwined relationship between desired and undesired practices of DIY in the GDR, particularly with regard to the creation of additional living space that was so important to both the state and its population. In addition to the poor condition of many apartment buildings, the inefficient system of allocating flats caused widespread resentment and frustration. The state claimed the right to allocate living space according to what it defined as 'just' and in line with political goals, but a considerable number of flats remained unoccupied despite a substantial housing shortage throughout the existence of the GDR. Due to a lack of trained construction workers and because of legal regulations that made the renovation of privately owned buildings highly unattractive, many old apartment buildings

erected at the turn of the century became dilapidated and uninhabitable. They stood empty at a time when thousands of people desperately looked for a place to live.[66]

Not all of these spaces remained empty, however. Careful not to attract any attention, individuals in many cities silently entered uninhabited apartments they had discovered. Moving into an empty apartment without official permission was illegal, even if the person in question suffered from dreadful housing conditions. But instead of being prosecuted, many illegal squatters not only managed to go unpunished, but they were able to transform their illegal status into a legal renting agreement.[67] To be habitable in the first place, the usually ramshackle rooms required substantial renovation. Squatters in the GDR showed impressive creativity, devotion and skills at repairing roofs, draining apartments, wiring them for electricity and installing heating and sanitary systems, with little means and often without any professional help.[68]

In a sense, except for being illegal, many of these activities perfectly matched the criteria of 'Join in!'. Squatters used their own equipment and often extracted and recycled stones, wood, installations or glass panes from condemned houses. Thus, they put no further strain on the already limited amount of building material available in stores and at supply stations. Even their attitudes were in line with the NF's vision of the ideal participant of 'Join in!' – in most cases, squatting was rather apolitical and did not result from genuine ideological discontent. On the contrary, squatters took responsibility and some even claimed they simply thought renovating a particular house was something they could easily do themselves instead of burdening the state with such tasks.[69] Right after moving in, most squatters started paying rent. After all, they were not trying to avoid expenses, but merely looked for a place to live and often intended to legalize their status as soon as possible, a goal that was much more likely to be reached when presenting oneself as a conscientious citizen.[70]

Squatting in combination with repairing the occupied buildings was not a very wide-spread phenomenon. It included perhaps ten thousand people in total, mostly in major cities such as East Berlin, Leipzig, Halle, Magdeburg, Jena and Dresden.[71] Still, the local authorities faced the difficult decision whether undermining their authority to allocate housing outweighed the independent, if unauthorized, creation of badly

needed additional living space. In the end, the state did not apply the law as strictly as it could have. Particularly for those who turned crumbling apartments into homes, rules proved to be negotiable.[72]

The political relevance of DIY in the context of East Germany is not only revealed by attempts to politicize such practices by integrating them into state policies. As the above examples illustrate, its political character was equally manifest in the authorities' reaction towards such practices in cases where they went not only beyond state priorities, but even against the law. By no means all of those who crossed ideological and legal lines set by the state considered their actions political. The authorities' regular (albeit not consistent) toleration of such transgressions against the rules when it came to DIY, however, shows that for the state, these practices had a political dimension.

Creating Socialist Citizen Consumers?

Politicising practices of DIY was part of a set of strategies the East German state employed in order to subject several spheres of life, from education to career and leisure choices, to socialist ideology and its economic plan. By systematically fostering practices of DIY, the state hoped to equip individuals with the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to step in wherever they would be most useful for the 'building up of socialism'. Given the discrepancy between the SED's promises of a bright socialist future and life under the conditions of real existing socialism, the authorities also drew on practices of DIY in order to compensate for their own shortcomings in providing for the standard of living they had promised. Official proclamations, however, were eager to portray their frequent 'call to tools' not as a sign of the state's ineptitude, but rather of a truly socialist sense of responsibility and communality.

