

AT HOME IN
EUROPE

EUROPE'S
WHITE
WORKING
CLASS
COMMUNITIES

BERLIN



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ISBN: 9781940983196

Published by
OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS
224 West 57th Street
New York NY 10019
United States

For more information contact:
AT HOME IN EUROPE
OPEN SOCIETY INITIATIVE FOR EUROPE
Millbank Tower, 21-24 Millbank,
London, SW1P 4QP, UK

www.opensocietyfoundations.org/projects/home-europe

Design by Ahlgrim Design Group

Layout by Q.E.D. Publishing

Printed in Hungary. Printed on CyclusOffset paper produced from 100% recycled fibres



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WORKING WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN MORE THAN 100 COUNTRIES, THE OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS SUPPORT JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS, FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION.

Acknowledgements

This city report was prepared as a part of series of reports titled Europe's White Working Class Communities. The series focuses on six cities in the European Union, and within them specific neighborhoods: Aarhus (Trigeparken), Amsterdam (Tuindorp Buiksloot and Floradorp), Berlin (Northern Marzahn-Hellersdorf), Lyon (8th arrondissement), Manchester (Higher Blackley) and Stockholm (Southern Botkyrka).

The research reports have been prepared by At Home in Europe, part of the Open Society Initiative for Europe, Open Society Foundations and in cooperation with local/national based experts.

The study has been conducted and authored by Dr. Andreas Hieronymus (iMiR) and Dušan Ugrina. However, the report would not have been possible without the generous assistance from numerous individuals and organizations that enabled the Open Society Foundations to better understand Marzahn-Hellersdorf and provided the research team with spaces in which to carry out interviews, focus groups and follow up discussions with various stakeholders. We would especially like to thank the district mayor Mr. Stefan Komoß for his unwavering support, Elena Marburg who guided the team through the often very complicated institutional arrangements within the district, Dr. Jochen Gollbach for his critical, but always productive, perspective on the study, and Michael Blau who took the time to introduce the district from the perspective of local inhabitants.

On 02 February 2014, the Open Society Foundations held a closed roundtable meeting in Hellersdorf, inviting critique and commentary on the draft report. We are grateful to the many participants who generously offered their time and expertise. These included representatives of civil society organizations, city officials, and relevant experts. We would also like to thank the district of Marzahn-Hellersdorf for offering space to hold to event.

At Home in Europe has final responsibility for the content of the report, including and errors or misrepresentations.

Open Society Initiative for Europe Team (At Home in Europe)

Nazia Hussain	<i>Director</i>
Hélène Irving	<i>Program Coordinator</i>
Klaus Dik Nielsen	<i>Advocacy Officer</i>
Csilla Tóth	<i>Program Assistant</i>
Tufyal Choudhury	<i>Sen. Policy Consultant</i>
Ana Macouzet	<i>Program Coordinator</i>
Szilvia Szekeres	<i>Administrative Coordinator</i>

Preface

Over the past 50 years states in western and northern Europe have undergone dramatic demographic, social and economic changes, including de-industrialisation, a shift to a service economy, growing inequality, challenges to the sustainability of social welfare, and increasing ethnic and cultural diversity. The challenges these changes create to sustaining social cohesion and ensuring integration are experienced at the local city-level.

Since 2007, the At Home in Europe Project of the Open Society Foundations has worked to support improved social inclusion, participation and advancing equality across 20 cities in 10 countries, in partnership with local policy makers, practitioners and civil society. The impetus for the engagement arose from Open Society Foundations' mandate to address and mitigate the concerns of vulnerable groups at a time when Europe's governments were beginning to accept that its myriad of immigrant communities—particularly those with a Muslim background—were here to stay and an integral part of the social, political, and cultural landscape. As Europe's Muslims and other minorities became more visible and demographically larger, there has been a pursuit of policies to encourage integration but this has been set against a backdrop of growing anxiety about migration, the perceived erosion of national identity, and the perception that communities from the majority population of European countries have been ignored and consequently disenfranchised.

While there is rhetoric of integration as a 'two way' process, too often integration and social cohesion policies have failed to engage with the views and experiences of existing settled communities, focusing instead on what immigrants or their descendants must do to integrate. For many this failure to address the concerns or anxieties created by changes in the economic and social structures of their neighbourhoods reinforces a sense of being ignored, left behind and demonised. In some cases this has fed into resentment of mainstream political parties and the liberal political values they are seen to represent and increased the appeal of populist parties on mainly the right but also the left. Too often this has led to disengagement from political processes of any kind.

The Europe's White Working Class Communities project documents the experiences of 'white' communities in six cities across Europe (Aarhus, Amsterdam, Berlin, Lyon, Manchester, and Stockholm). Each report in the series focuses on a specific district or neighbourhoods within the city. In doing so it provides new groundbreaking research on the experiences of a section of the population whose lives are often caricatured and whose voices and views are rarely heard in public debates and discussion on integration, cohesion and social inclusion. Through a comparative lens, the project seeks to highlight parallels and differences in policies, practices and experiences across the different European cities.

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List of abbreviations

ABMe	Employment Creation Measures (<i>Arbeitbeschaffungsmassnahmen</i>)
AfD	Alternative for Germany
CDU	Christian Democratic Union
EU	European Union
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GKV	Statutory Health Insurance (<i>Gesetzliche Krankenversicherung</i>)
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NPD	German National Party
PDS	Party of Democratic Socialism (Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus)
POLIS	District Coordination Office for Development of Democracy in Marzahn-Hellersdorf
SED	Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands)
SFZ	Social Science Research Centre (Sozialwissenschaftlichen Forschungszentrum)
SPD	Social Democratic Party

Executive summary

This report is part of an international comparative project on Europe's white working-class communities which is being undertaken by the Open Society Foundations' (OSF) At Home in Europe project. It presents qualitative research gathered in interviews and focus groups with residents and key stakeholders living in the northern parts of the former East Berlin district of Marzahn-Hellersdorf, specifically in the neighbourhoods of Marzahn-North, Hellersdorf-North and Hellersdorf-East.

In the late 1970s, the areas that are now part of Marzahn-Hellersdorf were transformed from villages on Berlin's outskirts to a major housing development. Young, well educated, families - mainly from inner-city Berlin - were relocated to these new apartment blocks. Today, the population of the district falls into two distinct groups: those in their late-fifties, who came to the area when it was initially developed, and those in their mid-twenties, including both the children of the older group and new arrivals. While the overall percentage of residents with immigrant backgrounds in the district is low, almost three-quarters of recent arrivals have an immigrant background. There is a division between the north and south sections, with the population tending to be older, more middle-class and likely to be of German ancestry in the southern neighbourhoods. The district has a good social and educational mix resulting from the initial settlement patterns, although in the northern part of the district a flow of low-income people from parts of inner-city Berlin exposed to intense gentrification processes are shifting this balance.

The residents of Marzahn-Hellersdorf identify as Berliners, but also shape their identity in contrast to the perceived urban problems of the city. More importantly, local sense of identity is also shaped in reaction against the outside, media imposed, view that presents Marzahn-Hellersdorf through a negative stereotype of a xenophobic, East German ghetto. On the other hand, some stakeholders claimed that many people living in the south disassociate themselves from Marzahn-Hellersdorf, preferring to identify with their, less publically stigmatized, neighbourhoods rather than the district at large. The older generation tends to perceive a difference between themselves and those who have arrived in the past 20 years; the hardships of the unification period bind this older group together. Many members of the older generation expressed a degree of nostalgia for the German Democratic Republic (GDR), lamenting the loss of economic security and the disappearance of close social relations that were cultivated under the previous regime. In this way they offer an indirect criticism of current politics and express their frustration over being forgotten by, and detached from, present-day power structures. While some residents connected the sudden arrival of immigrants in the 1990s with persistent high unemployment and associated social problems, younger people see their environment in much less ethnicized terms, resulting from their own multicultural experience in schools and playgrounds.

The educational system has undergone several phases of reform and has developed a greater openness to change. There are positive legacies from both the GDR and West Germany: almost all children attend pre-school and day-care nurseries, which support strongly developed intercultural and inclusive education. While dropout rates are not published, half of students finish school with a certificate that allows access to university. The past dramatic population decline in Marzahn-Hellersdorf led to the closure and even removal of infrastructure, such as schools and youth clubs. Current demographic projections, however, suggest that the number of children is on the rise and the lack of infrastructure is becoming an issue. Teachers and local inhabitants indicated that the bad reputation of the district affects the recruitment possibilities and leads to a high turnover of teachers in the area.

Cycles of unemployment have affected Marzahn-Hellersdorf, with various programmes and broader economic trends playing out differently in various neighbourhoods. There were references to a “lost generation” of people between the ages of 40 and 60 who, after the unification, never found a way back into the labour market, in turn leaving the next generation without role models. Several stakeholders mentioned that the high levels of unemployment in the north, along with the serious unintended negative consequences of the so-called Harz IV welfare reforms, are leading to a creation of a culture of welfare dependence as children grow up in households without a working parent. Young people reported seeing little potential for work in Marzahn-Hellersdorf, and are seeking work elsewhere. The developing fields of health and the Clean Tech Park project will need an educated labour force, but there is a disconnect between existing education structures and the needs of the new economy. The Mayor's Office has developed a strategy to better synchronise training with these new fields, supporting apprenticeships and creating stronger ties between schools and industry.

The differences in housing typify the divide between the northern and southern sections of the district. To the north of the interstate road B5, the area is dominated by large apartment blocks, while single-family homes predominate to the south. In general, residents of Marzahn-Hellersdorf are quite satisfied with the quality of life in their area: green spaces, access to transportation and renovation programmes were all considered good aspects of life in the neighbourhoods. However, certain urban amenities such as cafés, galleries and theatres are more limited, and the schools and other facilities that were demolished in regeneration initiatives of the past decade are also missed. Rents are on the rise due to decreasing vacancy rates resulting from pressures of inner city gentrification. If this trend continues, it has the potential of endangering the social cohesion of the area through displacement of the most economically vulnerable members of the local population and through a decrease of social involvement from local building associations.

The discussion of health care was dominated by comparisons between the old socialist system and the more complex, market-driven present-day system. Stakeholders reported particular concern about low-income children with developmental delays

and other health conditions clustered in the northern neighbourhoods. It appears that the prevalence of serious health issues in these northern, socially endangered, neighborhoods is closely related to the socio-economic conditions in which the above mentioned children are growing up. In addition, parental smoking and excessive watching of television were also mentioned as risk factors for children in the area. In terms of their health, older residents focused on the problems related to ageing and the lack of specialised care for older people. Long waiting times and hurried, impersonal appointments were two of the concerns most often voiced by the participants.

There was an apparent disconnect between the pronounced fear of crime and actual crime rates, which are relatively low. Some participants reported that certain types of criminal activity are linked with specific ethnic groups, a belief that has been exploited by right-wing groups to generalise about the effects foreigners have on crime rates in the district. Residents have high expectations of the police, but many issues that come up do not fall within the authority of the police department. According to the police spokesperson, in trying to meet these needs, the role of the police has shifted from policing towards social engineering. He argued that this goes beyond the training or responsibility of the police personnel. More successful initiatives include the revival of local consultation hours, where residents can discuss concerns with a police officer, and coordination efforts among diverse stakeholders, including prevention officers, social workers, the neighbourhood management, private and public associations and schools.

Voter turnout in Marzahn-Hellersdorf is usually lower than Berlin's average. While the north of the district traditionally votes for political parties on the left, there are areas with high electoral support for the right-wing nationalists. Not incidentally, those are also areas with most wide-spread socio-economic problems and the lowest voter turnout in the district. A wide range of participation opportunities do exist in the district, but many people do not take part, possibly due to financial obstacles. There has been more active participation in city planning; in particular, whole housing blocks have been renovated instead of demolished, a change driven by residents. A range of measures have been proposed to encourage people to be more active in public life, including small-scale, limited-time initiatives, measures focused on social milieus instead of ethnic groups, finding ways of direct communication with people, learning from marketing approaches and identifying the common interests of the local people.

Despite numerous recent improvements, Marzahn-Hellersdorf still evokes negative associations among people living outside the district, based on impressions created by the western media in the 1990s. In addition, the district is rarely reported on in-depth. On the other hand, there have also been fewer negative and stereotypical reports in recent years. There are differences in the way generations use the media: younger people rely far more on the internet and are moving away from traditional news outlets such as TV, radio and newspapers. Moreover, older people are more critical about

negative stereotypical reports, while younger people and those who have moved to the district more recently are more prone to uncritically accept the prevalent media perspective on Marzahn-Hellersdorf.

The unification of Germany and the profound changes that the transition from socialism brought still loom large over Marzahn-Hellersdorf, which, in many ways, was a district on the losing side of that historical process. Those who lived through those years in the district feel very much shaped by the experience, and set apart from those who were not present. Other divisions, such as those between the northern and southern parts of the area, are also significant. Nevertheless, there is a strong overall sense of belonging, and even as the area continues to change and people continue to move around, local identity remains strong, ensuring a degree of social cohesion necessary for the district to successfully face possible future challenges.

1

INTRODUCTION

This report is part of an international comparative project on Europe's white working-class communities being undertaken by the Open Society Foundations' At Home in Europe project.¹ The At Home in Europe project explores the political, social, cultural and economic participation of vulnerable communities in Western Europe via engagement with residents, civil society and policymakers. Through policy-oriented research and advocacy, the initiative also examines modes of participation and life experiences of marginalised communities living in six cities: Aarhus, Amsterdam, Berlin, Lyon, Manchester and Stockholm. The overarching goals of the project are to identify barriers to full participation and equal treatment, to better understand the factors leading to marginalisation, and, last but not least, to contribute to developing effective policy for engaging with and addressing the needs of the above-mentioned communities at the local level.

While initially the At Home in Europe project focused on experiences of minority communities in the six above-mentioned European cities, the follow-up project, Europe's White Working Class Communities extends the focus to include members of the marginalised majority populations and communities living in these six cities. For the purposes of this project, the term "marginalised majority populations and communities" is used to denote those who identify themselves as belonging to the ethnic and religious majority populations in areas which experience high levels of social, political, and economic exclusion.

The research aims to capture the ways in which municipal and national authorities address the challenges relating to social inclusion and cohesion in European cities, in particular growing social, political and economic tensions. It also seeks to highlight policies and initiatives which have or have not contributed to the cohesion and inclusion, both political and social, of majority communities in the selected cities. At the same time, the project aims to explore factors that have impeded certain local level initiatives to succeed.

This is qualitative research that has gathered data from interviews and focus group discussions with residents and key stakeholders living in a particular local area in the city.

This report focuses on the northern parts of the former East Berlin district of Marzahn-Hellersdorf, especially the neighbourhoods of Marzahn-North, Hellersdorf-North and Hellersdorf-East. The report attempts to answer the following questions. How is the district ensuring social cohesion, which includes and addresses the needs of disadvantaged majority communities? What are the challenges that affect social cohesion and the inclusion of disadvantaged majority communities in northern parts of Marzahn-Hellersdorf? How are cohesion and inclusion defined? How do participants feel about their neighbourhoods and city? What are the key concerns and

¹ For more information see <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/projects/home-europe> (accessed 11 July 2014).

priorities of research participants in Marzahn-Hellersdorf and do they overlap with the concerns of minorities in the area and with the priorities of the local policymakers?

The research attempted to answer these questions through 20 semi-structured interviews with local public officials, opinion-makers and stakeholders from various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working on social inclusion and cohesion, 12 focus groups with local residents who self-identified as members of the majority population, and an extensive literature review of reports, statistical data and other writings dealing with the topics. Given the limitations of the chosen methodology, the research is not intended to be a representative study. In fact, the applied scientific methodology can be better understood as an open, qualitative heuristic approach, which aims at discovering new aspects in the field rather than testing existing hypotheses.²

There are four main reasons for the decision to undertake the research in Berlin in the northern parts of Marzahn-Hellersdorf.

1. In terms of socio-economic conditions (unemployment, social transfers, types of employment), the northern parts of the district can be seen as an example of an economically stagnating East Berlin working-class neighbourhood. Moreover, the rapid gentrification of the nearby districts such as Neukölln, Friedrichshain, Lichtenberg and Prenzlauerberg is pushing lower-income people to the edges of Berlin, particularly to socio-economically weaker areas such as the ones included in this study. This dynamic provides the conditions for the continual development of mechanisms of socio-economic exclusion that this research attempts to examine and address.
2. The district in question has one of the highest percentages of ethnic Germans among all Berlin's districts, and is thus an appropriate site for research involving majority populations. Furthermore, with a notable exception of a large Vietnamese community, all of the largest immigrant groups are white and could in theory pass as members of the majority population. In fact, "Russian-Germans" (*Aussiedler*) from the former Soviet Union are also ethnically German and have mostly naturalized, but are still often seen as Russians by the non-immigrant population, a situation which complicates the notion of a majority community and brings about interesting results in terms of belonging and participation.
3. The northern areas of Marzahn-Hellersdorf contain a number of voting stations with very low voter turnout and high support for the extreme right-wing German National Party (NPD). Thus, in the Berlin elections 2011 the NPD received as much as 10 percent of the votes in certain areas of Marzahn-Hellersdorf, a

2 Gerhard Kleining & Harald Witt "The Qualitative Heuristic Approach: A Methodology for Discovery in Psychology and the Social Sciences. Rediscovering the Method of Introspection as an Example" (2000), at <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1123/2495> (accessed 23 March 2014).

number much higher than the 1.5 percent that the party received in Berlin as a whole.

4. Last but not least, the district was also selected due to its archetypical role in the public discourse in Berlin and in Germany as a whole. Since unification the large housing estates of Marzahn and Hellersdorf that this research focuses on have often been presented in newspapers and by politicians as an impoverished area of uninhabitable blocks of flats plagued by a number of socio-economic problems such as welfare dependency, crime and rising support for various neo-Nazi organizations (among other anti-democratic tendencies). In this way, the district as a whole has been often disproportionately marginalised in the public discourse, a situation that is bound to lead to other, more concrete, forms of marginalisation and social exclusion.

This report consists of 12 chapters. The next chapter examines the basic demographic composition of the research area, presenting the age and ethnic structure of the population and discussing the quite significant differences in the district's socio-economic composition. Chapter 3 presents the policy context of Marzahn-Hellersdorf, focusing mostly on its administrative structures and various programmes and organisations dealing with topics that this report is concerned with. Chapters 4–11 are thematic chapters dealing with particular issues (identity and belonging, education, employment, housing, health and social protection, policing and security, participation and citizenship, and the role of the media) where mechanisms of socio-economic and political exclusion can be made visible and addressed by future policy interventions. The final chapter presents the main conclusions of the investigation and discusses some of the overarching themes that have been uncovered during the research and which influence the processes of social, economic and political inclusion in the northern parts of Marzahn-Hellersdorf. The annexes include a bibliography and information about the focus groups and the stakeholders interviewed. In the report itself the contributions of all the participants are anonymous, in order to ensure confidentiality and to facilitate conditions for the unrestrained engagement of people we interviewed.

2

POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Given the short life-span of the large housing settlement (*Grossbausiedlung*) under consideration, the best way to present the current socio-demographic composition of Marzahn-Hellersdorf is to first briefly discuss the historical development of the area in the last 40 years, since the official inception of Marzahn and a couple of years later Hellersdorf as new districts (*Bezirk*) of East Berlin. In this way the present chapter will show how past developments influenced the present-day demographic and socio-economic situation of Berlin's youngest district.

2.1 | INITIAL SETTLEMENT

Until 1977 the area that is today Marzahn-Hellersdorf was composed of five townships or villages (Marzahn, Biesdorf, Hellersdorf, Kaulsdorf and Ahrensfelde) positioned on the outskirts of East Berlin, with a combined population of about 40,000.³ Despite being officially integrated into Greater Berlin in the 1920s, these five towns maintained their own separate local identities throughout the 20th century. However, as a result of attempts by the East German government to address housing shortages in the GDR, and in Berlin in particular, and to create an example of the so-called real existing socialism, the area was in the late 1970s transformed into one of Europe's biggest housing projects, which by 1990 housed about 290,000 people.⁴ As this chapter shows, this development has decisively shaped the socio-economic character of the area under investigation and brought the previously disparate villages under a common jurisdiction of the newly constructed districts of Marzahn and Hellersdorf.

The additional 250,000 people who settled in the area between 1977 and 1990 were mostly selected from a large number of young families with children who lived in rapidly decaying housing estates of East Berlin's inner-city districts such as Prenzlauerberg, Friedrichshain and Lichtenberg. However, much of the best-quality housing in the quite uniformly built new construction area (*Neubausiedlung*) was reserved for officials and bureaucrats of the vast GDR state apparatus, mostly members of the police, secret services, border patrols and other privileged members of the East German socialist society⁵ coming from regions such as Saxony, Silesia and Pomerania. According to a stakeholder who moved to the area in the early 1980s, these arrangements created a certain amount of tension and animosity between the young Berliner families and those whom they saw as privileged non-Berliners.⁶ However, most of the residents interviewed for this research talked about this period as a

3 Eli Rubin, "Concrete Utopia: Everyday Life and Socialism in Berlin-Marzahn", *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* Supplement 7 (2011), pp. 29–45 (hereafter, Rubin, "Concrete Utopia").

4 Bezirksamt Marzahn-Hellersdorf, "Demographische Situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf 2012, Beiträge zur integrierten Gesundheits- und Sozialberichterstattung" (Demographic situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf, contribution to the integrated health and social report). Marzahn-Hellersdorf: Bezirksamt Marzahn-Hellersdorf, 2013 (hereafter, District Office, Marzahn-Hellersdorf, "Demographische Situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf 2012").

5 Rubin, "Concrete Utopia".

6 Stakeholder interview with a local NGO activist, 17 April 2013.

time when people who settled in Marzahn and Hellersdorf united in their common struggles to find their place in the not yet finished concrete jungle which radically differed from the areas they had moved from.⁷ Moreover, the majority of people interviewed also emphasised that Marzahn-Hellersdorf was never an exclusively working-class district, but was composed of people from very different socio-economic strata of East German society. In interviews and focus group discussions this idea was most commonly illustrated by interviewees offering numerous examples of how, at that time, workers lived right next to professors and other members of the more privileged classes.

Nevertheless, while socio-economically the area under consideration was thoroughly mixed from its inception, this cannot be said for its ethnic composition. Marzahn-Hellersdorf (as well as the GDR as a whole) was ethnically extremely homogenous and populated predominantly by white people of German descent. The only exception to this rule was a small number of contract workers from countries such as Poland, Hungary, Algeria, Cuba, Mozambique, the Soviet Union, China and last but—in regard to Marzahn-Hellersdorf—not least, Vietnam. While never composing a noticeable share of the total population of the case study area, contract workers from Vietnam and other “friendly” socialist states of the developing world have brought about a certain degree of ethnic diversity to an otherwise very homogenous German population living in Marzahn-Hellersdorf. During the last 10 years of the GDR’s existence, these contract workers were carefully segregated from the majority population. They were housed in special workers’ living quarters (*Wohnheime*) and were legally prevented from staying permanently in East Germany.⁸ However, many of the Vietnamese contract workers stayed in Berlin after the unification and have thus significantly added to the ethnic diversity of the research area.

2.2 | MARZAHN-HELLERSDORF DURING THE TRANSITION

As the construction of Marzahn and Hellersdorf was nearing its final stages, the collapse of the Berlin Wall and subsequent unification of East and West Germany (a period which Germans call *die Wende*, the transition or turnaround) brought about a series of radical transformations, which profoundly influenced the socio-economic and demographic composition of the area. One of the most significant developments in that period was the dissolution of the East German heavy industries and their economic infrastructure.⁹ In Marzahn-Hellersdorf many people lost their jobs, which, due to persistently high unemployment in Berlin, they seldom regained. Furthermore,

7 For more on this, see Chapter 4.

8 Eva Kolinsky, “Former Contract Workers from Vietnam in Eastern Germany between State Socialism and Democracy 1989-1993”, *German as Foreign Language*, 3 (2004), pp. 83–101.

9 See Chapter 6.

the image of (especially) Marzahn in the newly unified Germany quickly deteriorated.¹⁰ Western media presented the area as the worst example of misguided East German housing policies embodied in the large housing blocks built out of prefabricated concrete slabs (*Plattenbauten*). These housing forms quickly became the perfect repository for projections of various prejudices that West Germans held against their co-nationals from the East. As one of the stakeholders¹¹ summarised, Western media quickly established a picture of Marzahn-Hellersdorf as an area of decaying grey buildings populated by grey people (*Graue Menschen in grauen Platten*). In addition, episodes of right-wing violence, mostly directed against Vietnamese workers who attempted to remain in Berlin after the unification, added to the worsening image of the area, which, in the eyes of the outsiders, soon became a symbol for the resurrection of virulent East German xenophobia, which was until 1990 held in check by the ideology and strong state apparatus of the GDR.

Combined, these developments contributed to the rapid socio-economic decline of Marzahn and Hellersdorf in the mid-1990s. Due to high unemployment and the newly obtained freedom to search for a better life in the West (that is, Berlin and western Germany), many of the better-educated and/or prosperous people left the area. Thus, as one of the stakeholders noted, about 20 percent of the people living in the housing blocks of Marzahn-Hellersdorf left the district at that time. While the situation was not that extreme in the southern areas of the district (Kaulsdorf, Biesdorf, Mahlsdorf), where people lived in single-family houses which they often owned, these areas also experienced decreases in the total number of inhabitants throughout the 1990s.¹² This outward movement of people, combined with a very small number of people settling in the area (beside the bad reputation that Marzahn had at that time, one has to remember that inner-city Berlin had an abundance of cheap housing in 1990s – a fact that also precluded Berliners from moving to the outskirts), resulted in a decrease in the population of the area by 50,000 inhabitants in just 10 years.¹³ As many stakeholders reported, a large number of these people left to go to the outlying areas in neighbouring Brandenburg, where they could escape the urban problems facing Marzahn by buying their own house, or by moving to the western parts of the city.

Many of the apartments that were emptied during that period were subsequently rented by the Vietnamese contract workers (often reclassified as asylum seekers) who had managed to stay in Berlin and were pushed out of their previous communal housing and by refugees coming from the war-torn areas of former Yugoslavia. At about the same time a new important immigrant group arrived in Marzahn-Hellersdorf: the Russian-Germans “returning” from the former Soviet Union and its successor states under the generous provisions of German citizenship law, which

10 See Chapter 11.

11 Stakeholder interview with local administration, 18 April 2013.

12 Stakeholder interview with a journalist, 17 April 2013.

13 District Office, Marzahn-Hellersdorf, “Demographische Situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf 2012”.

permitted easy naturalisation for them. The housing market fluctuations, combined with the desire of these immigrant groups to maintain social connections with their own ethnic groups, created conditions for the process of the (self) segregation of Vietnamese and Russian-Germans in what the established German population saw as ethnic ghettos, giving impetus for more of the long-term residents to move out of such areas (mostly North Marzahn and North Hellersdorf).¹⁴

2.3 | MARZAHN-HELLERSDORF TODAY

In the last 15 years the city and district governments, in collaboration with the local housing companies (*Wohnbaugesellschaften*), have made many important steps towards improving the living conditions in the area. As Chapter 7 on housing shows, they especially focused on renovating the housing stock, which they hoped would curb the exodus of people out of Marzahn-Hellersdorf. These attempts, along with the changed housing situation in the inner city where rent prices have been rising in the last ten years, created conditions for the latest demographic transition that the district went through in the last five years. As a representative of the district's integration office explained, since 2008 statistical data indicate an increasing number of mostly poor young families of migrant origin (predominantly Polish, Romanian and people from other European Union (EU) countries, but also Turkish and Arab families) searching for affordable housing in the northern parts of the district.¹⁵ If one combines the fact that in the last five years more people (especially young people with children) are moving into the district than leaving it, with the increasing number of children born in the area (resulting from children of first settlers now starting their own families), one understands why the population of Marzahn-Hellersdorf is again on the rise, even though only slightly.

2.3.1 | AGE STRUCTURE

The current demographic and socio-economic situation in the district is conditioned by the area's historical development. In comparison with other more established districts of Berlin, Marzahn-Hellersdorf has a very pronounced double peak age distribution.¹⁶ The first peak consists of a large number of people who are between 50 and 60 years old. This group is mostly composed of the initial settlers, who came to the area in their mid-twenties and have, in last 30 years, grown older with the district. The second peak in the age distribution of the district consists of inhabitants

14 Stakeholder interview with a local activist, 8 May 2013. See also Buttler, Harald, Interview, "20 Jahren Integrationsbeirat Marzahn-Hellersdorf" (20 Years of Integration Office Marzahn-Hellersdorf). Marzahn-Hellersdorf: Bezirksamt Marzahn-Hellersdorf, 2011, p. 9 (hereafter, Buttler, Interview).

15 Stakeholder interview with district administration, 14 February 2013.

16 District Office, Marzahn-Hellersdorf, "Demographische Situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf 2012".

between the ages of 20 and 30. They are mostly children of the initial settlers along with the new young families settling in Marzahn-Hellersdorf since 2008.¹⁷ The recent settlement of the area also explains why Marzahn-Hellersdorf is the fastest-ageing district of Berlin: every year the average age of the area increases by about nine months.¹⁸ Thus, while the district started out with the youngest profile of all Berlin's districts in the 1980s it is now, with an average age of 43.1 years, already above Berlin's average of 42.8 years. Moreover, local government demographic projections suggest that the number of people over 75 years of age will double until 2030, while the number of people over 85 years of age will triple,¹⁹ numbers that can only be understood in the context of this formerly extremely young district, which until recently contained a very small number of seniors. In terms of the geographical distribution of the different age groups, one can note that Hellersdorf-North, Marzahn-North and Hellersdorf-East (areas troubled by some of the worst socio-economic problems in the district) are the areas where most young people live, while older people more often reside in Marzahn-South, Marzahn-Central and Biesdorf. The differences between the areas are quite pronounced: while the average age of inhabitants of Hellersdorf-North is 37.9 years, the average age of people living in Marzahn-South is about 46.6 years.²⁰

2.3.2 | ETHNIC COMPOSITION

History has also affected the present-day ethnic composition of the district. Thus, according to the Statistical Office for Berlin-Brandenburg, at the beginning of 2013 there were 30,828 people with migration backgrounds (*Migrationshintergrund*) living in Marzahn-Hellersdorf. Out of these, 11,519 people were foreign nationals. Looking at their proportion within the total population of the area, we see that, in comparison with Berlin as a whole, Marzahn-Hellersdorf has relatively few immigrants living in the area. Thus, while in Berlin the average proportion of people with migration backgrounds is about 27 percent, it is only about 12.5 percent in Marzahn-Hellersdorf.²¹ Looking at people who do not possess German citizenship, the differences between Berlin (14.5 percent) and Marzahn-Hellersdorf (4.7 percent) is even more pronounced due to the high number of Russian-Germans (the *Aussiedler* and *Spätaussiedler*), who gained German citizenship based on their right to automatic naturalisation at the time of their arrival in Germany. In terms of the ethnic composition of inhabitants with migration backgrounds, slightly more than half (53 percent) come from the successor states of the former Soviet Union, while 21 percent come from the EU member states (most notably Poland and Bulgaria). Given the historical reasons discussed above, people of Vietnamese descent also compose an important proportion (10 percent) of inhabitants with immigrant descent. The

17 Stakeholder interview with local administration, 18 April 2013.

18 District Office, Marzahn-Hellersdorf, "Demographische Situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf 2012".

19 District Office, Marzahn-Hellersdorf, "Demographische Situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf 2012".

20 District Office, Marzahn-Hellersdorf, "Demographische Situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf 2012".

21 Berlin-Brandenburg Statistics Office, at www.statistik-berlin-brandenburg.de (accessed 12 September 2013).

remaining 16 percent consists of people from about 110 countries, among which only people coming from ex-Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Turkey compose more than 2 percent of the total population with migration backgrounds (or about 700–1,000 people each).²²

TABLE 1. ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF MARZAHN-HELLERSDORF, 2012

	Population	% of total population
Germany	221,051	87.6
Former Soviet Union	16,310	6.4
Vietnam	3,232	1.3
Poland	2,657	1.0
Former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia	1,088	0.4
Former Czechoslovakia	739	0.3
Turkey	743	0.3
Bulgaria	473	0.2
Romania	385	0.2

Source: District Office, Marzahn-Hellersdorf, "Demographische Situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf 2012"

An examination of the geographical distribution of people with migration backgrounds in Marzahn-Hellersdorf reveals significant differences among the areas of the district. As in many other socio-economic indicators, there is a noticeable gap between the area of large housing-block estates to the north of the interstate road B5 and the single-family housing areas to its south. In fact, the above-mentioned road seems to divide the district into two socio-demographically distinct parts. Thus, about 57 percent of all people with immigrant backgrounds live in Marzahn, 27 percent in Hellersdorf and only 16 percent in the single-family housing areas of the south (Mahlsdorf, Biesdorf, Kaulsdorf).²³ There are also significant differences in the distribution of people with migration backgrounds at the sub-district level. Thus, in Marzahn-North about 21 percent of the total population has a migration background, while in Mahlsdorf the proportion is only about 5 percent. Moreover, the distribution at the neighbourhood level shows that Hellersdorf-Central has the largest share of people with immigrant backgrounds at 38 percent.²⁴ More than half of people aged under 18 living in Hellersdorf-Central have immigrant backgrounds, a percentage approaching that of more established immigrant districts such as Kreuzberg and Neukölln. Central

²² District Office, Marzahn-Hellersdorf, "Demographische Situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf 2012".

²³ District Office, Marzahn-Hellersdorf, "Demographische Situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf 2012".

²⁴ District Office, Marzahn-Hellersdorf, "Demographische Situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf 2012".

Hellersdorf is also one of the neighbourhoods with the highest unemployment figures and the highest percentage of people receiving social welfare in the whole district.²⁵

Out of 2,600 inhabitants that Marzahn-Hellersdorf added to its total population in 2012, 1,900 (73 percent) had migration backgrounds, while 1,100 (42 percent) were foreign nationals. The largest increase in numbers among foreign nationals were those of Poles (245 new inhabitants) and Romanians (120 new inhabitants).²⁶ Again, most of these people now live in the areas north of the interstate road B5. These neighbourhoods (especially Marzahn-North, Hellersdorf-Central and Springpfuhl) are also where most of the people of Vietnamese and Russian-German descent live.

2.3.3 | CLASS STRUCTURE

In public discussions in Berlin, Marzahn-Hellersdorf is often presented as a typical example of a stagnating East Berlin working-class district. However, this is a serious oversimplification that does not account for many internal differences within the district. For example, one can divide the area into the northern and southern part, with the interstate road B5 functioning as a dividing line.²⁷ Below that road one mostly finds single-family housing where more established middle and even upper-middle class people live and where socio-economic indicators are relatively good in comparison to Berlin as a whole. On the other hand, certain parts of the large (6–22 floor) block housing estates to the north of the interstate road B5 are facing serious socio-economic problems. According to a Youth Welfare Office (*Jugendamt*) representative, in Marzahn-North, Hellersdorf-North and Hellersdorf-East statistical data reveal large numbers of people living on social transfers (Hartz IV²⁸), a substantial number of children living below the poverty line and many single-parent families struggling to survive.²⁹ To illustrate the radical difference between different parts of the district, one only needs to compare the unemployment figures of Marzahn-North with 42 percent unemployment and Mahlsdorf with 4 percent unemployment.³⁰ Most of the other socio-economic and even psycho-motional data follow this division. Given such extreme differences in the socio-economic situations of the borough (along with other demographic, social and political differences), some people interviewed for this report even stated that Marzahn-Hellersdorf does not really exist.³¹ Instead, the district

25 District Office, Marzahn-Hellersdorf, "Zur sozialen Situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf 2009" (On the Social Situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf). Marzahn-Hellersdorf: Bezirksamt Marzahn-Hellersdorf, 2010. (hereafter, District Office, Marzahn-Hellersdorf, "Zur sozialen Situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf 2009").

26 District Office, Marzahn-Hellersdorf, "Zur sozialen Situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf 2009".

27 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local NGO, 2 May 2013.

28 Since the welfare reforms implemented by the SPD and the Green Party government starting in 2001, most Germans use the surname of the main architect of the reforms Peter Hartz as a synonym for the long-term unemployment benefits (*Arbeitslosengeld*) and/or welfare benefits (*Sozialhilfe*), which the reform combined into one.

29 Stakeholder interview with local youth service, 14 April 2013.

30 District Office, Marzahn-Hellersdorf, "Zur sozialen Situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf 2009".

31 Stakeholder interview with local youth service, 14 April 2013.

needs to be seen as composed of two separate parts, which are roughly divided by the interstate road B5, but united by a single overarching bureaucratic structure. This is also one of the reasons why this research mostly focuses on the areas to the north of the road where most of the marginalised majority population of the district lives. However, even this area is not homogenous in terms of social structures and should be differentiated into areas with a stable population structure (such as Marzahn-South, Marzahn-Central and Old-Marzahn), and problematic areas, with higher population fluctuations that have in the last 10 years been settled mostly by socially disadvantaged people pushed out of the inner city.³²

3

POLICY CONTEXT

Before discussing how the administrative structure of Marzahn-Hellersdorf influences efforts of various stakeholders to ensure better inclusion of marginalised majority populations in the district, it is important to understand the way the German federal political system works and how it affects local politics in Berlin and in Marzahn-Hellersdorf. Therefore, this chapter starts with a brief discussion of Berlin's position in the German political system and the way local government is structured in a city which is at the same time the capital of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) as well as one of the 16 federal states (*Bundesländer*). The chapter continues with a brief overview of the numerous administrative changes that have happened in Marzahn-Hellersdorf in the last decades, followed by a discussion of the current administrative arrangements in the district. The chapter examines how the district is spatially subdivided into smaller sub-municipal units and how this division reflects the socio-demographic development of the area in the past decades. More importantly, the chapter details the most important district offices and stakeholders that are involved with social inclusion in education, employment, housing, health and policing. The chapter concludes with an examination of various federal, state and local programmes that are being implemented in the district and which attempt to further the processes of social inclusion of marginalised majority populations in Marzahn-Hellersdorf.

3.1 | LEVELS OF GOVERNANCE IN GERMANY

Germany is officially divided into three administrative levels: federation (*Bund*), federal states (*Bundesländer*) and communes (*Gemeinden*). On the federal level, the government is composed of 12 ministries, the Office of the Federal President (*Bundespräsidialamt*), the Office of the Federal Chancellor (*Bundeskanzleramt*), the Federal Public Relations Office (*Bundespresseamt*) and the Federal Court of Auditors (*Bundesrechnungshof*). On the legislative side, federal laws are usually proposed by the federal parliament (*Bundestag*), while the Federal Council (*Bundesrat*) is concerned with laws relevant to the federal states.

At the state level, the administrative arrangements of most of the federal states mirror the federal government's structure at the regional level. Thus, in Berlin, the local government is composed of an elected mayor (since 2001 this position has been held by the Social Democratic Party (SPD) member Klaus Wowereit), and eight senators responsible for different ministries (*Senatsverwaltungen*). Out of these ministries, the Ministry for Social Affairs and Health (led by Mario Czaja of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU)), the Ministry for Employment, Integration and Women (led by Dilek Kolat of the SPD) and the Ministry for Education Youth and Science (led by Sandra Scheeres of the SPD) are the most directly involved with the questions of socio-economic and political inclusion that this report is examining. In addition, paralleling the German federal parliament, there is the state parliament (*Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin*), which is composed of elected members of the local political parties. Moreover,

each federal state also has its own court of auditors (*Landesrechnungshof*), which is independent from other branches of local government, and the Ministry for Federal Affairs, which deals with issues related to federal governance.