The focus of these joint DIY endeavours was on public goods: housing, infrastructure and public facilities, such as kindergartens, playgrounds and cultural centres, therefore on a mix of public and private consumer goods with a strong focus on the former. By redefining consumption and leisure in collective terms, the East German state tried to generate pride in communal facilities and in public goods rather than in private possessions. The focus on public goods as an indicator for

the standard of living was supposed to set East Germany apart from the Western capitalist model with its alleged individualistic greed for private consumer goods and its lack of community spirit. At the same time, this approach also reflected older German traditions of focusing on public consumption, a characteristic that had distinguished most European consumer societies from the American model of mass consumption since the interwar years.[73]

The efforts to inspire private citizens to dedicate their leisure time on the production of public goods can be interpreted as an attempt to create socialist 'consumer citizens'. Established to delineate the complex interrelation between citizenship and consumption in democratic societies, the term is useful as well for conceiving state-driven attempts to mobilize citizens to the creation of public consumer goods rather than using resources, skills and time (only) for the realization of individual consumer desires, thus seeking to create a socialist consumer identity.[74] Such attempts were elements of a socialist mode of provision where the state urged its population to contribute beyond working hours to the provisioning of private as well as public consumer goods.

This idea of the citizen as a 'collective handyman' (and -woman) competed with practices of DIY where citizens used their handiwork to improve their private standard of life. Individual consumer wishes and ideas about how to organize leisure time outranked the ideal of collectively transforming East Germany into the perfect socialist society. Whereas the NF struggled to activate citizens to 'join in', other forms of DIY flourished that promised access to private consumer amenities otherwise not available in the GDR or that seemed satisfying leisure activities. The Jena exhibition, however, suggests that the emphasis on DIY and the constant 'call to tools', along with an educational system that combined intellectual with practical skills, had left its marks even if it did not necessarily create the kind of socialist consumer citizens the SED had hoped for. Almost thirty years after the GDR's demise, people rushed to bring their self-made goods and recalled meticulously how and why they had gathered materials and then planned, built and used the various items. The interest in the topic displayed by the donors, more than 7000 visitors (in a city with a population of roughly 100,000) and the media interest speak of a shared East German experience, identity and, not least, pride based on the ability to 'do it yourself'.

About the Author

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Notes

1 See statement of Reinhard Kieck in Nicole Andries and Majken Rehder, *Zaunwelten: Zäune und Zeitzeugen – Geschichten zur Alltagskultur der DDR* (Marburg, 2005) 29; for the quote see Ulf Herlyn and Bernd Hunger (eds), *Ostdeutsche Wohnmilieus im Wandel: Eine Untersuchung ausgewählter Stadtgebiete als sozialplanerischer Beitrag zur Stadterneuerung* (Basel et al, 1994) 75.

2 Ina Merkel, *Utopie und Bedürfnis: Die Geschichte der Konsumkultur in der DDR* (Köln et al, 1999) 348 [my translation].

3 Teresa Thieme, *Man muss sich nur zu helfen wissen: Selbstgemacht in der DDR* (Jena, 2016); 'Kampf gegen Mangelwirtschaft: So erfinderisch waren die Bürger der DDR', *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, 8 June 2016, http://www.mz-web.de/panorama/kampf-gegen-mangelwirtschaft-so-erfinderisch-waren-die-buerger-in-der-ddr-24189292, accessed 4 February 2017.

4 On the expression, see 'Die Deutschen – ein Volk von Heimwerkern', *Der Spiegel*, 2 May 1983, 72; on the history of home improvement in West Germany see Jonathan Voges, 'Vom Handwerk zum Heimwerk? Zur Diffusion professionellen Wissens in den Haushalten im Zuge der Do-it-yourself-Bewegung in der der Bundesrepublik Deutschland' *Ferrum* 86 (2014) 89–96; Reinhild Kreis, 'Do it yourself mit Pioniergeist: Selbermachen in deutsch-amerikanischer Perspektive', in Dorothee Pesch (ed.), *Do it yourself – Mach's doch selber!* (Oberschönfeld, 2016) 23–30.

5   Steven M. Gelber, *Hobbies: Leisure and the Culture of Work in America* (New York, 1999) 155–294; Richard Harris, *Building a Market: The Rise of the Home Improvement Industry, 1914–1960* (Chicago and London, 2012); Voges, 'Vom Handwerk zum Heimwerk?'; Kreis, 'Do it yourself mit Pioniergeist'.

6   Reinhild Kreis, 'Anleitung zum Selbermachen: Do it yourself, Normen und soziale Ordnungsvorstellungen in der Industriemoderne', in Klara Löffler and Nikola Langreiter, *Selber machen: Diskurse und Praktiken des 'Do it yourself'* (Bielefeld, 2017) 17–33; Reinhild Kreis, 'Mechanisierung als pädagogisches Argument: Schule, Arbeit und Konsum um 1900', in *Jahrbuch für historische Bildungsforschung* 20 (2015) 199–217; Gelber, *Hobbies*, 155–194.