Below the state level, there is a system of communes. They form an independent political and administrative level, but their relationship to the federal state depends on the provisions of the constitution of the particular federal state. Due to Berlin's constitutional arrangements, the various districts composing the city do not form separate communes and thus the responsibility for governing is complexly divided between the city and the districts. Nevertheless, districts do have their own local government (*Bezirksamt*) composed of the district mayor and four members of the district council (*Bezirksstadtrat*), each responsible for a specific area such as social and health services, economy, sport and education, culture and others. Last but not least, each district also contains its own district assembly (*Bezirksverordnetenversammlung*), which is composed of local representatives in charge of the local legislature and supervising the work of the district council.

3.2 | ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF MARZAHN-HELLERSDORF

In Marzahn-Hellersdorf the current district mayor, Stefan Komoß (SPD³³), is also in charge of the Department of Education and Sport. There are four other district council members: Dagmar Pohle, (Left Party³⁴) who is responsible for social affairs and health,³⁵ Christian Gräff (CDU³⁶), responsible for economy and city development, Juliane Witt (Left Party), in charge of youth services and culture, and Stephan Richter (SPD), responsible for the Office of Citizens' Affairs and Facility Management.³⁷ The district council was selected in accordance with the proportion of votes that each locally represented political party received in the last local elections for the district assembly in 2011. As the political affiliations of the district council members testify, the district assembly is traditionally dominated by members of the political parties from

33 Social Democratic Party of Germany, SPD, one of the two leading parties in Germany.

34 The Left Party is a merger of the leftovers of the former Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED, the former leading party in the GDR), which after the transition turned into the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) and left Social Democrats who left the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) after the reform of the social welfare system starting in 2001 ("Agenda 2010") under the first red-green government (1998–2005).

35 Ms Pohle is also acting as the current vice-mayor of Marzahn-Hellersdorf.

36 Christian Democratic Union, CDU, conservatives, one of the two leading parties in Germany.

37 See District of Marzahn-Hellersdorf at www.berlin.de/ba-marzahn-hellersdorf (accessed 2 February 2014).

the left of the political spectrum (Left Party and SPD), who received the large majority of votes in last local elections.³⁸

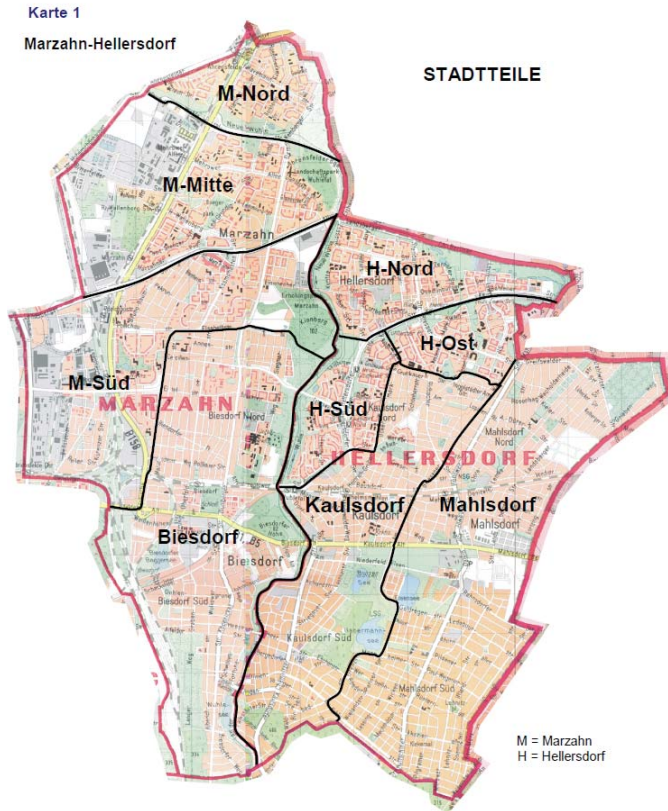
As a result of the recent unification of Marzahn and Hellersdorf districts, which occurred in 2001 as a part of the Berlin-wide administrative restructuring, the new district of Marzahn-Hellersdorf is still in a process of administrative reorganisation and consolidation. One of the most important parts of this process was the merger of the local assemblies, district councils and other governmental structures. In addition, as Figure 1 shows, in 2006 the district was also subdivided into new district parts (*Stadtteile*) and social spaces (*Sozialräume*). Thus, in terms of local administration, the northern part of the district (*Grosssiedlung*) is divided into six district parts: Marzahn-North, Marzahn-Central, Marzahn-South, Hellersdorf-North, Hellersdorf-East and Hellersdorf-South, while the southern part of the district (*Siedlungsgebiet*) is composed of Biesdorf, Kaulsdorf and Mahlsdorf.³⁹ The division of the district into two separate parts to the north and south of the interstate road B5 is a functional division, crosscutting the old district boundaries of Marzahn and Hellersdorf, but taking into account the needs of two very different areas (large housing block settlements to the north and single-family housing settlements to the south) that compose the newly unified district. Marzahn-Hellersdorf is further divided into 33 social spaces, which are something like the sociological category of neighbourhoods. Their boundaries have been determined based on the socio-economic conditions and spatial and architectural features of each neighbourhood, but also according to people's own perceptions of where neighbourhood boundaries lie.⁴⁰

38 In 2011 district assembly elections, the Left Party received 31.2 percent of the votes, the SPD 26.4 percent and the CDU 17.3 percent. In addition, the left-leaning Pirate party received 8.6 percent of the vote and the Green Party 5.8 percent. On the other side of political spectrum the extreme-right NPD received 4.6 percent of the vote. See www.wahlen-berlin.de (accessed 4 April 2014). See also Chapter 10.

39 Marzahn-Hellersdorf District Office, "Strukturierung der sozialräumlichen Planungsgrundlagen des Bezirks Marzahn-Hellersdorf" (Structuring of socio-spatial planning in the district of Marzahn-Hellersdorf). Marzahn-Hellersdorf: Bezirksamt Marzahn-Hellersdorf, 2006 (thereafter: District Office, "Strukturierung").

40 District Office, "Strukturierung".

FIGURE 1. ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICTS (STADTTEILE) OF MARZAHN-HELLERSDORF



Source: Marzahn-Hellersdorf District Office

(Translation: Name of the area + Nord = North, Süd=South, Ost=East, Mitte=Center)

3.3 | PROGRAMMES AND ORGANISATIONS FOCUSING ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC INCLUSION

Beyond the basic administrative structures of the district, there are also a number of government-sponsored programmes that are intended to stimulate socio-economic development of specific parts of the district and are thus important for the analysis of the processes related to the inclusion of marginalised communities in the research area. Reflecting the socio-economic characteristics of the district, most of these programmes have been implemented in the northern part of Marzahn-Hellersdorf where socio-economic marginalisation is most apparent. The most important of these projects was a federal housing reconstruction programme called Urban Reconstruction East (*Stadtumbau Ost*), which was initiated in 2002 and focused on providing urban planning solutions for revitalising the former East German cities that

had been stagnating or were being vacated throughout the 1990s.⁴¹ While the main project, which primarily aimed at renovating housing stock in the northern parts of the district, ended in 2008, a follow-up programme continues to develop infrastructure and provide structural solutions to combat the challenges that the demographic changes in the district will bring in the future.

Second, areas of Marzahn Northwest, Mehrower Allee and Hellersdorfer Promenade have been included since 1999 in the federal programme Social City (*Soziale Stadt*), which promotes social cohesion and social participation in neighbourhoods facing high levels of social and economic exclusion.⁴² In Berlin, this federal programme has been implemented through the Neighbourhood Management (*Quartiersmanagement*) programme, whose main purpose is to involve local residents in decision-making processes affecting their neighbourhoods by establishing neighbourhood councils (*Quartiersbeirat*), where they can voice their opinions on developments in their immediate environment.⁴³ While some local activists have questioned the degree to which neighbourhood councils actually empower the local population,⁴⁴ a representative of the Neighbourhood Management for Marzahn Northwest interviewed for this research argued that the programme has had an important stabilising effect on the areas of the district where it was implemented.⁴⁵ In part this is a result of the establishment of local community centres (*Stadtteilzentren*), which, as one stakeholder claimed, function as an important point of contact between the local associations dealing with social inclusion and economic participation and the District Office for Social Affairs.⁴⁶

Third, most of the northern part of the district is included in Sphere of Activity Plus (*Aktionsraum Plus*), which is a city-based programme set up in 2010 by Berlin's Ministry for Urban Development and Environment (*Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt*) in collaboration with the five districts where the programme is being implemented. The main goal is to prevent the further stagnation of neighbourhoods affected by high levels of social and economic exclusion by improving general living conditions, empowering local people who have been socio-economically marginalised by offering them better educational and employment

41 For a more detailed discussion of this programme and its effects on Marzahn-Hellersdorf see Chapter 7.

42 See http://www.staedtebaufoerderung.info/StBauF/DE/SozialeStadt/soziale__stadt__node.html (accessed 12 May 2014).

43 Neighbourhood Management Berlin at www.quartiersmanagement-berlin.de (accessed 10 May 2014). See also Chapter 10.

44 Stakeholder interview with a local activist, 8 May 2013 and with a journalist, 17 April 2013.

45 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local NGO, 6 May 2013.

46 Stakeholder interview with a local politician, 26 April 2013.

opportunities, and developing strategies for stabilising the affected neighbourhoods in terms of their basic demographic and socio-economic characteristics.⁴⁷

In addition to the federal and state programmes, there are numerous district initiatives which attempt to combat the socio-economic exclusion of local people. Very often, the mayor's office attempts to address these issues by having various stakeholders sharing their resources and expertise, a strategy resulting from a difficult budgetary situation in which financing is not readily available.⁴⁸ One example is the Masterplan: Work and Apprenticeship for all Youngsters in Marzahn-Hellersdorf by 2016 (Masterplan: *Arbeit und Ausbildung für Alle Jugendlichen in Marzahn-Hellersdorf bis 2016*), in which the mayor's office has set forth a goal of enabling every young person to find an apprenticeship in the district.⁴⁹ To achieve that, the district is working on bringing together various stakeholders, such as the Job Agency of Marzahn-Hellersdorf, representatives of local schools, business circles (represented in an organisation called Wirtschaftskreis Marzahn-Hellersdorf) and Berlin's departments for education and employment.⁵⁰

This ambitious project shows how intertwined the state, city and district governments are. Thus, representatives of Berlin's Department of Education must first approve changes to the educational system in the district, since they are responsible for state educational policies.⁵¹ According to some district representatives, the dual structure of government in Berlin often means that it is not clear which level of government is responsible for solving a specific problem or addressing a need expressed by citizens. This creates some confusion among the stakeholders involved in the process and often a fair deal of frustration among citizens trying to bring about social change in the district. As, one of the stakeholders working in the district administration said about the dual arrangements: "Too many cooks spoil the broth."⁵²

The Integration Office of Marzahn-Hellersdorf also addresses social inclusion and cohesion. It mostly deals with the integration of immigrants living in the district, but has in recent years shifted to more structural issues of enabling equal opportunity and equal access to various socio-economic structures and organisations for all inhabitants of the district regardless of their ethnic origin.⁵³ Moreover, the office has in the last decade spent a considerable amount of resources on programmes intended

47 Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt. Aktionsräume Plus: Bilanz und Ausblick (Spaces for action plus: outcome and outlook). Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, 2013, at http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/soziale_stadt/aktionsraeume_plus/download/Aktionsraeumeplus_Dokumentation2013.pdf (accessed 10 May 2014).

48 Stakeholder interview with district administration, 14 February 2013.

49 Stakeholder interview with a district politician 17 April 2013.

50 For more detailed discussion of this important project see Chapters 5 and 6.

51 Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17 April 2013.

52 Stakeholder interview with a local politician, 25 April 2013.

53 Stakeholder interview with district administration, 14 February 2013.

to prevent the xenophobia and right-wing extremism that plagued the district in the 1990s. One of these is the District Coordination Office for Development of Democracy in Marzahn-Hellersdorf (POLIS), whose function is the development of democracy and the prevention of anti-democratic phenomena. It brings together governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in this field in order to more efficiently address the problem of persistent anti-democratic sentiments among the local people. Over the last few years the office has turned its efforts from a direct struggle against right-wing groups towards promoting better conditions for the democratic participation of diverse local populations. This is in line with a basic premise of POLIS, which is that the work on education and prevention, along with enabling local people to have better access to governmental structures and better chances for participation in the socio-cultural life of the city, is the best way to prevent right-wing extremists from gaining a foothold in society.⁵⁴

Last but not least, there are numerous associations dealing with the social inclusion and participation of various populations in Marzahn-Hellersdorf. There are numerous youth clubs, women's groups, cultural centres and senior citizens' associations, which are in one way or another connected to existing structures of local governance. The two largest immigrant groups are also strongly represented in the district: the Vietnamese through the Reistrommel association and the Russian-Germans through the Kulturring organisation. In addition, the local government also supported the foundation of the Voluntary Agency (*Freiwilligen Agentur*), an organisation that works on connecting the various social organisations in the district with people who are ready to get socially engaged.⁵⁵ Many stakeholders interviewed for this report indicated that the main representatives of these organisations are all very well connected and have known each other for many years.⁵⁶ This is especially the case in the northern part of the city, where, due to a stagnating socio-economic situation and the availability of office spaces, most of the social industry infrastructure is based. Moreover, the fact that many different organisations use the local community centres enables them to establish contact with each other and also with the local government, which provides space and limited financial support for these centres. Nevertheless, it should be noted that these crosscutting ties between various stakeholders are not intergenerational. It seems that young people are not really included in the various associations working with social inclusion in Marzahn-Hellersdorf, which could lead to serious management problems in the near future when the members of the *Gummistiefel* (Wellington boots) generation (see Chapter 4) decide to retire.

54 Stakeholder interview with district administration, 2 May 2013.

55 See Freiwillige Agentur Marzahn-Hellersdorf (Volunteer Agency), at <http://www.aller-ehren-wert.de> (accessed 7 June 2013).

56 Stakeholder interviews with a local politician, 26 April 2013; district administration, 14 February 2013 and a journalist, 17 April 2013.

4

IDENTITY AND BELONGING

Most scholars concerned with the concepts of identity and belonging agree that identity is not a singular phenomenon; personal identity should be seen as fluid, multiple and relational because it is constantly renegotiated depending on social position, relation to different social groups in a given society, and on the more or less conscious positioning of a person vis-à-vis various discourses about belonging and identity that one is exposed to through contact with media and other information channels.⁵⁷

Thus an analysis of how people relate to the social environment in which they are embedded must refer to this complexity of identifications. This is especially true for Marzahn-Hellersdorf, given the radical socio-cultural and economic changes that it has experienced in the last 25 years. As Chapter 2 showed, in this period Marzahn-Hellersdorf has experienced both significant socio-economic stagnation and discursive repositioning in the national media away from a shining example of a new, socialist way of living towards being called “Berlin’s Bronx”,⁵⁸ a ghetto composed of grey blocks of flats populated by xenophobic and asocial people (derogatorily called *Assis* in German), living off social transfers and not taking any responsibility for their own lives.⁵⁹ Setting aside for now the question whether such characterisations of the district are justified, it is clear that the radical social transformations that Marzahn-Hellersdorf has endured have influenced the way its inhabitants present their identities and how they construct their own sense of belonging in relation to the area under consideration.

Social scientists examining identity formation processes also distinguish similarities between individuals based on their common socio-economic positioning. The commonly accepted markers of socio-economic proximity influencing identity formation are generation, gender, ethnicity, religion, class, occupation and geographical position (such as urban compared with rural dwelling).⁶⁰ However, analysis of the interviews and focus group discussions in the Open Society Foundations research in Marzahn-Hellersdorf revealed that the most important division lines affecting the way people in the district construct their identities are generation (where there are clear differences between the initial settlers and their children), time of arrival in the area (roughly before and after unification), ethnicity (connected to the time of arrival, but also to existing discourses on who can and who cannot belong to the German nation) and geographical position (differences between people living in the single-family housing to the south of the district and people living in the large housing blocks to the north, which can also be reconceptualised in terms of class difference). As the rest of this chapter shows, these socio-economic

57 Homi K. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*. Routledge, London, 1994. See also Patricia Price, *Dry Place: Landscapes of Belonging and Exclusion*. Minneapolis, MN, University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

58 Stakeholder interview with a journalist, 6 May 2013.

59 For more on the many negative stereotypes that Marzahn evokes in Berlin and western Germany see Chapter 10.

60 W. Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond Identity”. *Theory and Society* 20 (1) (February 2000), pp. 1–47.

markers influence the way people conceptualise their belonging to Germany, to Berlin and to Marzahn-Hellersdorf. Moreover, they also affect who inhabitants of the district perceive as belonging to the area and to Germany as a whole, as well as how they construct their own identities in relation to other groups and to existing class structures.

The fact that generation and the time of arrival are such important markers of identity in Marzahn-Hellersdorf can partly be explained by the fact that the people belonging to the older generation have in the last 30 years shared numerous hardships, experiences which certainly brought them closer together. For instance, they all still remember wading through the flooded streets of Marzahn in Wellington boots when the streets had not yet been paved. In fact, many older people in the district recognise each other as the Wellington boots (*Gummistiefel*) generation and distinguish themselves from their transition children (*Wendekinder*) and other people who came to the area in the last two decades. Moreover, people who settled in the area in the 1980s also shared the many hardships that followed the unification period, when it seemed that everybody (the media, the government, West Berliners) had turned against them or had forgotten about them. Both of these moments have crucially affected identifications among the people living in the district and have resulted in some people being able to pass for Marzahners or Hellersdorfers and not others.

4.1 | NATIONAL BELONGING AND NOSTALGIA FOR THE GDR

As expected, the data from the interviews and focus group discussions showed that most of the participants strongly identify with the recently unified nation as their homeland. However, there are certain important differences between the two generations mentioned above, the Wellington boots generation, who experienced life in the area during the GDR times, and the transition children, who are too young to really remember life in the GDR. As a result of their negative personal experiences with the process of unification, many members of the former generation living in the district have quite conflicting attitudes towards the country they live in and the people who they see as running it. David, one of the participant in the older men's focus group presented that attitude eloquently:

After the unification it was said we are all one people (ein Volk). Today nobody notices what is happening here, nobody pays attention to what we want. GDR companies have been liquidated, or made bankrupt. Their machinery was sold off and the companies mismanaged.⁶¹

61 Focus group with older men, 5 July 2013.

Not being heard by the government and being treated as second-class citizens by their fellow Germans from the West is a common complaint voiced by many (mostly) older people in the area who feel let down by the new system that followed the demise of the GDR. Often such complaints are immediately followed by a comparison of the present situation with a slightly nostalgic and quite selective (the repressive side of the GDR is very rarely mentioned) picture of life in the GDR. In those times, they claim, people could feel that they belonged to a community and citizens were encouraged to act as active participants in the society they lived in. Moreover, one of the focus group participants stated, life in the GDR was carefree, since one did not have to pay for social services, housing and child care, while employment and pensions were secure. In sharp contrast, the society they live in now has gone through a radical process of individualisation, which happened after the unification and subsequent introduction of capitalism to the new federal states of the former GDR. In the opinion of some of the older participants of the focus group on identity, this process has also affected some of the basic personality traits of people, who used to be socially warmer, more open and more generous during the GDR era.⁶² In this way, the initial settlers of Marzahn and Hellersdorf often exclude their children and people who moved to the district later on from their imagined community, which is rooted in the experience of living in the GDR in the 1980s.

On the other hand, most of the younger people interviewed expressed fewer reservations about belonging to the new Germany and have often openly stated that the East–West divisions are not at all relevant to their lives. As Michael, a participant in the focus group on employment stated:

*I was born in 1990 and for me the division on East and West plays no role at all. It is the same to me, East or West. And as for the people who think in such way—I find it sad.*⁶³

This quote can be seen as a criticism of what one of the stakeholders called “*die Ewiggestrigen*”, people who remain nostalgic about the good old times of the GDR and cannot accept the socio-political reality of the district as it is now.⁶⁴ As stated above, most of them belong to the older generation, especially those who never found their footing in the new conditions that emerged after unification. Nevertheless, while the majority of younger people identify as Germans, what this means in a socially atomised environment they live in is a question calling for more detailed study.

62 Focus group on identity, 11 June 2013.

63 Focus group on employment, 4 June 2013.

64 Stakeholder interview with district administration, 14 February 2013.

4.2 | DRAWING THE BOUNDARIES OF NATIONAL BELONGING

Some interesting differences were noted in how members of the majority population draw the boundaries of national belonging in relation to the two largest immigrant communities living in the area, the Russian-Germans and the Vietnamese. Vietnamese contract workers arrived in Marzahn-Hellersdorf before the Russian-German immigrants, but the wider population has never considered them as German due to their physical appearance. On the contrary, as one of the stakeholders who has been working with the Vietnamese community for more than two decades claimed, members of the Vietnamese community were the primary targets of the revived right-wing violence and experienced frequent discrimination and harassment by the police throughout the 1990s.⁶⁵ Moreover, the research also noted that in open conversations many people still use a derogatory term *Fidschi* (Fiji islanders) to refer to Vietnamese people in Berlin. It is therefore no surprise that as a group Vietnamese are still quite isolated from the wider society and have formed a tightly knit ethnic community, though, according to several interviewees, this situation has also been changing quite rapidly in the last 10 years as the Vietnamese have been recognised by the majority population as hard-working and non-violent neighbours whose children often excel in school.⁶⁶ This increasing acceptance may reflect the fact that, like the Wellington boots generation, the Vietnamese community experienced both life in the district during the GDR period as well as its hard times in the 1990s.

The discursive position of the members of the Russian-German community who arrived in Marzahn-Hellersdorf in the 1990s is somewhat different. They are officially considered to be German since they were given German citizenship on their arrival. This is a consequence of the persistence of the *jus sanguinis* principle (which considers family descent as an important factor in determining nationality) in German citizenship law and the German conception of national belonging. However, as the Open Society Foundations interviews showed, despite the official discourse and the familiarity of East Germans with the Russian culture and language (which was taught in schools throughout the GDR), the Russian-German population moving into Marzahn-Hellersdorf was never really accepted as German by the local population. One of the participants in the focus group on policing and security stated:

Russian-Germans might be considered German in statistics, but in the local community they are still considered foreigners.⁶⁷

65 Stakeholder interview with a local NGO activist, 17 April 2013.

66 Stakeholder interview with a local politician, 26 April 2013; focus group on housing, 13 June 2013; focus group on employment, 4 June 2013.

67 Focus group on policing and security, 5 July 2013.

This attitude is further stimulated by the persistent conviction among many members of the majority population that Russians, with their perceived inability to accept German cultural codes, were responsible for many of the social ills that the district had had to face since the time of their arrival.⁶⁸ While many of these social problems had nothing to do with the arrival of Russian-Germans in Marzahn-Hellersdorf,⁶⁹ this mistrust led to a dynamic of increasing ethnic segregation between the two groups. As Harald Buttler, an ex-chair of Marzahn's advisory board for foreigners (*Auslanderbeirat*), wrote:

*Migrants tend to concentrate in one area. But when 30 percent of people in one building are of Russian-German descent, the remaining 70 percent of German inhabitants start moving out. That was a very difficult process which housing communities had to deal with.*⁷⁰

Despite the problems that older generations of Russian and Vietnamese immigrants face in their quest for achieving national belonging, there are many signs that the situation is changing with the younger generation. Thus, as a stakeholder working for one of the main Russian-German associations in the district explained, children of Russian-German immigrants living in Marzahn-Hellersdorf are learning the German language and many of them are excelling in school. Moreover, second-generation Russian-German children are strongly identifying with Germany, so much that their parents are often concerned about their outright rejection of the Russian language and the cultural patterns associated with Russian national identity.⁷¹ The same might be happening among the Vietnamese second generation, but due to their legal status, physical appearance and the more closely knit ethnic community they live in they may encounter more problems in their quest for acceptance as equal members of the German nation-state.

More important, a study about belonging that involved children in youth centres found that among youngsters in Marzahn-Hellersdorf, both Russian and Vietnamese peers are often accepted as one of the group, a sign of acceptance of the multiculturalist character of the area these children are living in.⁷² This was confirmed by younger participants in the focus group on employment, who observed that the youth gangs, while dominated by Russian-German and Albanian youth, are not divided along ethnic lines but are mostly ethnically very diverse and based in a specific local environment such as a particular street or neighbourhood.⁷³

68 Stakeholder interview with a local resident, 14 February 2013.

69 Stakeholder interview with district administration, 14 February 2013.

70 Buttler, Interview.

71 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local NGO, 19 April 2013.

72 Stakeholder interview with a local politician, 26 April 2013.

73 Focus group on employment, 4 June 2013.

On the other hand, as a stakeholder working for the youth welfare office mentioned, these results may also be interpreted as a consequence of a process resulting from the arrival of new immigrants of Roma and Arab descent, in which the exclusion boundary among the young people in the district has now shifted to these new arrivals and the pressure on the more established groups has been relaxed.⁷⁴ In fact, some of these dynamics were observed in various focus groups where young people reported positive feelings towards the Vietnamese immigrants, while reserving their anger for Russian-Germans and the newcomers, who are often seen as Roma or Arab, despite the fact that, according to official statistics their numbers are extremely low in Marzahn-Hellersdorf. Moreover, in the focus group on policing and security older participants often connected their feelings of insecurity and fears of crime with the increased diversity of the area.⁷⁵ Such ethnicised perceptions of crime and security will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.

4.3 | BELONGING TO BERLIN

In terms of belonging to the city, differences between various groups of people interviewed are less pronounced than with national belonging. Most of the interviewees felt that they belong to Berlin and proudly claim that they are Berliners. This is consistent with social science research on urban identification which claims that, due to the open nature of modern cities, claiming urban belonging is often much easier than claiming belonging to a nation, which is still often associated with descent or, at least, with obtaining citizenship.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, among the older generation a slightly more negative view of the recent developments in the inner city was apparent: they see it as overrun by tourists and young people coming to Berlin in order to have fun in a city that has become known as the party capital of Europe in the last few years. As a consequence, many older people complain about the noise, trash, drugs and alcohol consumption that one has to endure every weekend in certain parts of the city (namely Friedrichshain, Kreuzberg and Mitte).⁷⁷

Moreover, some of the older participants in the focus group on security complained about the high percentage of immigrants living in certain areas of Berlin such as Neukölln or Kreuzberg, which, as Werner, a participant of the focus group on policing and security, stated: “already resembles Antalya”.⁷⁸ Others claimed that they do not

74 Stakeholder interview with a local politician, 26 April 2013.

75 Focus group on policing and security, 5 July 2013.

76 Jens Schneider, Tineke Fokkema, Raquel Matias, Snežana Stojčić, Dušan Ugrina & Constanza Vera-Larrucea, “Identities: Urban Belonging and Intercultural Relations”, in M. Crul, J. Schneider and F. Lelie (eds), *The European Second Generation Compared*. Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam, 2012.

77 Focus group on housing, 13 June 2013.

78 Focus group on policing and security, 5 July 2013.

feel welcome and safe⁷⁹ in these districts where, as one of the focus group participants dramatically claimed: “Our culture is slowly ceasing to exist.”⁸⁰ Such negative, ethnicised valuations of life in the inner city were much less frequent among young people who were interviewed. This may be connected to the fact that due to the lack of youth facilities and possibilities for entertainment, they travelled to other districts more often than the older people interviewed. However, regardless the age, the pronounced feeling of belonging to Marzahn-Hellersdorf that many participants of the Open Society Foundations focus groups expressed (see below) was often expressed in terms of positive comparisons in relation to other districts of the city. Thus, while Marzahn-Hellersdorf was depicted as peaceful, green and clean, Berlin as a whole (and especially its inner city districts) was often described as chaotic, dirty and lacking green spaces.

4.4 | IDENTIFICATION WITH THE DISTRICT

Looking at people’s identification with their district, the research noted some important differences along the dividing lines of generation, ethnicity and geographical position. Thus, older German people, who first settled in the area and have grown old with it (the Wellington boots generation), strongly identify with Marzahn-Hellersdorf and often cannot imagine living anywhere else.⁸¹ However, this is not always the case with their children, who have only experienced the troubled times of the area and who are also more exposed to the negative stereotypes of Marzahn-Hellersdorf coming from the media and their peers from other neighbourhoods of Berlin. In fact, a majority of the young people interviewed in the Open Society Foundations research said that they would like to move out of the area, since they do not see any future for themselves there. As Fabian, one of the participants of the focus group with younger men dramatically stated:

*Marzahn-Hellersdorf is simply a hole in Berlin—a hole where people cannot improve themselves.*⁸²

This sentiment is often shared by the outsiders and the more recent arrivals in the area (especially people below the age of 60), possibly because many of them had to move there as a result of being pushed out of their previous housing because of rising rents in the inner city.

79 As Chapter 9 shows, older focus group participants often judged the safety of a neighbourhood based on the presence of ethnic minorities.

80 Focus group on policing and security, 5 July 2013.

81 Focus group with older women, 3 June 2013; focus group with older men, 5 July 2013.

82 Focus group with younger men, 4 July 2013.

4.4.1 | NEIGHBOURHOOD IDENTIFICATIONS

Given the history of the area, it is necessary to examine how people divide the district in ways that make sense to them and correspond to their experiences of living there. Many of the focus groups participants emphasised the distinction between Marzahn and Hellersdorf by pointing out their different histories and socio-economic structures and the fact that the two former districts were joined together mostly for bureaucratic reasons only in 2001. Therefore, it seems that on the local level inhabitants of Marzahn-Hellersdorf do not identify with the district as such, but with its constituent parts, which they see as having their own particular identities arising from their socio-historical development. In fact, in the focus group with younger men, there was a lively discussion on differences between people living in Marzahn and people living in Hellersdorf. The majority of the participants agreed that there are important differences in terms of what kind of people live in these areas, claiming that more socially marginalised people live in Marzahn, while the population in Hellersdorf is predominantly composed of East German families and their offspring.⁸³ To what extent this emphasis on the difference between the two areas is a consequence of the stigma that especially Marzahn has in the eyes of the wider population is a question that invites future research.

More important, many people who live in the southern, single-family housing areas were careful to emphasise that they do not live in Marzahn or Hellersdorf, but in Mahlsdorf, Kaulsdorf or Biesdorf, which they described as very different from the large block housing areas in the north. This observation was confirmed by a number of the stakeholders interviewed, who said that many people living in the south disassociate themselves from Marzahn-Hellersdorf.⁸⁴ This is understandable because of the socio-economic differences between the two areas and because, visually, the single-family housing areas in the south do not fit into the stereotypical picture Berliners have of Marzahn or Hellersdorf. As a result, many of the stakeholders started their interviews by first explaining the divide between the north and south parts of the district and by discussing different problems that each of the parts faces. In fact, socio-economic differences between the areas north and south of the interstate road B5 are so pronounced that one of the stakeholders argued that Marzahn-Hellersdorf does not exist, but is divided into two parts which do not have much in common except for the local government and common administrative structures.⁸⁵

There is another dimension to making such distinction. As Chapter 2 shows, a substantial class difference exists between the two parts of the district which entails a difference in cultural patterns. Thus, as one of the stakeholders claimed,⁸⁶ people in

83 Focus group with younger men, 4 July 2013.

84 Stakeholder interviews with a district politician, 17 April 2013; stakeholder interview with a journalist, 17 April 2013.

85 Stakeholder interview with local youth service, 14 April 2013.

86 Stakeholder interview with a local politician, 26 April 2013.

the southern areas are considered more *petit bourgeois*, possibly also because of their persistent voting for the CDU which is in stark contrast to the rest of the district where people predominantly vote for the left-wing parties.

4.4.2 | THE TENANT COMMUNITY

On the most local level of personal identification, the Open Society Foundations research discovered that the initial settlers of Marzahn and Hellersdorf often felt intimately connected to other members of the Wellington boots generation living in the same building. Interviewees explained this phenomenon in two ways. First, as the discussion on the Wellington boots generation above indicates, many of them moved to the area at the same period and have grown old together in the last 30 years. As they had children in the 1980s, they met each other on the playground while watching their offspring play together. As many of them lost their jobs as a consequence of dramatic changes during the 1990s, they shared advice on how to survive economically and find new employment. Now they have grown old and are again facing similar problems: how to make ends meet on their limited pensions, where to find good doctors, how to fight the social isolation that many experience and how to maintain their often oversized apartments now that their children have moved away.

A second explanation interviewees gave for this attachment to the other initial inhabitants of their block is that in the GDR people were encouraged to maintain contact with each other in order to take care of the houses they lived in, but also in order to maintain a certain degree of social control over each other.⁸⁷ Thus, inhabitants of the district were expected to participate in the *sobotniks*, which were regular meetings where tenants in a block would discuss various tasks that needed to be taken care of or even solve personal disputes. Very often these meetings also had a purely social function, providing people who were cut off from their social networks in the inner city with a way to establish new friendships and maintain regular social contact.⁸⁸ In fact, most of the older interviewees have fond memories of these semi-formal meetings and feel sorry that they no longer exist. Nevertheless, it seems that some of the bonds that were created through these mechanisms remained and now contribute to the strong feeling of belonging that older people feel in relation to their old housing communities. Moreover, after unification, these personal bonds and the strong sense of responsibility for one's own immediate environment have provided a firm foundation for various newly established associations, which have attempted to address the numerous social problems that Marzahn-Hellersdorf has faced in the last two decades.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Focus group with older women, 3 June 2013.

⁸⁸ Focus group with older women, 3 June 2013.

⁸⁹ For a discussion on how these newly established associations provided a viable re-employment option for people who lost their jobs during the transition see Chapter 6.

Such personal bonds are especially important in a district such as Marzahn-Hellersdorf. Resulting from its modernist planning, which did not provide enough space for social institutions where people could meet and interact, and following decades of economic stagnation that seriously limited the function and effect of the already existing social institutions, people often complained that the biggest problem of the area (next to crime, lack of police presence and unemployment) was the lack of any structured means of social interaction among the inhabitants of the district. This is a complaint voiced by both the younger generation, whose youth clubs are often closing down or existing on the edge of financial survival without the help from local government, and by the older people living in the area and lamenting the dissolution of the old GDR mechanisms for maintaining social participation and cohesion.

On the other hand, the interviews suggest that the feeling of belonging that older people have for their old housing communities and which seems to influence all other forms of geo-spatial identification, such as identification with the nation or the city, can also function in an exclusionary way. Thus, members of the older generation often said that the real Marzahnners are the people who came to the area (preferably in their Wellington boots) in the 1980s, did not abandon it in the 1990s and thus helped built up the place into what it is now.⁹⁰ As one can imagine, such conceptions of belonging exclude a number of people who came to the district later, most importantly the immigrants, but curiously enough also members of the younger generation, who do not share the initial settlers' experience of the older generation and are consequently often cut off from many social networks and decision-making mechanisms in the district.

4.5 | CLASS IDENTIFICATIONS

There are also interesting results in terms of peoples' class identifications emerging from the interviews. Thus, while most Berliners consider Marzahn-Hellersdorf as a former working-class district, which turned into a problematic social welfare district, the inhabitants of the area (as mentioned above, especially the ones living in the southern part) maintain a considerably different view. Primarily, they emphasise that the area was initially settled by a socio-economically diverse mix of people and that, even north of the interstate road B5, there are still areas where middle-class families live. In this way, inhabitants of the district attempt to discursively counteract the effects of simplistic media portrayals of Marzahn-Hellersdorf as a poor workers' district. They do so with an acute awareness of how such negative portrayals affected the district in 1990s, stimulating an exodus of many middle-class families which did not want to be stigmatised as members of the socio-economically doomed area.

90 Focus group on housing, 13 June 2013; focus group on policing and security, 5 July 2013.

More important, the research points to a number of mechanisms that inhabitants of the area use in order to avoid the stigma of living in what is considered by many outsiders to be an archetype of a social welfare district (Hartz IV Bezirk). On the one hand, most interviewees openly lament the emergence of the social welfare culture, which they see as destroying people's ability to actively participate in society and reducing people to passive recipients of various forms of financial support from the state. On the other hand, Herbert, a participant in the focus group on media seemed to openly celebrate the social welfare lifestyle, stating that "Marzahn-Hellersdorf was made for social welfare" and that the alternative (working at often very demanding, but low-paid, jobs) is no life at all. What seems to be at stake here is the famous German work ethic, an ideology that demands a substantial degree of personal self-reliance and which condemns accepting government assistance unless it is really needed. However, as the same participant in the focus group stated:

I will not take any job that they offer me ... they have brought this district into the state it is in and I will not be paying for their mistakes ... I live comfortably and make more money working on the side (schwarzarbeiten) than the fools breaking their backs in regular jobs.⁹¹

While he was one of the few people to openly express such radical views in a focus group, the statistical data suggest that Herbert is unlikely to be alone in holding such opinions in Marzahn-Hellersdorf.

Moreover, many of the people participating in focus groups attempted to protect themselves from the stigma that wider society has placed on Marzahn-Hellersdorf by disassociating themselves from the so-called *Prole* (proletarian) label. The clearest example of this is the way focus group participants reacted to a female comedian calling herself Cindy from Marzahn, who achieved national recognition with her stand-up comedy act in which she attempts to embody the prevalent stereotypes of the female, East German *Prole*. Most of interviewees took care to explain that she is not even from Marzahn and that she is only reinforcing the existing stereotypes and not paying attention to the ever greater diversity of people living in Marzahn.⁹² Similarly, many of the participants in the focus groups with younger women used the *Prole* label to designate people who can hardly be distinguished from them in terms of basic socio-economic characteristics.⁹³ Thus, while it seems that for people living in Marzahn-Hellersdorf the Protestant work ethic remains a part of their identity, they have definitely abandoned the once proud identification with the proletariat, which has lost its significance in the process of the dissolution of the socialist ideology that the former GDR promoted.

91 Focus group on media, 25 July 2013.

92 Focus group on media, 25 July 2013.

93 Focus group with younger women, 6 June 2013.

What seems to be replacing working-class identification among young people is a form of consumerism, which they rely on in order to overcome the stigma of living in the district and to gain social acceptance as equal members of the wider society they live in. They attempt to achieve that through a persistent search for the most recent socially accepted prestige objects. As one of the stakeholders mentioned, it is curious that children living in very difficult economic conditions still often carry the new iPhones and other prestige objects which are marketed to them as signs of social success.⁹⁴ This phenomenon should be further examined in relation to the recent transition of East Germany from a society that celebrated work to a new society that celebrates consumption and the appearance of wealth as a legitimate route to social acceptance and success.

LOCATION MARKETING

In order to improve the persistent negative image of Marzahn-Hellersdorf, the district government decided in 2012 to apply for the available federal Joint Task Programme for the Promotion of Industry and Trade (*GRW – Gemeinschaftsaufgabe*) and for the EU Funds for Regional Development (EFRE) in order to establish the Marzahn-Hellersdorf Location Marketing office (*Standortmarketing Marzahn-Hellersdorf*) office. Led by Oleg Peters, this office is responsible for improving the overall media image of the district through a redesigned marketing strategy based in emphasizing the many positive changes that Marzahn-Hellersdorf has gone through in last ten years. Moreover, the office is also working on attracting more businesses and investors to the area and on improving the existing tourist infrastructure.

5

EDUCATION

This chapter is based on data from a discussion in a focus group whose topic was specifically education, although the topic was also prominent in the young women's and young men's focus groups. There were also interviews with key stakeholders, inside and outside the district administration; including a stakeholder, also a local inhabitant who went to school in the district himself and has an older daughter who went through the school system and a young son in a nursery. The data in interviews were complemented by a variety of official data, reports and publications, such as an analysis of the integrated reporting on social and health issues, school development plans and concepts, and the school entrance examination.