7   For the term 'participatory dictatorship', see Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven and London, 2005) 235–249.

8   Theodore Schatzki, 'Materiality and Social Life', in *Nature and Culture* 5:2 (2010) 123–149; Frank Trentmann, 'Political History Matters: Everyday Life, Things, and Practices', in Willibald Steinmetz et al. (eds), *Writing Political History Today* (Frankfurt a.M. and New York, 2013); with less focus on practices Martin Knoll, 'Nil sub sole novum oder neue Bodenhaftung? Der material turn und die Geschichtswissenschaft', in *Neue Politische Literatur* 59 (2014) 191–207; Simone Derix et al., 'Der Wert der Dinge: Zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte der Materialitäten', in *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 13:3 (2016) 387–403, http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/3-2016/id=5389, accessed 21 April 2017.

9   Frank Trentmann, 'Materiality in the Future of Historiography: Things, Practices, and Politics', *Journal of British Studies* 48 (2009) 300.

10 Trentmann, 'Political History Matters', 407.

11 Ibid.

12 Sven Reichardt, 'Praxeologische Geschichtswissenschaft: Eine Diskussionsanregung', in *Soziale Geschichte* 22:3 (2007) 48 [my translation]; Trentmann, 'Materiality in the Future of Historiography', 297.

13 Thomas Lindenberger, 'Das Land der begrenzten Möglichkeiten: Machträume und Eigen-Sinn der DDR-Gesellschaft', *Deutschland Archiv*, 10 August 2016, www.bpb.de/232099, accessed 4 February 2017. See also Thomas Lindenberger, 'The Fragmented Society: 'Societal Activism' and Authority in GDR State Socialism' *zeitgeschichte* 37:1 (2010) 3–10. Mary

Fulbrook introduced the term 'participatory dictatorship' yet with less focus on mass initiatives, see Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 235–288.

14 Gutsche, 'Der Unterschied', *practic* (1967:4) 145 [my translation].

15 'Do it not yourself', *modellbau und basteln* 1 (1966) 9. These texts usually explicitly pointed to the fact that do-it-yourself was an English expression, indicating that West Germans either imitated the United States as the superpower of the Western bloc, or were manipulated by them.

16 The distinction between professionals and amateurs refers to institutionalized, standardized education and training usually completed with a degree, and says very little about the actual possession of knowledge and skills necessary to carry out a task.

17 Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 50, 54, 56.

18 Andreas Reckwitz, 'Grundelemente einer Theorie sozialer Praktiken: Eine sozialtheoretische Perspektive', *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 32:4 (2003) 290–91; Trentmann, 'Materiality in the Future of Historiography', 297.

19 Merkel, *Utopie und Bedürfnis*, 88.

20 As an example for another socialist society see Susan E. Reid, 'Makeshift Modernity: DIY, Craft, and the Virtuous Homemaker in New Soviet Housing of the 60s', *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity* 2:2 (2014) 88–89. On architecture as a site of Cold War conflicts see Thomas Großbölting and Rüdiger Schmidt (eds), *Gedachte Stadt – gebaute Stadt: Urbanität in der deutsch-deutschen Systemkonkurrenz 1945–1990* (Cologne et al, 2015).

21 Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 51. See also Annett Kästner, *Eingaben im Zivilrecht der DDR: Eine Untersuchung von Eingaben zu mietrechtlichen Ansprüchen aus den Jahren 1986 und 1987* (Berlin, 2006).

22 Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 278; Eli Rubin, *Amnesiopolis: Modernity, Space, and Memory in East Germany* (Oxford, 2016) 20–34.

23 Thomas Topfstedt, 'Wohnen und Städtebau in der DDR', in Ingeborg Flagge (ed.), *Geschichte des Wohnens, vol. 5: 1945 bis heute. Aufbau, Umbau, Neubau* (Stuttgart, 1999) 439–441.

24 Wenzel Müller, *Leben in der Platte: Alltagskultur der DDR der 70er und 80er Jahre* (Wien, 1999) 43–49; Christine Hannemann, *Die Platte: Industrialisierter Wohnungsbau in der DDR* (Berlin, 2000); Rubin, *Amnesiopolis*. Rubin rightly points out that moving to a Plattenbau meant a major improvement in living conditions for most tenants, see 77–85.