The educational system in Marzahn-Hellersdorf has undergone different phases of reforms until today and has therefore developed an openness to change. Since 2000 there has been concern about the effectiveness of the (West) German educational system compared with international standards. This led to a change in 2010 from the traditional three-tier school system to a two-tier school system in Berlin. This chapter begins with an examination of how Marzahn-Hellersdorf has implemented these reforms. The chapter identifies other positive legacies of the GDR and West Germany, such as high levels of enrolment in pre-school day-care nurseries and an intercultural and inclusive education that is valued positively by local inhabitants. While there is a general trend of declining numbers of students in Berlin this has been particularly strong in Marzahn-Hellersdorf because of the rapid population decline since the transition. The current school development plan anticipates the numbers remaining stable or increasing slightly, because the population decline has stopped in the district.

The chapter also examines the school dropout rate and considers whether this is related to the high youth unemployment in the district. The fact that there is an integrated reporting system on the health and social situation in the district is another legacy of the GDR and provides an insight into the accumulation of social risk factors in the north of Marzahn, such as the high number of mothers with no educational qualifications or a very low-grade leaving certificate, the high proportion of single and teenage parents and of very young children living on social welfare. The research finds that half of the children in the neighbourhood need support in school; boys are more affected than girls, children with migrant backgrounds more than children of German origin.

The district struggles, as other districts do, with the inclusion of children with disabilities. Although there are a large number of special educational facilities for children with learning difficulties and Berlin has adopted the model of integration classes, there are fears among the parents of children both with disabilities and without.

5.1 | THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Education is a highly contested and complex topic in Germany. Its federal structure places responsibility for education in the hand of the states. Therefore it is not possible to speak of a single German educational system, but of 16 often very different educational policies in the country. This is different from the educational system in the former GDR, which was centralised, and fundamentally reformed twice. The first time was in 1959 when a unitary type of school for all students, the 10-year general polytechnic school (POS), was introduced with the Law on the Socialist Development of the School System. The provisions of the Law on the Unitary Socialist Education System of 1965 regulated the school system of the GDR, where the state had the educational monopoly, until the transition in 1989.⁹⁵

Germany suffered a “Pisa shock” in 2000, when the OECD published its first international comparison of school achievements.⁹⁶ The study showed that the German educational system was performing badly; it led to serious reforms in the states and the shift in Berlin from the traditional three-tier school system to a two-tier school system in 2010,⁹⁷ so that now there is either the integrated secondary school (*Integrierte Sekundarschule*), which takes 13 years or the *gymnasium* (grammar school), which finishes after 12 years. Parents of children with special needs also have the option of having them taught in special educational centres as an alternative to inclusion in regular classes. Private or independent schools are not considered as a separate type of school but are organised according to the same principles as state schools.⁹⁸ Once children start school, they remain together for two years in the first class. It is expected that all children have the same starting level in the third grade. This model was compulsory at its introduction, but is now voluntary. One-third of Berlin’s primary schools have already abandoned this model, although primary schools in Marzahn-Hellersdorf still follow it.⁹⁹

The transition had dramatic effects on schools and the system in Marzahn and Hellersdorf. Between 1991 and 2006 the population of Marzahn-Hellersdorf declined from 291,210 to 247,127. As a consequence a key feature of the educational system in Marzahn-Hellersdorf was the decline in student numbers and the subsequent need

95 Education in East Germany, at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_East_Germany (accessed 11 July 2014).

96 In 2000 the first PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) study shocked the German public. because Germany rated under average and every 4th student under 15 was not able to read and write properly, “Internationale Schulleistungsstudie der OECD” (International School Achievement Study of the OECD), at <http://www.oecd.org/berlin/themen/pisa-internationaleschulleistungsstudieroecd.htm> (accessed 14 March 2014).

97 Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Wissenschaft, “Schulreform. Ergebnisse und Ausblick” (School Reform. Results and Outlook) (2013), at <http://www.berlin.de/sen/bildung/bildungspolitik/schulreform> (accessed 14 March 2014).

98 Education System in Berlin, at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Berlin (accessed 11 July 2014) and Schulstrukturreform in Berlin (Structural school reform in Berlin), at http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schulstrukturreform_in_Berlin (accessed 14 March 2014).

99 Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17 April 2013.

to close schools. According to the mayor, managing the process of closing schools became an expertise of Marzahn-Hellersdorf to the extent that officials from districts in the west of Berlin often visited Marzahn-Hellersdorf for advice on how to manage this process in their areas, where they had to close schools for the first time in 60 years.¹⁰⁰ Since 2006, however, the population has stabilised. The current school development plan anticipates the numbers of students to remain stable or to increase slightly.¹⁰¹ There seems to be a general trend of declining numbers of students in Berlin, but the numbers have been particularly strong in Marzahn-Hellersdorf.¹⁰²

In 2010 Marzahn-Hellersdorf, together with the neighbouring district of Treptow-Köpenik, had the lowest number of public and private schools in Berlin. The district has 57 public educational institutions of which 46 are schools. The 46 schools have 841 classes and 19,788 students. Alongside the public schools there are six private schools in Marzahn-Hellersdorf. This is, together with Lichtenberg, the lowest number of private schools for a Berlin district. In comparison, the wealthy Berlin district Steglitz-Zehlendorf has 24 private schools.¹⁰³

One positive aspect of the district's GDR heritage is that almost all children (98 percent) attend pre-school day-care nurseries (Kita). This is in line with the Berlin average.¹⁰⁴ Officials consider that attendance at pre-school day care is an important part of the strategy of the state of Berlin for ensuring that all pupils have an equal starting point at school.¹⁰⁵ One 40-year-old resident, who was raised in the district and is one of the children of the transition (*Wendekinder*), reported that there are also many child-minders (*Tagesmütter*) who are paid privately to look after children.¹⁰⁶ He had direct experience of their system as his son attends a Kita in the area. He explained how the Kita deals with different children of different backgrounds. In his experience Kitas try to support the integration of foreign families, help them interact and learn the German language. Another woman, a participant in the focus group with young women, also commented positively on the opportunities they create for children to come into contact with people from other backgrounds.

100 Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17 April 2013.

101 Bezirksamt Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Department School, Sport, Finances, School development plan 2008–2012, Marzahn-Hellersdorf at https://www.berlin.de/imperia/md/content/bamarzahnhellersdorf/publikationen/schule/schulentwicklungsplanmarzahn_hellersdorf2008_2012.pdf?start&ts=1222770167&file=schulentwicklungsplanmarzahn_hellersdorf2008_2012.pdf (accessed 11 July 2014) (hereafter: Bezirksamt Marzahn-Hellersdorf, School development plan 2008–2012).

102 Ferchland, Rainer; Wilfried Barthel, Ursula Schröter and Renate Ullrich (2010), "Zur sozialen Lage von Kindern und Jugendlichen in Marzahn-Hellersdorf. Ein Beitrag zur integrierten Sozialberichterstattung". Thesen zur Studie (About the social position of children and young people in Marzahn Hellersdorf. A contribution for an integrated social report". Theses to the study), original study at http://www.kommunalpolitik-berlin.de/pdf/Broschuere_sociale_Lage_Kinder_Jugend_Marzahn_Hellersdorf.pdf (accessed 11 July 2014) (hereafter, Ferchland et al., "Zur sozialen Lage").

103 Ferchland et al., "Zur sozialen Lage".

104 Ferchland et al., "Zur sozialen Lage".

105 Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17 April 2013.

See also <http://www.berlin.de/sen/bwf/presse/archiv/20110506.1145.343337.html> (accessed 11 July 2014).

106 Stakeholder interview with a local resident, 14 February 2013.

In 2010 in Marzahn-Hellersdorf 17 percent of children starting school are classified as having a migration background. This is the third lowest proportion among Berlin's districts. The Berlin average is 37 percent. Three-quarters of children of Eastern European origin have parents from Russia (105 children or 5.2 percent of all children) and Kazakhstan (59 children or 2.9 percent). Seventy percent of children coming from "other countries" are of Vietnamese origin (77 children or 3.8 percent of all children).¹⁰⁷

Out of the 32,856 students in all schools 7.5 percent have left school without any leaving certificate, 5.8 percent left with a secondary-school (*Hauptschule*) certificate (lowest), 9.8 percent with an extended secondary-school leaving certificate, 27.1 percent with a middle leaving certificate (*mittlerer Schulabschluss*, allowing access e.g. to engineering schools) and 50.2 percent left with an certificate which allows access to universities (the highest).¹⁰⁸

5.2 | BACKGROUND OF PARENTS AND REASONS FOR DROPOUT

School dropouts have been a significant concern but no first hand data on school dropout rates of pupils in Berlin is available. Therefore this section relies on secondary information such as comparative studies or newspaper articles.¹⁰⁹ The Berlin Senate does not publish the dropout rate of individual schools, as unjust ranking among the schools is feared, because the rate strongly depends on the social environment of a school, which can vary greatly in Berlin.¹¹⁰ A report in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* claims that a school in the wealthy Zehlendorf district cannot be compared with one in the poorer district of Wedding.¹¹¹ The report further referred to a study by the Technical University of Dortmund according to which 7.1 percent of Berlin students left school in 2012 without any formal qualification. Furthermore, it noted that the post-secondary school dropout rate of 27 percent was the highest for a federal state outside the

107 Stakeholder interview with a local resident, 14 February 2013.

108 Bezirksamt Marzahn-Hellersdorf, School development plan 2008–2012.

109 There are several studies from the German Youth Institute (DJI) on school dropouts in Germany after the PISA shock until 2005. See DJI Online October 2005, "Chancen für Schulmüde", at <http://www.dji.de/index.php?id=40632> (accessed 15 March 2014).

110 "Berlin verweigert Auskunft über Schulabbrecher. Transparenz: ungenügend" (Berlin refuses information over dropouts. Transparency: insufficient), 31 January 2013, at <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/bildung/berlin-verweigert-auskunft-ueber-schulabbrecher-transparenz-ungenuegend-1.1588611> (accessed 3 September 2013).

111 "Berlin verweigert Auskunft über Schulabbrecher. Transparenz: ungenügend" (Berlin refuses information over dropouts. Transparency: insufficient), 31 January 2013, at <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/bildung/berlin-verweigert-auskunft-ueber-schulabbrecher-transparenz-ungenuegend-1.1588611> (accessed 3 September 2013).

former GDR.¹¹² The Berlin urban development policy¹¹³ calls for further research into the reasons for high youth unemployment, to see if it is related to the number of youngsters leaving school without any leaving certificate.

As seen above, the Berlin Senate considers the social context of schools an important factor in accounting for their school dropout rate. In interviews with stakeholder and focus group participants, the social, economic and educational background of parents was noted as an important part of the picture.

In Marzahn-Hellersdorf 23.4 percent of mothers have no school-leaving certificate, or only the lowest (*Hauptschulabschluss*), compared with the average for Berlin of 20.1 percent. Over half of all parents in Marzahn-Hellersdorf have completed only 10 years of school, which is more than in any other district in Berlin, where the average is 33 percent. In contrast, the proportion of parents with polytechnic or university degrees is 25 percent, which is only half as high as the Berlin average (50 percent).¹¹⁴

Almost half (46 percent) of children under six years of age in Marzahn-Hellersdorf live in families receiving social welfare, well above the Berlin average of 35 percent.¹¹⁵ Marzahn-Hellersdorf has the highest proportion of single parents in comparison with all other districts: 38.5 percent of those who start school live in households with only one parent while the Berlin average is 25.5 percent. Single parents with a low level of education are especially often at risk of material poverty and of being overworked. In the education focus group, participants noted the significant number of children from divorced families in Marzahn. They also noted that many single parents were attracted to the area due to its low rents. The proportion of children who live with both parents (60 percent) is one of the lowest in Berlin, where the average is 74 percent.¹¹⁶

Some members of the participation focus group were very critical of what they saw as the large number of young teenage parents. As one of the participants in that focus group drastically put it:

112 The source of the study the newspaper article from "Süddeutsche Zeitung" in foot note 107 refers to cannot be found online, but there is a special edition of the Zeitschrift für Pädagogik 57 (2) (March/April 2011), which focuses on a wide range of aspects related to school dropouts in Germany, at http://www.pedocs.de/zeitschriften.php?action=get_heft&zeitschriftentitel=Zeitschrift+f%C3%9C+r+P%E4dagogik&zeitschriftenjahr=2011&zeitschriftenheft=2 (accessed 11 May 2014).

113 Bezirksamt Marzahn Hellersdorf, Abteilung Ökologische Stadtentwicklung & Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Abteilung IV, "Integriertes Stadtentwicklungskonzept" (Integrated Urban Development Concept=INSEK), INSEK 2011/12, at http://www.berlin.de/imperia/md/content/bamarzahnhellersdorf/stadtplanung/grossiedlungen/insek/insek2012_bericht_k_1.pdf?start&ts=1358239890&file=insek2012_bericht_k_1.pdf (accessed 11 July 2014).

114 Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Berlin, District Office, "Gesundheitsberichterstattung. Ergebnisse der Einschulungsuntersuchungen Schuljahr 2011/2012. Beiträge zur integrierten Gesundheits- und Sozialberichterstattung" (Health Reporting. Results of the School Entrance Test for the schooling year 2011/12. Contributions to the integrated health and social report") (hereafter, Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Berlin, District Office, "Gesundheitsberichterstattung" (Health Reporting).

115 Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Berlin, District Office, "Gesundheitsberichterstattung" (Health Reporting).

116 Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Berlin, District Office, "Gesundheitsberichterstattung" (Health Reporting).

*Instead of learning they put children in the world.*¹¹⁷

Another participant added:

*The number of young parents is high and then they are mostly overwhelmed.*¹¹⁸

The official health reports of the district administration support this argument and refer to the highest rate of teenage pregnancies in all Berlin.¹¹⁹ Some participants believed that the high rate of teenage pregnancies was due to the welfare support and the children allowance.¹²⁰ A participant in the young women's focus group explained the high rate of teenage pregnancy by referring to it as the "generation Hartz IV" (social welfare generation). According to her there are two or three generations without work and a culture of dependency has developed.¹²¹ Another participant said that the kids were exposed to sex (pornography) too early and children were a means to get money.¹²² Another participant suggested:

*Some of the young mothers think of a child as a toy, only to realise too late that it is not a toy.*¹²³

A local stakeholder described his contact with teenage parents at his son's Kita. In his experience teenage parents do not attend parent events (*Elternabend*) and they do not feel like getting engaged with their education.¹²⁴ Others identified some of the barriers that young mothers faced and suggested possible solutions, like one participant of the young women's focus group:

*Well-kept playgrounds and flexible opening hours of the Kitas up to 8 pm are missing and that would help young single mothers.*¹²⁵

The focus group participants talked positively about one Kita in Marzahn-Hellersdorf, where children can even sleep over. Kids' clubs and youth clubs should be open on weekends and there should be more of such organisations, the participants requested.¹²⁶

117 Participant in focus group on participation, 21 May 2013.

118 Participant in focus group on participation, 21 May 2013.

119 Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Berlin, District Office, "Gesundheitsbericht Marzahn-Hellersdorf 2006/2007. Beiträge zur integrierten Gesundheits- und Sozialberichterstattung Marzahn-Hellersdorf" (Health Reporting. Results of the School Entrance Test for the schooling year 2006/2007. Contributions to the integrated health and social report"), p. 4, at https://www.berlin.de/imperia/md/content/bamarzahnhellersdorf/publikationen/gesbericht2002/gesbericht2006_2007.pdf?start&ts=1215168222&file=gesbericht2006_2007.pdf (accessed 15 March 2014).

120 Focus group on participation, 21 May 2013.

121 Participant in focus group on participation, 6 June 2013.

122 Participant in focus group with younger women, 6 June 2013.

123 Participant in focus group with younger women, 6 June 2013.

124 Stakeholder interview a local resident, 14 February 2013.

125 Participant in focus group with younger women, 6 June 2013.

126 Focus group with younger women, 6 June 2013.

There is an integrated reporting system on health and the social situation in the district (*Integrierte Gesundheits- und Sozialberichterstattung*), which monitors social indicators in the area.¹²⁷ It shows some similarities between different groups. For example, children of single parents and children with migration backgrounds attend the Kita for a shorter period than children who live with both parents together or children who are of German origin.¹²⁸ The report also shows a close correlation between the amount of time a child attends the Kita and the educational level of the parents. The report observes that educational levels are often low among single parents and immigrant families.¹²⁹ Only 5 percent of all single parents belong to the upper status group, but 37.7 percent are part of the lower status group. This explains the lower level of education and the high proportion of mothers without work.¹³⁰

In Marzahn-Hellersdorf, as in the whole of Germany, there is a significant difference in educational achievement between girls and boys, with boys over-represented among those with low qualifications and girls over-represented among those with higher levels of education.¹³¹ Almost half (49.8 percent) of the children need additional support in school; boys are significantly more affected than girls, children with immigrant backgrounds more than children of German origin.¹³²

5.3 | EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

There are many special educational facilities in Marzahn-Hellersdorf for children with learning difficulties.¹³³ The state of Berlin has adopted the model of integration classes as a first step to take children with disabilities (including visually impaired students) out of the special schools and to put them into mainstream classes where they can have the opportunity to demonstrate their learning abilities. However, the experience in Berlin is that the comprehensive integration of students with special needs is only possible when combined with a radical reduction of class sizes and the employment of specially qualified teachers.¹³⁴ Since 2007, the number of special schools (*Sonderschulen*) in Marzahn-Hellersdorf has been reduced from nine to three and teachers have been relocated to mainstream schools. The experience of

127 Bezirksamt Marzahn-Hellersdorf, "Integrierte Gesundheits- und Sozialberichterstattung" (Integrated health and social report) 2003–2012, at <https://www.berlin.de/ba-marzahn-hellersdorf/verwaltung/gesundheit/ges.soz.berichte.html> (accessed 15 March 2014).

128 Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Berlin, District Office, "Gesundheitsberichterstattung".

129 Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Berlin, District Office, "Gesundheitsberichterstattung".

130 Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Berlin, District Office, "Gesundheitsberichterstattung".

131 Ferchland et al., "Zur sozialen Lage".

132 Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Berlin, District Office, "Gesundheitsberichterstattung".

133 Ferchland et al., "Zur sozialen Lage".

134 Ferchland et al., "Zur sozialen Lage".

the district shows that mixed groups achieve better results for all involved.¹³⁵ The mayor sees the fears of the parents of disabled and non-disabled children as a key issue.¹³⁶ The stakeholders involved in the area's management noted that there are certain challenges to the implementation of this inclusive approach. They mentioned that 20 percent of disabled children have a degree of disability that requires changes and adaptation, but public institutions in Marzahn-Hellersdorf are far from being accessible. One of them said:

*Creating an inclusive education system is difficult under circumstances of public saving, because you need money to change and adapt things.*¹³⁷

5.4 | DISCRIMINATION

The Equal Treatment Act 2006 prohibits both direct and indirect discrimination in education. The most common form of direct discrimination identified in this research was bullying, but neither stakeholders nor focus group participants spoke of discrimination as such. The only moment where discrimination came up was in the education focus group, where a participant reported his daughter's experience of being bullied at school. This school, although well regarded in terms of its academic rating, was identified as a school with problematic students in various focus group discussions. Another participant in the education focus group also described the bullying of a friend's daughter, which she felt went unchallenged.¹³⁸

There were also indications of indirect forms of discrimination related to class, which translates to social background in German, but is not identified in the Equal Treatment Act as a prohibited ground for discrimination. A key moment in the educational career is the recommendation of the teacher about which type of school a child should attend in the transition from grade 6 to 7. The data show that twice as many students from the family housing settlements in the south of the district receive a recommendation to go to gymnasium compared with students from the large housing estates in the north.¹³⁹ This indicates a worrying and deep pattern of unequal educational opportunities on the basis of income and social class. A challenge for those working in education is therefore to ensure that those most in need of the additional support for a good education have access and receive it. The district is trying to address this through its Masterplan, which aims to make sure that all young people of the district have an apprenticeship (see Chapter 3).

135 See INKA Marzahn-Hellersdorf – Regionales Zentrum für Schulerfolg und inklusive Bildung (Regional centre for success in school and inclusive education) at http://bildungsserver.berlin-brandenburg.de/fileadmin/bbb/themen/inklusion/tagung_2012/INKA_Marzahn-Hellersdorf_Vortrag.pdf (accessed 11 July 2014)

136 Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17 April 2013.

137 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local NGO, 6 May 2013.

138 Focus group on education, 15 May 2013.

139 Ferchland et al., "Zur sozialen Lage".

5.5 | EFFECTS OF THE COMPLEXITY OF EDUCATION

Measures are being taken to improve education in the district. The School Development Plan 2008–2012 for Marzahn-Hellersdorf identified a need to invest €92.5 million, mainly in physical infrastructure.¹⁴⁰ The following School Development Plan 2013–2017 stated that the need for investment had declined to €60.7 million, and therefore there was more real investment than expected in the previous period.¹⁴¹ The Office for Young People (*Jugendamt*) has financed projects such as school stations¹⁴² and students' clubs, which support students outside regular school classes, organised by a civil society organisation (*Träger*).¹⁴³ This type of financing results from the complex intersection of competencies in education, where different legislations (Berlin school law [*Schulgesetz für Berlin*], federal youth help legislation [*Jugendhilfe*] and different levels of administrations [local school, district, state] of Berlin) are involved.¹⁴⁴

A headmaster of a vocational and trading school in Marzahn considers education to be very important. In his experience the main problem lies in the size of the classes and the need for a different kind of elementary education, rather than the physical equipment of educational facilities. Large class sizes were also identified as an issue in the young men's focus group. A local young man who went to school in the district recalled his experience: "We had classes of one teacher with 30 students." He felt that this was too large to allow students to get the necessary attention. Indeed, most of the participants wanted smaller class sizes. They felt that it was too much work for one teacher who would then be overburdened.¹⁴⁵

A further recurrent theme in the education focus group was the profession and performance of teachers. A social worker in the district thinks that Marzahn has a very poor reputation among teachers. As a consequence, he continued, a transfer to Marzahn is seen by teachers as a punishment. A mother participating in the focus group on education believed that teachers who work in Marzahn often take positions in schools in other districts. As a consequence schools experienced a large turnover of teachers and experienced shortages of teaching staff, and often they do not have teachers to cover particular lessons.¹⁴⁶ Although there are no official numbers on

140 Bezirksamt Marzahn-Hellersdorf, School development plan 2008-2012.

141 Bezirksamt Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Schulentwicklungsplan 2013 – 2017 (School development plan 2013-2017) at http://www.berlin.de/imperia/md/content/bamarzahnellersdorf/ba-beschlsse/2014/vzb635_iv.pdf?start&ts=1390397063&file=vzb635_iv.pdf (accessed 10 May 2014).

142 The school stations are a refuge independent of the school. They support the children and young people at the school, if they look for assistance in a difficult personal, family and/or school situation, at <http://www.berlin.de/ba-neukoelln/schulamt/schulstationen.php> (accessed 11 July 2014).

143 Bezirksamt Marzahn-Hellersdorf, School development plan 2008-2012.

144 General Jurisdiction Act, "Gesetz über die Zuständigkeiten in der Allgemeinen Berliner Verwaltung" (Law on the competencies in the general Berlin administration"), at <http://www.berlin.de/imperia/md/content/seninn/abteilung/fooo41.pdf> (accessed 16 March 2014).

145 Focus group with younger men, 4 July 2013.

146 Focus group on education, 15 May 2013.

the turnover of teachers available for the districts, this perception reflects the high competition of the states for young teachers. According to *Berliner Zeitung* every year 200 teachers move to schools in neighbouring Brandenburg. One in five teachers living in Berlin commutes to Brandenburg. In contrast to Berlin, where teachers are ordinary employees, teachers in Brandenburg are employed as civil servants.¹⁴⁷ This makes Brandenburg more attractive for teachers than Berlin. There are estimates that Berlin is in need of 5,000 new teachers until 2015. However, in order to attract new teachers Berlin has now accepted that teachers should have the status of being a civil servant and even pays teachers more money.¹⁴⁸

There were a number of sharp criticisms of teachers and teaching quality from focus group participants. According to Peter, a participant in the young men's focus group:

*Teachers are less and less teacher, they don't know what to do with the pupils.*¹⁴⁹

A participant in the education focus group reported:

*The teachers do not indicate consequences any more and the relationship between teachers and pupils is not so good. It's not helpful to promise an ice-cream if children do their homework.*¹⁵⁰

The focus group also discussed teacher training and whether it can improve the situation. A participant responsible for a local community centre concluded that there is a need for younger teachers if one also wants to bring in changes to the style of teaching.¹⁵¹

In the view of the headmaster, the role schools and education play in society is becoming problematic. On the one side he sees general society with its normative approach, which he called the behave-yourself culture (*Benimm-Dich-Kultur*). This articulates specific values, is based on peaceful living together and needs to be lived in the families. For those marginalised families who do not follow these norms the school functions in his view as a repair service for negative developments in society.¹⁵²

The headmaster therefore has established new approaches to learning that make a difference. They have integrated class levels 9 and 10 into one vocational training class

147 *Berliner Zeitung*, "Die Konkurrenz im Nachbarland" (The competition in the neighboring country), at <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/berlin/lehrer-in-brandenburg-die-konkurrenz-im-nachbarland,10809148,24056664.html> (accessed 11 May 2014).

148 "Lehrer, die nach Berlin wechseln, dürfen Beamtenstatus behalten" (Teachers, who change to Berlin, may keep official status), BZ, 31 July 2012, at <http://www.bz-berlin.de/archiv/lehrer-die-nach-berlin-wechseln-duerfen-beamtenstatus-behalten-article1511698.html> (accessed 16 March 2014).

149 Participant in focus group with younger men, 4 July 2013.

150 Participant in focus group on education, 15 May 2013.

151 Focus group on education, 15 May 2013.

152 Stakeholder interview with a teacher in a local school, 4 June 2013.

where productive learning is key.¹⁵³ Such approaches, which result in a creative school, are, however, mostly successfully implemented in private schools rather than public schools. This means that students living in more marginalised areas and attending large public schools where resources are lacking have less opportunity to access the innovative approaches to education they would benefit from.¹⁵⁴

A participant in the focus group on young men highlighted the fact that in his view there are too many pilot projects in Berlin.¹⁵⁵ A stakeholder involved in the area management (QM) brings up a similar argument. A big problem with pilot programmes is their sustainability. Many are temporary programmes that provide project financing. He argues that such an approach in this field is a problem:

*What you need is regular financing of Kitas and schools. Especially classes with marginalised pupils need more resources.*¹⁵⁶

He is aware that finances are only one aspect of the problem and highlights other difficulties for those involved in area management, such as getting in contact with other schools. He added that social work in school (*Schulsozialarbeit*) to help marginalised students has a negative image among students, teachers and parents.¹⁵⁷ There are good programmes that target marginalised groups, such as the participation packages (*Teilhabeapakete*) and parent coaches (see boxes below).¹⁵⁸ The former, however, are only used by 35 percent of those eligible,¹⁵⁹ one reason for which is the high bureaucratic hurdle in the application procedure.

PARTICIPATION PACKAGE

The participation package covers the costs for one-day or multi-day trips with schools and kindergarten, personal school supplies, school transport, social and cultural participation, lunch in schools, child-care centres and in-family day care, public transport and supplementary costs for adequate learning support.

153 Stakeholder interview with a teacher in a local school, 4 June 2013.

154 Stakeholder interview with a teacher in a local school, 4 June 2013.

155 Focus group with younger men, 4 July 2013.

156 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local NGO, 6 May 2013.

157 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local NGO, 6 May 2013.

158 "Gewährung der Leistungen im Bildungs und Teilhabepaket (BuT)" (Grant of the education and participation package, at <https://www.berlin.de/ba-marzahn-hellersdorf/buergerdienste/buergeraemter/bildungsundteilhabe.html> (accessed 16 March 2014).

159 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local NGO, 6 May 2013.

PARENT COACHES

Each of the 10 schools in Marzahn-Hellersdorf has been given €5,000 to develop a parents coach programme. The coaches help parents with their specific problems. The parent coaches are part of the Masterplan of the district to end youth unemployment in Marzahn-Hellersdorf by 2016. It started in January 2012. The coaches are coordinated by a match point. Results about how many parents and coaches are involved as well as the number supported are not yet available.

5.6 | TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO LABOUR MARKET

Providing apprenticeships is an important part of the mayor's Masterplan to support the transition from school to employment.¹⁶⁰ Vocational training is viewed as vital for providing young people with the skills for future employment. One of the participants in the education focus group, a local community centre manager, emphasised the need to prepare students for a professional life from an early stage, such as at the Kita. She felt that a "good way of doing it has not been not found yet".¹⁶¹ A local stakeholder, who is a construction worker and was raised in the district, thought that there are places for vocational training in Marzahn-Hellersdorf. But he feels that the stereotyping media reports, which suggest that the young people of Marzahn-Hellersdorf are not suitable for such jobs, due to the poor education they are said to receive, is a barrier. He recalled the difficulties his daughter faced in securing vocational training:

It was difficult to get a vocational training place for my daughter. She wanted to become a nurse for the elderly (Altenpflegerin). In other places you don't pay anything for the training, but we have to pay every month €170 additionally for her education. She gets paid the normal training wage (Lehrlingsgehalt). But it is the public service and if she had done it with a private company it would have been even more expensive.¹⁶²

160 Stakeholder interview with district administration, 14 February 2013.

161 Focus group on education, 15 May 2013.

162 Stakeholder interview with a local resident, 14 February 2013.

6

EMPLOYMENT

In order to examine the processes of economic exclusion among marginalised majority populations in the northern, high-rise areas of Marzahn-Hellersdorf, this chapter focuses mainly on the labour market situation in the area, discussing the main reasons for the persistently high levels of unemployment that these parts of the district are facing and presenting specific groups that are most directly affected by economic exclusion. The chapter concludes with a description of possible solutions that have already been implemented by the district administration and other stakeholders working for the socio-economic inclusion of marginalised people and offers some limited advice on possible new avenues that could be taken. However, it is necessary to first present a short outline of the present-day economic situation in Germany, Berlin and, last but not least, the northern parts of Marzahn-Hellersdorf where the research was carried out. This will enable the reader to understand the magnitude of the problems that the local administration is facing in their efforts to combat the deep-rooted mechanisms of economic exclusion that exist in the northern parts of the district.

6.1 | SECOND GERMAN MIRACLE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR MARZAHN-HELLERSDORF

As a consequence of its robust, export-oriented economy, which benefited greatly from the recent EU expansion to the east and the substantial streamlining of the welfare system that the federal government implemented in the early 2000s through the Hartz IV reform, Germany is today one of the few EU countries that can safely claim that it has managed to escape an economic recession following the global economic meltdown in 2008. However, despite the persistently decreasing unemployment rates and increasing profits of the largest German companies, the methods by which the new German miracle has been achieved have had plenty of critics in recent years. On the one hand, representatives of trade unions claim that the various measures included in the recent social welfare reforms (such as the infamous €1 jobs) are reducing the wages of employed people and masking the ever more prevalent phenomenon of underemployment among large sections of the German population, who are officially considered as being employed but receive less than living wages for their work.¹⁶³ On the other hand, some critics on the left emphasise that the profits that the large German companies are reporting hide the fact that the gap between the rich and the poor has been widening in the last decade¹⁶⁴ and that a substantial number of Germans now live below the poverty line, a situation that was unimaginable a couple of decades ago.

¹⁶³ Ben Knight, "Hartz Reforms: how a benefits shakeup changed Germany", *The Guardian*, 1 January 2013, at <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jan/01/germany-hartz-reforms-inequality> (accessed 5 January 2013) (hereafter, Knight, "Hartz Reforms").

¹⁶⁴ Knight, "Hartz Reforms".

Berlin has, despite recent economic advances, been struggling for decades with chronic unemployment and crippling public debt. While the rebuilding of the formerly divided city facilitated employment in the construction industry and its subcontractors in the 1990s, and the relocation of the federal government to the city provided for many new white-collar jobs at the end of the millennium, the consequences of the post-unification restructuring of East Berlin's economy resulted in high levels of unemployment in the eastern parts of the city. Along with the loss of the federal subventions that West Berlin received throughout the cold war, this situation exacerbated the city's public debt, which forced Berlin's government to substantially decrease the number of its public employees. Therefore, despite the fact that in the last decade the city managed to attract certain large transnational companies and has recently shifted its attention to tourism and enabling the growth of creative industries, the unemployment levels in Berlin (12.1 percent in January 2014) are still almost twice as high as those Germany as a whole (7.3 percent in January 2014).

Because of its history, the eastern parts of the city have been particularly affected by the rising unemployment levels and related socio-economic problems. In this sense, Marzahn-Hellersdorf is no exception. However, as Chapter 2 shows, in terms of overall socio-economic data, the district can be divided into the southern part, where unemployment levels are often below Berlin's average, and the northern part, containing neighbourhoods such as Marzahn-North and Hellersdorf-North, where almost a third of the population is unemployed and thus dependent on some form of social transfers. As subsequent sections show, the district government is attempting to combat this situation by focusing on supporting the remaining local industry and its subcontractors, developing a health-care service sector, attracting new knowledge-based industries and promoting Marzahn-Hellersdorf as a possible tourist attraction. Nevertheless, given the recent economic displacement of unemployed people from the inner city to the outlying areas such as Marzahn-North and the limited ability of the district government to address wider issues of socio-economic justice, the levels of unemployment in the area are most likely to remain high in the foreseeable future.

6.2 | REASONS FOR UNEMPLOYMENT

There are several reasons for the high rates of unemployment in the northern part of the district. To start with, as a number of stakeholders explained, Marzahn and Hellersdorf were designed with the intention of separating the residential areas from the workplaces.¹⁶⁵ While the newly built social infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, police stations and libraries offered some limited employment opportunities in the district,¹⁶⁶ already during the GDR times people left Marzahn and Hellersdorf

¹⁶⁵ Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013; stakeholder interview with a journalist, 17 April 2013.

¹⁶⁶ Roundtable, 10 February 2014.

to work in Berlin's other districts such as Lichtenberg or in the surrounding areas in the Brandenburg region and returned to the district after work. However, with the dissolution of the GDR, these jobs have largely disappeared and many Marzahn- and Hellersdorfers never found a way back into the primary job market. In addition, due to the severe financial trouble that the district found itself in after the unification, the local infrastructure was also affected, leaving more people without secure employment.¹⁶⁷

Many of the people who lost their jobs during the transition managed to find their way back to work through the employment creation measures (*Arbeitsbeschaffungsmassnahmen*, ABM). This was a federal programme to alleviate the rising unemployment rates in the newly unified Germany (especially in the east) by providing people with employment in the low-paying, state-subsidised secondary labour market.¹⁶⁸ Many of these jobs were later transformed into employment opportunities in the ever-growing social economy established around various organisations and associations that worked on alleviating the growing social problems that Marzahn-Hellersdorf faced, but which the local government could not afford to carry out any more. In fact, a number of people interviewed for this report said that after they lost the often highly qualified jobs they had held in the GDR, they were able to find employment only through ABM programmes or through the associations established in the area in the late 1990s.¹⁶⁹

However, following the Hartz IV welfare reform implemented by the SPD-Green coalition between 2003 and 2005, most of the ABM programmes were abolished and many people were subsequently transferred back to receiving the new Hartz IV unemployment benefits. According to many stakeholders working in local administration and in the non-governmental sector, this reform has adversely affected the unemployment situation in the district and worsened the position of economically marginalised people in the northern parts of Marzahn-Hellersdorf.¹⁷⁰ This is because, since the reforms in 2003 people find it more difficult to find their way back to regular employment and are therefore often condemned to a long-term existence on the bare minimum social welfare established through the Hartz IV reforms.

Furthermore, a stakeholder working for the district's social welfare office expressed a concern that the reduced chances of labour market re-entry have consequently led to an establishment of a culture of welfare dependency (*Hartz IV Kultur*) in certain parts of the district. Others mentioned the danger that this dependency on social welfare

167 Roundtable, 10 February 2014.

168 See Springer Gabler Verlag (ed.), "Gabler Wirtschaftslexikon, Stichwort: Arbeitsbeschaffungsmaßnahmen" (Gabler economic dictionary, glossary word: Employment creation measures), at <http://wirtschaftslexikon.gabler.de/Definition/arbeitsbeschaffungsmassnahmen.html> (accessed 12 December 2013).

169 Focus group with older men, 5 July 2013; stakeholder interview with a journalist, 17 April 2013.

170 Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17 April 2013; stakeholder interview with a person working in a local community center, 23 April 2013.

assistance, already present among older generations, is now slowly being transferred to the second generation living in areas of northern Marzahn-Hellersdorf plagued by persistent unemployment. Thus, two out of three children in Marzahn-North and Hellersdorf-North are from families dependent on social welfare transfers.¹⁷¹ As one of the interviewees stated, these children are growing up with parents who gave up on finding jobs (which is a particularly hard task for people over 40) and have accepted their reliance on social welfare transfers. Interviewees further argued that this process creates a situation where children are growing up with no role models that could teach them the necessary work ethics and show them how to reach economic independence through gainful employment.

In fact, in the focus group on media, some of the elements of this emergent “*Hartz IV Kultur*” were being articulated by the members of the younger generation. As one participant boldly stated, he does not see anything wrong with the fact that he is collecting social welfare and intends to remain in that situation for as long as he can. He also mentioned that many of the people who receive social benefits do in fact work but do not report that to the welfare office and thus make more money than people working in difficult, but low-paid, jobs that the welfare office and its job centres mostly offer to people in Marzahn-Hellersdorf. Moreover, he believed that, given the low prices of housing, certain areas of the district are “made for Hartz IV” since, due to the impact of gentrification and associated rising costs of living in other parts of Berlin, people on social welfare can only afford to live in areas such as Marzahn-North.¹⁷² While most of the people in the focus group disagreed with him, his comments provide an insight into the ways in which some young people in the area adopted the idea that, since the society does not offer them many chances, they are not responsible to society and are free to exploit its laws and provisions for their own individual purposes.

This is not to say that majority of the younger generation wants to live on social transfers and rejects the proverbial German work ethic. In fact, in the focus group on employment, young people explained how hard they struggled to find employment and that they were well aware of the trap of becoming dependent on social welfare. Nevertheless, they also complained about the lack of real employment opportunities in the district. While they mostly managed to find an apprenticeship (*Ausbildung*) through the school they attended, they emphasised that it was very hard to find actual employment after the apprenticeship period was over.¹⁷³ While the participants of the focus group on employment did not explicitly state that, their problems with finding employment are also intricately connected with the bad reputation of Marzahn-Hellersdorf outside the district. Thus, one stakeholder claimed that people from Marzahn often face discrimination from employers outside the district and mentioned

171 District Office, Marzahn-Hellersdorf, “Zur sozialen Situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf 2009”; stakeholder interview with local youth service, 14 April 2013.