25 Alice von Plato, '"Gartenkunst und Blütenzauber": Die Internationale Gartenbauausstellung als Erfurter Angelegenheit', in Adelheid von Saldern

(ed.), *Inszenierte Einigkeit: Herrschaftsrepräsentationen in DDR-Städten* (Stuttgart, 2003) 194; Leonie Treber, *Mythos Trümmerfrauen: Von der Trümmerbeseitigung in der Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit und der Entstehung eines deutschen Erinnerungsortes* (Essen, 2016) 192–197.

The National Socialist organization 'Schönheit der Arbeit' (Beauty of Labour) launched a similar initiative that urged the staff of large companies to engage 'voluntarily' in building parks, swimming pools, and other leisure facilities for workers on company grounds. See Tim Schanetzky, *'Kanonen statt Butter': Wirtschaft und Konsum im Dritten Reich* (Munich, 2015) 116.

26 Sometimes 'Nationales Aufbauwerk' is translated as National Reconstruction Project/Effort. The East German term, however, avoids any reference to the past but stresses construction rather than re-construction, thus further emphasising the claim to establish something radically new instead of re-building the past. Marzahn, a large settlement in the northeast of Berlin, is an outstanding example for the aspiration for creating 'brand new, purely socialist space[s]', see Rubin, *Amnesiopolis*, 11, 34–75.

27 For a comprehensive summary of the 'Join in!' campaign see Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics of Everyday Life in the GDR, 1945–1990* (Cambridge, 2009) 149–185.

28 Nationalrat der Nationalen Front, Konzeption zur Führung des sozialistischen Wettbewerbs 'Schöner unsere Städte und Gemeinden – Mach mit!' im Jahre 1974. Beschluss des Sekretariats des Nationalrats der Nationalen Front der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 17 January 1974, 3, HStA Weimar, 6-62-0001 Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, No. 2326 [my translation]. Other programs followed the same goal, e.g. the initiative 'Umgebaut und ausgebaut' aimed at members of the Free German Youth, the only official youth organization in the GDR, to help fixing and creating living space. See Kästner, *Eingaben im Zivilrecht der DDR*, 55–56.

29 See for instance Sekretär des Rates des Bezirkes Erfurt, Information über beste Beispiele und Ergebnisse der Erfüllung im Wettbewerb 'Schöner unsere Städte und Gemeinden – Mach mit!', 14 June 1973, 4, HStA Weimar, 6-62-0001 Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, No. 1144; 'Unserer Republik ein schönes Festkleid', in *practic* (1968:5) 193; 'Erhaltung und Modernisierung der Bausubstanz ist einer der 75er Wettbewerbsschwerpunkte', *Neue Zeit*, 4 February 1975, 3.

30 See e.g. Ergebnisse im sozialistischen Wettbewerb, enclosed document to: Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, Einschätzung der Initiativen, Aktivitäten und Ergebnisse im Wettbewerb 'Zu Ehren des IX. Parteitages der SED! Schöner

unsere Städte und Gemeinden – mach mit!' mit Stand vom 15. April 1976, 17 May 1976, HStA Weimar, 6-95-7201 Nationale Front, No. 13.

31 Klaus Gläß and Manfred Mühlmann, *Bürger – Hausgemeinschaft – Wohngebiet* (Berlin [East], 1981) 43–47.

32 Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation,* 151.

33 Gläß and Mühlmann, *Bürger – Hausgemeinschaft – Wohngebiet*, 44, 50.

34 Alfred Norden, 'Klare Köpfe – rührige Hände', in *Information. Nationalrat der Nationalen Front des Demokratischen Deutschland* (1969:7) 30 [my translation].

35 Quoted after Rubin, *Amnesiopolis*, 109.

36 Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, Vorschläge für Schlussfolgerungen aus dem Wettbewerb 'Schöner unsere Städte und Gemeinden – mach mit!' zur weiteren Qualifizierung der staatlichen Führungstätigkeit, 1 September 1969, HStA Weimar, 6-62-0001 Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, No. 1372 [my translation].

37 'Reparaturstützpunkte… eine hervorragende Hilfe bei der Beseitigung von Schäden', in *Magazin für Haus und Wohnung* (1963:1) 28–30; 'Aufgaben der Reparatur- und Beratungsstützpunkte', in *Nationalrat der Deutschen Front der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Information* (1973:12) 22–23, HStA Weimar, 6-62-0001 Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, No. 2326; Gläß and Mühlmann, *Bürger – Hausgemeinschaft – Wohngebiet*, 60–63. According to the newspaper *Neue Zeit*, more than 4000 such centers existed in 1985. 'Mehr als 4000 Mach-mit-Zentren zur Wohnraumwerterhaltung', in *Neue Zeit*, 19 February 1985, 2.

38 'Heimwerker-Zentrum in der Markthalle', in *Berliner Zeitung*, 11 August 1973, 8; 'Heimwerkerhalle am Ostbahnhof', in *Berliner Zeitung*, 26 November 1974, 8. On the importance of the mass initiatives as a part of the training schedule for prospective sales assistants for home improvement products see Rahmenausbildungsunterlage für die sozialistische Berufsausbildung Fachverkäufer, November 1969, section 5.2.2.5, BArch Berlin, DY 42/2163.

39 On infrastructures and power see Jens Ivo Engels and Gerrit Jasper Schenk, 'Infrastrukturen der Macht – Macht der Infrastrukturen: Überlegungen zu einem Forschungsfeld', in Birte Förster and Martin Bauch (eds), *Wasserinfrastrukturen und Macht von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Berlin et al., 2015) 22–57; Trentmann, 'Political History Matters', 405–406.

40 Gerhard Bückmann, 'Unsre Hauptstadt soll schöner und anziehender werden', in Nationalrat der Nationalen Front des Demokratischen

Deutschland (ed.), *Schöner unsere Städte und Gemeinden – mach mit! Zum 20. Jahrestag der DDR* (Berlin [East], 1968) 50–52; 'In Pankow beginnt ein Schulungsprogramm für Heimwerker', in *Berliner Zeitung*, 2 October 1975, 12; 'Heimwerker auf der Schulbank', in *Berliner Zeitung*, 26 January 1976, 8; 'Mehr als 4000 Mach-mit-Zentren zur Wohnraumwerterhaltung', in *Neue Zeit*, 19 February 1985, 2.

41 'Wenn der Hahn tropft', in *Berliner Zeitung*, 22 November 1979, 12.

42 Wesentlicher Inhalt des Diskussionsbeitrages des Gen. Ludwig in der Aussprache mit den Presseorganen am 16.7.1970, 8, HStA Weimar, 6-62-0001 Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, No. 2323; Sekretär des Rates des Bezirkes Erfurt, Information über beste Beispiele und Ergebnisse der Erfüllung im Wettbewerb 'Schöner unsere Städte und Gemeinden – Mach mit!', 14 June 1973, 5, HStA Weimar, 6-62-0001 Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, No. 1144; Nationale Front, Kreissekretariat Eisenach to Nationale Front, Bezirkssekretariat Erfurt, 11 May 1973, HStA Weimar, 6-95-7201 Nationale Front, No. 661.

43 Nationale Front der DDR, Bezirkssekretariat Erfurt, Konzeption für die Vorbereitung und Durchführung einer Tagung zu Problemen der politisch-ideologischen Arbeit mit Handwerkern und Gewerbetreibenden, 26 March 1974, 3, HStA Weimar, 6-62-0001 Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, No. 2326; Werner Bachmann, 'Bauaktiv – wichtiger Partner im Wettbewerb', in Verbesserung der Wohnungsbedingungen – wichtigste Aufgabe im 'Mach mit!'-Wettbewerb. Gemeinsame Tagung des Sekretariats des Nationalrats der Nationalen Front der DDR und des Ministeriums für das Bauwesen am 24. Oktober 1973 in Eberswalde-Finow, 29–30: HStA Weimar, 6-62-0001 Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, No. 2326. Skilled handymen, however, proved to be rather reluctant to engage in 'Join in!', see Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation*, 160–161.

44 Wolfgang Prüfert (ed.), *Bauberatung für Heimwerker. Zusammenstellung von Bauberatungsblättern für Bürgerinitiativen und Eigenleistungen*, 2 vols (Berlin [East], 1984 and 1986, 2nd eds. 1988 and 1989) [my translation].