172 Focus group on media, 25 July 2013.

173 Focus group on employment, 4 June 2013.

that some of the people he helped find employment used his postal address in another district in order to mask their district of residence and thus improve their chances of getting a job.¹⁷⁴

6.3 | GROUPS OF PEOPLE MOST AFFECTED BY UNEMPLOYMENT

Interviews with stakeholders dealing with socio-economic exclusion in Marzahn-Hellersdorf revealed that there are four specific groups of people most affected by persistent unemployment and poverty. The first group is young people who encounter significant problems entering the labour market due to their lack of education.¹⁷⁵ It is therefore not surprising that, in the focus group with young men, many of them mentioned that the district does not offer many employment opportunities for its youngsters. As a result, out of 12 young people participating in the younger men's focus group, 10 of them said they wanted to leave Marzahn-Hellersdorf, as they did not see any real employment opportunities in the area.¹⁷⁶

Another group consists of people over 50 years of age who lost their jobs during the transition period and have few chances of regaining employment. Many of the stakeholders talked about a lost generation of East German men, who were between 20 and 40 years of age when the GDR collapsed in 1989 and who never really found good jobs in the newly unified Germany.¹⁷⁷ In the focus groups this group also expressed the most pronounced sense of nostalgia for the work conditions in the old GDR, where, as one participant said, everybody had a secure job and could rely on receiving a decent pension after retiring.¹⁷⁸

The third group struggling to find employment in Marzahn-Hellersdorf consists of single parents, many of whom are young single mothers. In fact, Marzahn-Hellersdorf has the highest share of teenage pregnancies of all districts of Berlin¹⁷⁹ and consequently they have often been stereotyped by the media as the welfare abusers or as uneducated and incompetent. As a result, employers often do not want to take the risk of employing a young mother, since they believe that she will soon be on maternity leave again.¹⁸⁰ Research for this report included a focus group with young single mothers who are receiving support through the JULE programme,

174 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local NGO, 6 May 2013.

175 Stakeholder interview with local youth service, 14 April 2013.

176 Focus group with younger men, 4 July 2013.

177 Stakeholder interview with local administration, 18 April 2013; stakeholder interview with a person working in a local NGO, 2 May 2013.

178 Focus group on identity, 11 June 2013.

179 Stakeholder interview with district administration, 14 February 2013.

180 Stakeholder interview with local youth service, 14 April 2013.

which offers housing and assistance in dealing with administrative structures, such as social services offices, for young single parents. These interviews revealed that even employees of the district offices responsible for helping young single parents in need often treated them with latent hostility. The young mothers interviewed explained this treatment by referring to widely shared prejudices against poor teenage single mothers. Therefore, programs such as JULE are very important in the fight for securing better inclusion of stigmatised and marginalised people.

Last but not least, immigrants and their children are also disproportionately found among the unemployed. While the Vietnamese group found a way out of unemployment by creating an ethnic economy based on trade and services,¹⁸¹ the Russian-German group has had more problems finding their way in the new society they have arrived in.¹⁸² This is especially so for Russian-German immigrants between 40 and 60 years old. Resulting from their lack of knowledge of the German language and associated discrimination from the majority population, coupled with the fact that their school credentials were often not recognised in Germany, they also often failed to enter the German job market. Since most of them were German citizens, however, they had a right to apply for the provisions of the German social welfare system, which enabled them to survive, but not to really prosper in the new environment they found themselves in. In addition this further alienated the established residents, since they saw Russian-Germans as abusing a welfare system that was not theirs.

6.4 | PERSISTENT PROBLEMS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The district officials interviewed in this study are acutely aware of the problems that youngsters and other at-risk groups are facing in their search for local employment and are working intensively on finding possible solutions to the current difficult situation. As one of the stakeholders working on the economic development of the district explained,¹⁸³ the local government is attempting to secure employment opportunities by focusing on the already existing economic infrastructure, which he presented as based on four main economic fields. First are the existing (Knor Bremse, Coca-Cola) and newly established (Clean Tech Park) industries and their subcontractors. In this respect the local officials placed many of their hopes on the newly developed Clean Tech Park, which should open in 2015 and which will be one of the largest industrial parks dealing with clean energy technologies in Berlin. However, as a number of stakeholders admitted, projects such as Clean Tech Park are not a solution for those who are currently unemployed in the district, since such projects

¹⁸¹ Stakeholder interview with a local politician, 25 April 2013; stakeholder interview with district administration, 14 February 2013.

¹⁸² Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

¹⁸³ Stakeholder interview with a local politician, 25 April 2013.

require highly qualified employees to undertake research and development functions and to manage the envisioned high-tech production processes.

The second economic area the local officials are focusing on is medical services. Here the district has already attracted a number of larger hospitals and medical centres such as the Unfallkrankenhaus Berlin, the Vivantes Klinikum and the Augenklinik Marzahn, which are slowly turning the district into a regional medical-industry powerhouse.¹⁸⁴ In the face of the district's rapidly ageing population, this promises to secure numerous employment opportunities for young people in the near future and has the potential to go a long way towards addressing the area's problem of youth unemployment.

The third important area of economic activity is the slowly developing services sector. Here the local government is placing a lot of attention on the planned expansion of Schönefeld airport, located just to the south of the district, and the employment opportunities that this might create. Officials are also attempting to address the growing problems facing small shops and small businesses, as they are increasingly being supplanted by large shopping centres, such as East Gate, and discount supermarkets such as Aldi and Lidl. This issue is very important for the social cohesion of the district since, as some of the people in the focus group on housing argued, the disappearance of small local shops and infrastructure surrounding them (such as cafés and hairdressers) has more far-reaching consequences than mere rising unemployment levels. It brings blight and decay that areas like Marzahner Promenade or Hellersdorfer Promenade experienced in the last decade and also further decreases available options for spontaneous social interaction in the district.¹⁸⁵

The last area of activity for the district government is the slowly developing tourist sector. Most officials mentioned the potential of the famous park called Gardens of the World, which annually admits almost 750,000 visitors. Moreover, officials hope that the International Garden Exhibition (IGA), which will be held next to the Gardens of the World in 2017 and is expected to bring an estimated 2.4 million people to Marzahn-Hellersdorf, could also provide the impetus for modernising the tourist infrastructure and turn the district into one of Berlin's tourist destinations.¹⁸⁶

In their attempts to encourage the development of these sectors of the economy in the district, the local government is facing some serious challenges. Most importantly, Marzahn-Hellersdorf is still fighting the stigma that was placed on it in the 1990s and which deters many businesses (as well as professionals such as teachers, police officers, dentists) from moving into the area and opening businesses there.¹⁸⁷ This is despite the fact that in many ways Marzahn-Hellersdorf is a logical location for small

184 Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17 April 2013.

185 Focus group on housing, 13 June 2013.

186 Stakeholder interview with a local politician, 25 April 2013.

187 Focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

and medium sized businesses: it is close to the city centre, contains cheap office space and has a newly built international airport nearby. As Chapter 11 shows, the local government is working hard to change the negative image Marzahn evokes among non-residents. It is not a coincidence that the district advertises itself with the slogan “More than you expected” (*Anders als erwartet*, which literally means “different from expected”). The district office has even employed a person to work on changing the negative image of the district (*Standortmarketing*).¹⁸⁸ Moreover, the district also tries to position itself as a gateway to the East, which makes sense given its position (in Europe and in Berlin) and the potential of its large Russian-German and Vietnamese populations to act as economic middlemen in future transactions with these countries. However, as one of the stakeholders claimed, beyond infrastructure, companies that are considering coming to Marzahn also want to make sure that the area offers the necessary urban infrastructure and amenities for their management employees, and in her opinion the district has a long way to go in this respect.¹⁸⁹

A key to ensuring that these attempts to stimulate the local economy will benefit the population currently living in the district will be the better adjustment of local educational capacity to the demands of the newly emerging local economy. Interviews with various local officials indicated their awareness of the problem as they emphasised the need to create a system that would enable a better fit between the apprenticeships offered to the local students and the actual labour market needs in the area.¹⁹⁰ The economic development plans for the district indicate that educational emphasis should be placed on medicine and ICT programmes that will enable young people to become acquainted with cutting-edge technologies that the Clean Tech Park will employ. In fact, some stakeholders reported that the existing companies often complain that they cannot find local workers with the necessary education and skills and thus must employ outsiders.¹⁹¹ While this is partly a consequence of a significant decrease in the number of students searching for apprenticeships, a result of demographic changes in the district (smaller numbers of young people aged between 18 and 35 in comparison with 10 years ago), it also testifies to a larger structural problem of educating local youth for professions that the local economy needs or will need in the next 5–10 years. Moreover, a large number of young people participating in the focus groups had not heard of the Clean Tech Park, but were very interested in the education that would be needed in order to be employed there.¹⁹² This suggests that more needs to be done by the local administration and local business leaders to inform young people about the available future jobs in the district.

188 Stakeholder interview with a journalist, 17 April 2013.

189 Stakeholder interview with a local politician, 26 April 2013.

190 Stakeholder interview with a local politician, 25 April 2013; stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17 April 2013.

191 Stakeholder interview with a journalist, 17 April 2013; stakeholder interview with a local politician, 25 April 2013.

192 Focus group with younger men, 4 July 2013; focus group on employment, 4 June 2013.

This problem of synchronising education and training with the employment opportunities of the local labour market is now being addressed through the Masterplan developed by the mayor's office. According to a representative of the mayor's office, the stated goal of the Masterplan is to provide an apprenticeship position for every young person looking for it until the year 2016.¹⁹³ It is doing this through establishing stronger ties between schools and businesses and other sources of employment in the district. It also requires that schools find more partners for their apprenticeship offers and asks the local employers to give more chances to local youngsters looking for their first jobs. Nevertheless, as one of the stakeholders working in the district administration claimed, the changes in educational structures are very hard to achieve, since these policies are being implemented at the state level and therefore many of the changes the mayor wants to achieve need to be approved by the city government first.¹⁹⁴

The local government is also trying to make public service jobs more attractive to local youngsters. However, as many of the younger participants in the focus groups claimed, the public-sector jobs are, despite the many social protections they offer, still often seen as over-bureaucratic and uninteresting.¹⁹⁵ More importantly, the district is in the process of reducing the number of its employees and thus cannot offer new positions that would interest talented young people living in the area.¹⁹⁶ This returns to the fundamental question of how can district administration achieve significant improvements in the social inclusion for marginalised people without more funds from the state or federal government. Many of the stakeholders interviewed for this report felt that most of the options have been tried and exhausted and that the consolidation of resources and competences that the district officials are forced to implement in order to save money can only do so much. In their view, serious financial investment in programmes that will secure better employment opportunities for the at-risk groups is required to significantly improve the employment situation in northern parts of Marzahn-Hellersdorf.

MASTERPLAN

The stated goal of the Master Plan is to provide until the year 2016 an apprenticeship position for every youngster in Marzahn-Hellersdorf that is looking for it.¹⁹⁷ It attempts to do this through establishing stronger ties between schools and the existing economic infrastructure in the district. It also requires that schools find more partners for their apprenticeship offers and asks the local employers to give more chances to local youngsters in their search for first job.

193 Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17 April 2013.

194 Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17 April 2013.

195 Focus group with younger men, 4 July 2013.

196 Stakeholder interview with local youth service, 14 April 2013.

197 Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17.4.2013.

7

HOUSING

As already noted, Marzahn-Hellersdorf's can be divided into two parts, separated by the interstate road B5. To the south of this road, the area is dominated by privately owned, single-family houses, interspersed with a number of smaller, recently built terrace housing projects. Although the pre-Second World War villages of Kaulsdorf, Mahlsdorf and Biesdorf still exist, they have been fused together in a process of continuous construction, beginning in the GDR period, when more privileged members of East German society were able to build their houses there,¹⁹⁸ until the present day. In last two decades, the area has acquired a comfortable, suburban character, which attracts many Berliners wishing and having the financial means to own their own house on the edge of Berlin. This has resulted in an ever-increasing density of housing as the average size of parcels decreased from about 1,000 square metres to around 600 square metres.¹⁹⁹ Moreover, the lack of building space has in recent years increased property prices and also prevented the building of any new larger housing projects in the area.²⁰⁰ Thus, the southern part seems to be forming into a stable suburban area populated mostly by middle or (more recently) upper-middle-class Berliners.

As most of the stakeholders stressed, on the other side of the interstate B5 the situation is radically different. While, similar to the southern part, the two pre-second world war villages of Marzahn and Hellersdorf have been preserved, they are visually and spatially dominated by the large block housing projects that were built in the late 1970s and 1980s. These blocks, which range from 6 to 22 floors, were built with prefabricated concrete slabs in an attempt to quickly solve the looming housing shortage that East Berlin (and the GDR as a whole) experienced in the post-war period.²⁰¹ As mentioned in Chapter 2, in terms of social structure the area was initially settled by a wide variety of people, but has experienced a steady socio-economic decline since the 1990s. This has homogenised the population and created areas (especially Marzahn Northwest and Hellersdorf-North) that are plagued by chronic unemployment and connected social problems such as crime, youth violence and drug addiction, leading to high levels of mistrust and social withdrawal among the inhabitants. As this research looked at the problems that marginalised majority communities are facing in Marzahn-Hellersdorf, it focused mostly on the areas above the interstate B5, in particular the neighbourhoods of Marzahn Northwest and Hellersdorf-North.

Again, the crucial historical point for understanding the current housing situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf is the period around the time of unification. Interviews with stakeholders and focus group participants suggested that people's own mental maps are often structured by this—for many, very dramatic—event and therefore it seemed

198 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local community center, 23 April 2013.

199 Stakeholder interview with a journalist, 17 April 2013.

200 Stakeholder interview with a journalist, 17 April 2013.

201 Rubin, "Concrete Utopia".

appropriate to structure this report accordingly. Therefore, this chapter begins with a discussion of the housing situation in the district at the time of its inception and then moves on to the changes the area underwent in the 1990s. The chapter considers the massive regeneration programme after unification called *Stadtumbau Ost*, which was carried out in the early 2000s, significantly influencing housing in Marzahn-Hellersdorf. Most of the chapter concentrates on the present-day housing situation in the northern part of the district and discusses some of the most pressing problems that marginalised majority people experience in their search for accommodation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf. The chapter concludes with a presentation of some of the social housing projects which are aimed at an improved inclusion of socially marginalised communities in the district that the local government and other stakeholders initiated in the last decade, and discusses their effects and possible shortcomings.

7.1 | THE NEWLY CONSTRUCTED SETTLEMENTS

The first thing participants in the focus group on housing said when discussing the period before the transition is how desirable the then separated districts of Marzahn and Hellersdorf were for East Berliners. Many of them emphasised how lucky and excited they felt when they received the news that they had been selected to live in an apartment in the newly constructed settlements (*Neubausiedlungen*).²⁰² This should not have come as a surprise since apartments in Marzahn and Hellersdorf were a notable improvement over the often decaying inner-city dwellings they were leaving behind. As one of the stakeholders succinctly put it, “The apartments were safe, dry, and warm.”²⁰³ Moreover, the GDR officials and their information channels also made sure that the newly constructed settlements were presented as the embodiment of the new socialist utopia, thus creating even more interest among the East Berliners searching for a new place to live.²⁰⁴

Despite the separation from social networks in the city and the absence of infrastructure (such as public transport and street lighting), most clearly exemplified by people needing to walk through the muddy district in Wellington boots (see Chapter 4), life in Marzahn and Hellersdorf was undeniably a significant improvement for many young families settling in the newly formed districts. Many participants in the focus group on housing recalled how happy they were to have hot water, central heating and enough space for their children to have their own rooms.²⁰⁵ In addition, while not owning the apartments they lived in (since mostly they were public property managed through companies tenants worked for), the rents people paid represented

202 Focus group on housing, 13 June 2013; focus group with older women, 3 June 2013.

203 Stakeholder interview with a local activist, 8 May 2013.

204 For more on this topic see Chapter 11.

205 Focus group on housing, 13 June 2013.

an insignificant percentage of the salaries they received.²⁰⁶ This was a result of the GDR's housing policy, which heavily subsidised the costs of housing. Many analysts of life in the GDR argue that, along with guaranteed employment, pensions and other social benefits such as free schooling or medical care, these policies functioned as a means of appeasing the population, which had no control over the political process and often even no way of escaping from the ever more repressive political system that the Communist regime developed in the GDR.²⁰⁷

Many participants in focus groups also fondly remembered the times before the transition as a time when one could really feel personal attachment to one's neighbours.²⁰⁸ Beyond the fact that most of the initial settlers had moved to the area as young families and were thus faced with similar problems, this was a result of the ideological emphasis on personal and communal responsibility for the area. Inhabitants of the newly constructed settlements were expected to help with the building and initial beautification of the area; in fact, residents were obliged to do a certain amount of work on the construction site as a precondition for getting the apartment.²⁰⁹ Moreover, people living in the new housing blocks were expected to maintain the housing stock they lived in. This created close contact between people living in the same block and enabled them to establish new social networks, which gradually replaced the ones they had left behind in the city. So it is not surprising that most people reported they were very happy with their housing in Marzahn-Hellersdorf in its early period of existence. In fact, only a couple of the interviewees referred to the dark underside of the prescribed intense social contacts: much of the information from public meetings was fed directly to the secret police (STASI), which tightly controlled the area and its inhabitants.²¹⁰

7.2 | TRANSITION AND ITS AFTERMATH

In the post-unification period, despite the fact that apartments and housing blocks remained the same, the overall situation of the district changed dramatically. Outsiders' view of the area was the first to change.²¹¹ The district, which was once seen as a proud example of new forms of socialist solidarity and coexistence, was suddenly presented by the Western media outlets as a hellish environment filled with asocial East Germans yearning for the good old days of the GDR or with right-wing extremists chasing immigrants down the empty streets. Moreover, the once

206 Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk, "Der Traum von der Platte" (The dream of Prefabricated Housing), at <http://www.mdr.de/damals/archiv/artikel83624.html> (accessed 12 November 2013).

207 Patrick Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall: East Germany and the Frontiers of Power*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010.

208 Focus group on identity, 11 June 2013; focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

209 Rubin, "Concrete Utopia".

210 Rubin, "Concrete Utopia". See also focus group with older women, 3 June 2013.

211 For a more detailed discussion of this topic see Chapter 11.

famed blocks of flats were—despite their tenants’ relatively high levels of satisfaction—soon considered by many outsiders as outdated, decaying, filled with asbestos and therefore uninhabitable. While some of the media reports were based on actual events (unemployment, rising crime, frequent skinhead attacks on foreigners, etc.), many stakeholders and focus group participants claimed that most of that reporting was overblown and clearly prejudiced against the district, which was seen as the archetype of the outdated East German way of life.²¹² Nevertheless, the new image of the area soon turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy, as many of the people who could afford it started moving out.

After unification whole streets in Marzahn and Hellersdorf were sold off to private investors. Some of the participants in the focus group on housing felt that this was done with little consideration for the tenants, who were rarely given a chance to buy their apartments, as had happened in some other former communist countries.²¹³ Some of the companies that took over the large blocks of flats were partially owned by the city and some blocks remained in the hands of the workers’ building cooperatives (*Arbeiterwohnungsbaugenossenschaften*), which had existed in the GDR and were intended to provide workers of a particular company with housing. As discussed below, some interviewees believe that these differences turned out to be quite important for the development of certain areas in the district. More important, the privatisation of the housing stock along with transition to a housing market where rents were not subsidised, led to significant increases in rents.²¹⁴ Combined with the progressively worsening reputation of Marzahn and Hellersdorf, this pushed ever more people out of these districts and into the surrounding Brandenburg area or towards the inner city. And so, in the decade between 1993 and 2003, Marzahn-Hellersdorf lost about one-sixth of its population, which decreased from 297,394 in 1993 to 249,676 in 2003.²¹⁵

Not surprisingly, the social cohesion of the area suffered as a result of these dramatic changes. Many of those interviewed for this research claim that the ties they built with one another in the decade before unification were threatened by the new social conditions. Fearing for their economic existence in conditions of increasing unemployment and social insecurity, combined with a steady influx of Russian-Germans (which the local people, not accustomed to ethnic diversity, viewed with strong suspicion), people turned inwards and closed their doors.²¹⁶ Neighbourhood social structures established under the old system were slowly abandoned and there were no new ones to replace them. Crime and violence were on the rise, creating even more insecurity among the locals and leading to increasing numbers of people moving

212 Stakeholder interview with local administration, 18 April 2013; focus group on housing, 13 June 2013.

213 In contrast, some of the stakeholders from the local administration explained that, due to low rents and the uncertain future of the area, not many local residents wanted to buy their apartments in the early 1990s.

214 Focus group with older women, 3 June 2013.

215 District Office, Marzahn-Hellersdorf, “Demographische Situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf 2012”.