45 Out of many, see Georg Waterstradt et al., *1x1 der Anstricharbeiten* (Berlin [East], 1970); Klaus Bödeker, *1x1 der Elektroarbeiten* (Berlin [East], 1975); Justus Breithaupt and Wolfang Prüfert, *1x1 der Fußbodenlegearbeiten* (Berlin [East], 1979); Georg Waterstradt, *1x1 des Tapezierens: Versuch's mal selber* (Berlin [East], 1966); Harri Beyer, *1x1 der Fliesenlegearbeiten* (Berlin [East], 1983).

46 Andreas Tietze, *Die theoretische Aneignung der Produktionsmittel: Gegenstand, Struktur und gesellschaftstheoretische Begründung der polytechnischen Bildung in der DDR* (Frankfurt, 2012).

47 Sektion 'Polytechnische Bildung und Erziehung' beim DPZI, Konzeption der Schulversuche 'Allgemeine, polytechnische und berufliche Bildung an der zehnklassigen Oberschule', 16 August 1962, 1–4, Archiv BBF, DPZI, No. 3142/2; Arbeitsgruppe Berufsaufklärung und Berufsorientierung des Wissenschaftlichen Rates beim Ministerium für Volksbildung, Denkschrift zur Problematik der Nachwuchslenkung, no date [ca. 1963?] 13, Archiv BBF, DPZI, No. 3614/1; APW, Institut für mathematischen, naturwissenschaftlichen und polytechnischen Unterricht, Problemmaterial 'Zur weiteren Ausprägung des polytechnischen Charakters der Oberschule', draft, 1980, 31, Archiv BBF, APW, No. 16005. These goals have been interlinked with practical school subjects since the second half of the 20th century. see Kreis, 'Mechanisierung als pädagogisches Argument'.

48 Joachim Merker, 'Vorstellungen zur perspektivischen Entwicklung des Bevölkerungsverbrauchs bei Werkzeugen', in *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Bedarsforschung* 1:1 (1962) 44–54.

49 Sebastian Strube, *Euer Dorf soll schöner werden: Ländlicher Wandel, staatliche Planung und Demokratisierung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Göttingen, 2013). In 1997 the contest took on the name 'Unser Dorf hat Zukunft' (Our village has got future, my translation).

50 Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation*, 182; Strube, *Euer Dorf soll schöner werden*.

51 Strube, *Euer Dorf soll schöner werden*, for an example of the work done by the villagers see ibid. 87, 197.

52 Gelber, *Hobbies*, 155–294; Harris, *Building a Market*; Voges, 'Vom Handwerk zum Heimwerk?'.

53 Nationalrat der Nationalen Front, Konzeption zur Führung des sozialistischen Wettbewerbs 'Schöner unsere Städte und Gemeinden – Mach mit!' im Jahre 1973. Beschluss des Sekretariats des Nationalrats der Nationalen Front der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 21 December 1972, 2, HStA Weimar, 6-62-0001.302 Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, No. 15383. As one example out of many school curricula, see Ministerium für Volksbildung, *Lehrplan Schulgartenunterricht Klasse 4* (Berlin [East], 1970) 5.

54 Michel Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', in Luther H. Martin et al. (eds), *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (Amherst, 1988) 18.

55 Andries and Rehder, *Zaunwelten*; Thieme, *Man muss sich nur zu helfen wissen*, xviii; more examples in the Jena exhibition 'Man muss sich nur zu helfen wissen'. DIY magazines such as *practic* and *das bauwerk* too contained many instructions how to transform items into something else that was needed. The same holds true for car magazines who published instructions on how to build the tools necessary for car repair. See Kurt Möser, 'Thesen zum Pflegen und Reparieren in den Automobilkulturen am Beispiel der DDR', in *Technikgeschichte* 79:3 (2012) 215.

56 Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 5–10.

57 Ibid., 9.

58 To be sure, in West Germany too it was not uncommon to take materials from the workplace, and to use equipment and machines at work for private purposes. This was not due to a general lack of materials and tools in stores, however. Moreover, since resources at work were not considered 'people's property' but the property of private companies, the moral implications differed from those in the GDR. As an example for West Germany, see Martin Schmeiser, '"Wenn's in d'Vespertasch' geht…" Die Fabrik als Fundort von Brauchbarem und als Ort der Reparaturmöglichkeiten', in *Flick-Werk. Reparieren und umnutzen in der Alltagskultur: Begleitheft zur Ausstellung im Württembergischen Landesmuseum Stuttgart vom 15. Oktober bis 15. Dezember 1983* (Stuttgart, 1983) 105–112.

59 See e.g. the cartoons reprinted in Isolde Dietrich, *Hammer, Zirkel, Gartenzaun: Die Politik der SED gegenüber den Kleingärtnern* (Berlin, 2003) 263, 337, 358. Unfortunately the book does not give any information on the sources but only on the dates. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (ed.), *Der Alltag in der DDR* (Bonn, 1984) 30.

60 Klaus Fritsche, 'Aus Kies wird Kies oder: Aus unseren VEB ist noch viel mehr herauszuholen (frei nach Ulbricht)', in Friedrich Thießen (ed.), *Zwischen Plan und Pleite. Erlebnisberichte aus der Arbeitswelt der DDR* (Cologne et al., 2001) 182–183; Gerold Schneider, '"Ein Stein, ein Kalk, ein Bier": Vom illegalen Bauen in der Planwirtschaft', in Thießen, *Zwischen Plan und Pleite*, 195, 197; Andries and Rehder, *Zaunwelten*, 23; Stefan Wolle, *Die heile Welt der Diktatur: Alltag und Herrschaft in der DDR 1971–1989* (Bonn, 1998) 229. Sometimes the quote is attributed to Honeckers predecessor, Walter Ulbricht.

61 Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, *Der Alltag in der DDR*, 44–46.

62 'Aufgaben der Reparatur- und Beratungsstützpunkte', in Nationalrat der Deutschen Front der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Information (1973:12) 22, HStA Weimar, 6-62-0001 Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes

Erfurt, No. 2326; Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, 'Worauf kommt es bei der Weiterführung des Wettbewerbes an?', [November 1969] 1–3, HStA Weimar, 6-62-0001 Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, No. 1300/11. See also Jan Palmowski's example of citizens striving for communal swimming pools that were deemed too expensive by the officials. Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation*, 160.

63 Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, 'Einschätzung über die Arbeit mit den Eingaben, Kritiken, Beschwerden und Hinweisen aus der Bevölkerung auf der Grundlage des Beschlusses des Sekretariates des ZK vom 21.3.1960 und 23.2.1965', 12 August 1968, 9, HStA Weimar, 6-62-0001 Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, No. 1300/11.

64 Even party officials had to concede this fact. Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation*, 164, 166.

65 Ibid., 162.

66 Peter Angus Mitchell, 'Socialism's Empty Promise: Housing Vacancy and Squatting in the German Democratic Republic', in Juliane Fürst and Josie McLellan (eds), *Dropping out of Socialism: The Creation of Alternative Spheres in the Soviet Bloc* (Lanham, 2017) 279.

67 Udo Grashoff, *Schwarzwohnen: Die Unterwanderung der staatlichen Wohnraumlenkung in der DDR* (Göttingen, 2011) 28–42, 54–68; Udo Grashoff, *Leben im Abriss: Schwarzwohnen in Halle an der Saale* (Halle, 2011); Mitchell, 'Socialism's Empty Promise'.

68 Grashoff, *Schwarzwohnen*, 46, 49, 55, 74, 78, 80–83. 111–112.

69 Ibid., 84, 111. With a stronger focus on the subversive nature of squatting see Mitchell, 'Socialism's Empty Promise'. The apolitical, secretive form of squatting practiced in the GDR distinguished the East German squatters from their Western counterparts who in the early 1980s made the occupation of houses as much of a public event as the renovation works they carried out in order to demonstrate against what they regarded a misguided housing policy.

70 Ibid., 55.

71 Udo Grashoff, 'Schwarzwohnen als subversive und zugleich systemstabilisierende Praxis', in *Deutschland Archiv*, 10 March 2016, 3, www.bpb.de/222535, accessed 4 February 2017.

72 Grashoff, *Schwarzwohnen*, 55, 184–185.

73 In this sense, the GDR was not so different from the FRG as it presented itself. The West German consumer society as it emerged after 1945 continued to expand public consumption, thus taking a different path into modern mass

consumption than the United States as the pioneering consumer society. See Jan Logemann, *Trams or Tailfins? Public and Private Prosperity in the Postwar West Germany and the United States* (Chicago, 2012) 5–7, 13–15, 50–55, 62–67.

74 On the concept of consumer citizens see Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York, 2003).