216 Focus group on identity, 11 June 2013.

out of the area. By the late 1990s, officials in the districts of Marzahn and Hellersdorf had to face the fact that more than one-fifth of the housing stock in the north of these districts was empty. This also created problems for the new owners of these housing blocks, who were struggling to secure finance to maintain their property.²¹⁷

7.3 | THE REGENERATION PROGRAMME

This is the wider context that led to the drive for a regeneration project, which the newly unified district of Marzahn-Hellersdorf experienced between 2002 and 2008. Financed by the federal government, the EU and the city of Berlin, the project, part of the larger, federal project Urban Reconstruction East, was an attempt to prevent further social and financial stagnation of the district by making it visually more appealing by demolishing buildings that were not in use any more because of the demographic trends. There were a number of proposals on how to deal with the compounded socio-economic problems that seemed to threaten the existence of the area, ranging from almost complete demolition of the most affected areas in Marzahn Northwest and Hellersdorf-North and resettlement of the remaining inhabitants of those areas to the renovation of the existing housing stock without much demolition.²¹⁸ After a great deal of debate the city decided on a middle way: tearing down some of the most decaying structures, reducing the size of others, renovating remaining buildings where people still lived and planting trees to try to beautify the area.²¹⁹ All in all, over 4,000 apartment units were demolished between 2002 and 2008, along with 142 buildings that had once housed schools, kindergartens and other social institutions,²²⁰ which were deemed redundant and too costly to maintain because of both the rapid dispersal and the ageing of the population of the district. This was a decision that many stakeholders and people participating in focus groups bemoan in hindsight, claiming that such infrastructure is again desperately needed due to the recent increase in the number of children living in the district.²²¹

As one might expect, the project met a variety of responses from the local population. On the one hand, people living in the affected areas understood that something had to be done in order to ameliorate the existing situation and were content that the city had

217 Marlies Schulz, *Stadtumbau Ost – Marzahn-Nord: Ergebnisse einer Bewohnerbefragung in den von Stadtumbau betroffenen Wohnhäusern* (Urban Redevelopment East Marzahn-Nord. Results of a residents survey in areas affected by urban redevelopment residential), Berlin, 2004 (hereafter, Schulz, *Stadtumbau Ost*).

218 Schulz, *Stadtumbau Ost*.

219 Schulz, *Stadtumbau Ost*.

220 Anka Stahl, "Stadtumbau Ost – Das Fördergebiet Marzahn-Hellersdorf (Urban Reconstruction East – the assisted area Marzahn-Hellersdorf). Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, 2012. at <http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/staedtebau/foerderprogramme/stadumbau/Marzahn-Hellersdorf.254.o.html> (accessed 14 November 2013).

221 Stakeholder interview with a local politician on 26 April 2013; stakeholder interview with a journalist 17 April 2013; focus group on housing, 13 June 2013.

decided to do something about it. Moreover, as Tina, a participant of the focus group on media explained, many of the kindergartens and schools planned for demolition were empty by that time and were seen as too costly to maintain even by the local population.²²² On the other hand, some people participating in the focus groups claimed that the demolition of buildings in the district was just another example of humiliations that the area has had to suffer since unification and argued that it was a mistake not to preserve the entire housing stock. This attitude should be understood in the context of the persistent resentment among some East Germans who felt that their memories and their old identities were systematically erased in the process of unification. This sentiment was most clearly expressed in their vehement opposition to the planned demolition of the *Palast der Republik*, the seat of East German government in the heart of Berlin.²²³ On a more local level a similar sentiment was voiced by Kirsten, one of the participants in the focus group on housing who said, referring to the area in Marzahn where a new large shopping centre (East Gate) now stands:

*My son, who was born and raised here and is now thirty years old, always says: "They stole my whole childhood. My day care centre is gone, my kindergarten is gone, my schools are all gone." Not one of the buildings where he was growing up remained. Not one!*²²⁴

Other people opposing the proposed regeneration plans believed that the demolition of buildings in Marzahn-Hellersdorf was a part of a hidden plan to artificially decrease the number of available apartment units and thereby achieve a substantial increase in the prices of housing in the area.²²⁵ Moreover, since the proposed list of buildings to be demolished included many social institutions such as schools and kindergartens, many locals saw that as another method for punishing the already struggling district. While in hindsight some of these arguments actually hold a grain of truth, they were initially mostly raised due to the fact that residents were not properly included in the decision-making process or informed about the reasons, costs and benefits of the project itself.²²⁶ This created resentment among the population, which one can still feel today, despite the fact that people now often point to projects such as *Ahrensfelder Terrassen*, a housing complex, which was renovated and reduced from eleven to four floors, as a good example of the successful regeneration of the area.

222 Focus group on media, 25 July 2013.

223 David Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1997.

224 Focus group on housing, 13 June 2013.

225 See also Schweizer Fernsehen, 10 vor 10, "Abbruch von Plattenbauten in Berlin" (Demolition pre-fab buildings in Berlin", 21 October 2003, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VISa6oFemdU>.

226 Schulz, *Stadtbau Ost*.

7.4 | HOUSING IN MARZAHN-HELLERSDORF TODAY

With the completion of the regeneration process Marzahn-Hellersdorf entered its most recent phase of development, which is characterised by a slight increase in the total population of the district and significantly fewer available housing units in the area. In fact, due to the demolition of many empty apartments and the increasing gentrification of the inner city, the percentage of available housing units has been much reduced in the last few years and is currently at about 3 percent. This has transformed the district from an area where housing companies look for tenants to an area where people look for apartments²²⁷ and brought about important changes in relations between tenants and their landlords, changes that have real consequences for the social inclusion of marginalised communities in the district.

Primarily, in the last few years the rents have again been steadily rising and it seems that this tendency will not stop in the near future.²²⁸ This is an especially troublesome development for people on low incomes and/or social welfare, since they are now facing the daunting option of having to leave their apartments and look for new housing in the already saturated market. The prospect of having to look for another apartment is also becoming a frightening reality for older people whose children have moved away and whose apartments are now too big and costly to maintain.²²⁹ Another group of people seriously affected by the increase in prices of housing are young people with no permanent employment searching for their first apartment. They often meet landlords who expect much more from their tenants than they would only a few years ago. As one of the stakeholders working for the social services department in Marzahn-Hellersdorf said:

*Bad credit, which only five years ago would not be a serious problem, is now a knockout criterion for young people searching for their own apartment.*²³⁰

Overall it seems that the large companies that own the majority of the housing stock in the district have become more selective in deciding who they will rent the apartments to, since they know that housing is not as plentiful as it used to be.²³¹ This leads to the possible exclusion of various at-risk groups like young people, single parents, applicants with bad credit, foreigners and other individuals who do not correspond to the established profile of a good tenant.

Despite these problems, interviewees still report a very high identification with the area they live in and a high satisfaction with their living arrangements. Interviewees

227 Stakeholder interview with a local politician, 26 April 2013, stakeholder interview with district administration, 14 February 2013.

228 Focus group on housing, 13 June 2013.

229 Focus group with older women, 3 June 2013; stakeholder interview with a journalist, 17 April 2013.

230 Stakeholder interview with district administration, 3 May 2013.

231 Focus group on housing, 13 June 2013.

and focus group participants valued Marzahn-Hellersdorf as a very green and peaceful area, where the housing stock has recently been well renovated and made visually appealing, and where one can reach the inner city and nature outside the city in a matter of minutes with a car or with the good public transport system.²³² On the other hand, interviewees were often concerned with the increase in crime and violence (which, as Chapter 9 shows, is often based more on subjective perception than on statistical reality), rising rents and especially missing urban structures such as small shops and cafés, many of which closed down as a result of the building of large shopping centres (such as East Gate) to the area.²³³ Many of the participants in the focus group on housing also mentioned that although the district has a lot of culture to offer, the physical structures (such as galleries, theatres, cinemas) that house these cultural events are often not adequate and should be further supported by the local government.

Also, it seems that people living in the district see that there are important differences between different areas in the north part of Marzahn-Hellersdorf. As one of the stakeholders said:

*There are good and bad corners in this town and we all know where they are.*²³⁴

However, it seems that these evaluations were often based on a limited knowledge of the area. Thus, in the focus group with young people, participants from Marzahn claimed that certain areas of Hellersdorf were dangerous, while young people living in Hellersdorf were claiming the same for areas of Marzahn. While this seems to be a function of limited mobility within the district (young people in particular gravitate towards the inner city and much less towards other areas within the district), a majority of those interviewed agreed that the general condition of any given area is closely related to the involvement of the owners with their property. Participants of the focus group on housing argued that workers' building cooperatives and companies partly owned by the city or the state of Berlin (such as DeGeWo) are much more involved with the overall social development of the area. Thus, in comparison with privately owned housing companies, the city-owned companies are seen by many as more likely to offer spaces for social functions, more involved in the beautification of the environment, or maintain a certain degree of social fairness in terms of who they rent their apartments to.²³⁵ In contrast to this widely held opinion, one of the stakeholders claimed that the degree of social involvement had more to do with the fact that in the past housing companies needed to attract tenants and that such kind of involvement has been reduced in recent years as the available housing became ever more scarce.²³⁶ If that assumption is correct, the prospects of involving

232 Focus group on housing, 13 June 2013; focus group with older women, 3 June 2013.

233 Focus group on housing, 13 June 2013.

234 Stakeholder interview with a local resident, 14 February 2013.

235 Focus group on housing, 13 June 2013.

236 Stakeholder interview with a local politician, 26 April 2013.

housing companies with the socio-economic development of the area will continue to diminish as the vacancy rate continues to decrease. This will certainly have important consequences for the efforts of local government and other stakeholders to achieve better social and economic inclusion of marginalised populations in Marzahn-Hellersdorf.

JULE PROJECT

Jule is a pilot project carried out by the housing company DeGeWo in cooperation with the district of Marzahn-Hellersdorf. It is intended to offer housing and socio-pedagogic support for young mothers and fathers who need support in their search for entrance into the job market or with their efforts at continued education. The project offers housing in a communal setting, childcare, individual coaching for the parents, and support in dealing with the bureaucratic structures that they have to negotiate in their search for socio-economic inclusion.



HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

This chapter begins by looking at the German health-care system from a historical perspective to help understand and explain the difficulties in implementing solutions for current problems.

The chapter considers how the transition configured a perception of the health-care system in which the free system of the GDR is contrasted with the complicated and bureaucratic system of Germany today, with an increased marketization of health care, information obtained through the media informing local decisions and individuals becoming more critical of their doctor's decisions, so that doctors feel that their authority is undermined. Although treatment for everybody who is insured is provided, people have the idea that not everybody gets equal treatment, such as people on social welfare. Older people find it difficult to ask for money and help.

Indicators of the health status of marginalised residents in the district highlight many issues of concern, because there is an accumulation of risk factors that promote mental health problems and disorders in children. Since these families live in clusters in the northern areas of the large settlement, there is a spatial concentration of children with developmental delays or needing special assistance and support. Age, language skills, unemployment, being single and the number of children seem to influence people's feelings about their health.

The chapter describes the quality of the health services and hospitals. The concept of doctors of trust and the right to a free choice of doctors established in the health-care system of the GDR continued to be part of the lived experience of the older generation. The research finds that this is in contrast to experiences with the new system, in which there are difficulties getting an appointment, long waiting times, a shortage of specialised doctors and a lack of specific treatment for an ageing population. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ageing society with reference to job opportunities for young people.

This chapter is based on information from participants in the focus group on health; health was also a feature of the discussion in the older male focus group. The chapter draws on expert articles in public health, a study on the situation of women in the district, the school entrance report of the district, stakeholder interviews inside and outside the local administration, for example with an older woman who had an academic career in the GDR, was unemployed for ten years in the united Germany and now runs a local community centre.

8.1 | HISTORY OF THE GERMAN HEALTH-CARE SYSTEM

The characteristics of the German health-care system can be traced back to social policy in the 19th century under Chancellor Bismarck. Self-government corporatism, the monopoly of the physicians' associations (*Kassenärztliche Vereinigung*) and the fragmented structures of health care are all rooted in decisions taken a long time ago. Such structures are hard to change and may explain the difficulties in implementing solutions for problems today.²³⁷ In 1883, statutory health insurance (*Gesetzliche Krankenversicherung*, GKV) was introduced as part of Bismarck's social legislation. The financing of health care of most of the population through social insurance is one of the main characteristics of the German health-care system.²³⁸

The basis of the health-care system of the GDR was the state-owned structures, with a strong emphasis on prophylaxis in medical care. This system was modelled closely on the system of the USSR, but it also incorporated aspects of the health-care policy of the German empire under Bismarck and a strong tradition of social hygiene in the Weimar Republic.²³⁹ The state and a few church hospitals were responsible for hospital care, and polyclinics and health-care facilities were responsible for care outside hospital.

Polyclinics had a prominent position in the health-care system of the GDR. They were found in every part of a city as well as in district centres (*Landkreise*). In the 1970s there were at least five specialist departments in each polyclinic, as well as a dentist and a pharmacy. The doctors were employed by the hospitals and the health-care facilities and were distributed proportionally to those facilities. In the beginning general practitioners were assigned to these districts as well, but that met resistance. In September 1973, the formal right to a free choice of doctors was explicitly confirmed. Since then doctors of trust may be consulted in primary care. In rural areas general practitioners worked outside the hospital and additionally, there was a parallel supply structure by occupational physicians (*Betriebsärzte*) who provided care not only to the workers but also to their families, which gave them a wider range of duties than their West-German counterparts (*Werksärzte*).²⁴⁰ Continuous health monitoring of the GDR population was ensured by the dispensary (*Dispensairebetreuung*). The term originates from French and refers to a delivery point of medicine for poor people. This dispensary

237 Thomas Gerlinger & Wolfram Burkhardt (2012), Dossier Gesundheitspolitik: Bismarcks Erbe: Besonderheiten und prägende Merkmale des deutschen Gesundheitswesens (Dossier public health policy: Bismarck's inheritance: Special features and coining features of the German health service), at <http://www.bpb.de/politik/innenpolitik/gesundheitspolitik/72553/deutsche-besonderheiten> (accessed 16 March 2014) (hereafter, Dossier Gesundheitspolitik).

238 Dossier Gesundheitspolitik.

239 *Ärztezeitung*, 2009: "Prinzipien, Finanzierung und Organisation des DDR-Gesundheitswesens, *Ärztezeitung Sonderdruck*" (Principles, financing and organization of the GDR health service), special edition, at http://www.aerztezeitung.de/politik_gesellschaft/gp_specials/special-mauerfall-20/article/574143/prinzipien-finanzierung-organisation-des-ddr-gesundheitswesens.html (accessed 16 March 2014) (hereafter, "Prinzipien, Finanzierung und Organisation").

240 "Prinzipien, Finanzierung und Organisation".

structure was introduced in the mid-1950s and was expanded continuously until 1989. The structure included the complete care chain, from prevention and the early detection of illnesses to follow-up after treatments. It differentiated according to risk characteristics and the severity of the condition. The dispensary structure was a very important feature of occupational health care in enterprises.²⁴¹

The financing of health care in the GDR was based on three pillars: parts of the costs were paid out of the contributions to the social insurance system (*Sozialversicherung*) and national insurance (*staatliche Versicherung*). Subsidies were assigned to the social insurance system. The third part came directly from the state budget. This was the funding system for health-care facilities and personnel. The subsidies from the state budget increased significantly over time, because the revenue from the contributions of workers and the enterprises to the social insurance system covered the health costs to a lesser and lesser extent.²⁴²

The financing of GKV is the focus of the health policy debate in the united Germany that has been going on for years. The key words here are citizens' insurance (*Bürgerversicherung*), health flat rate per head (*Kopfprämie*) and capital cover/funding principle (*Kapitaldeckungsverfahren*). None of the current proposals for reform fundamentally changes the system in the direction of a predominantly tax-funded or market system.²⁴³

8.2 | PERCEPTION OF THE HEALTH-CARE SYSTEM AND THE TRANSITION

For older residents of the district the moment of unification is a key marker in their narrative of their experiences of health care. In the focus group on health care, an older woman who moved to Marzahn at its foundation, recalled the pride people had in living in Marzahn because of the quality of life there. "Everything was planned and worked well, including the health sector." Other participants recalled that people operated differently, in particular from the approach they felt is prevalent today, and that the idea of time being money did not really apply back then.²⁴⁴

The participants in the health focus group considered that there had been not too many changes in the health-care system since the transition. In their view, private practitioners enlarged the GDR system of "polyclinics" and specialised doctors. Polyclinics dating from the GDR period have been renovated since the transition

241 "Prinzipien, Finanzierung und Organisation".

242 "Prinzipien, Finanzierung und Organisation".

243 Dossier Gesundheitspolitik.

244 Focus group on health, 5 July. 2013.

and new private doctors established.²⁴⁵ This perception contradicts the historical development and in fact this has only come into effect in recent years. Polyclinics were a key feature of the GDR system. During the transitional government there was a small window of opportunity to preserve the polyclinics.²⁴⁶ Although the GDR health sector was generally regarded as backward, positive elements of it have slowly been recognised, such as the well-functioning links between the in-patient (*stationär*) and out-patient (*ambulant*) sectors, the occupational health-care system, the good care of diabetes or rheumatism patients, the tumour registry and the vaccination system.²⁴⁷ With the accelerated process of unification the preservation of the old system was not on the agenda. The West German government insisted that the West German welfare state must be expanded into the East, so that after unification the number of polyclinics rapidly declined. Within three years, only 2 percent of all outpatient medical services were provided in polyclinics. It was only with the emergence of medical care centres (MVZ) and the legal equality of the remaining polyclinics with medical centres that there was a change in the approach to these GDR relics.²⁴⁸

Nowadays critics say that the structural deficits in the health-care sector for the whole of Germany were already foreseeable then and that Germany missed the opportunity to change health care for the whole of Germany. People say that 1990 was a historically unique opportunity to start from the beginning and find a better solution for a health-care system in the new Germany.²⁴⁹

How the transition forms the perception of current health care in the district and among the participants of the focus group with health seems to be very specific. One area of increasing concern among focus group participants centred on their sense of the increased marketisation of health care. As mentioned above, the German health-care system has not yet fundamentally changed to a predominantly tax-funded or market system. Nevertheless, recent reforms leave ordinary citizens feeling that the system is becoming more market-like. Participants in the focus group did not think that this marketisation was a benefit, for example through increased choices; rather they found that the market operated to limit their options because of their low incomes. Three of the pensioners reported in the focus group on health that they mostly get cheap medicine. They found that doctors do not prescribe more expensive medicine, because the health insurance does not pay them any more.²⁵⁰ The health

245 Focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

246 Martina Merten & Thomas Gerst, "Wende im DDR-Gesundheitswesen 1989/90: Vom Westen viel Neues" ("Transition in the GDR health service 1989/90: Of the west much new"), *Dtsch Arztebl* 103 (36) (2006), at <http://www.aerzteblatt.de/archiv/52564/Wende-im-DDR-Gesundheitswesen-1989-90-Vom-Westen-viel-Neues> (accessed 16 March 2014) (hereafter, "Wende im DDR-Gesundheitswesen 1989/90").

247 "Wende im DDR-Gesundheitswesen 1989/90".

248 "Wende im DDR-Gesundheitswesen 1989/90".

249 "Wende im DDR-Gesundheitswesen 1989/90".

250 Focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

sector is seen to be like a factory: everything that is too expensive has to disappear,²⁵¹ stemming from the fact that medicines in Germany are expensive. For example the antibiotic Flammazine costs €21 in Germany but can be as low as €3.91 in France.²⁵² Generic pharmaceutical products that are cheaper than the copyright-protected original products are available:

*[the doctor] has to choose which product to prescribe within a certain budget. Doctors are required to write cost-effective prescriptions, at the same time they also have to meet their responsibility for the patient and offer a high-quality therapy.*²⁵³

One positive aspect of this specific form of marketisation is the increased accessibility of information about medicines and medical treatments that focus group participants acquired through the media. Two focus group participants reported that they often got information from the media before making decisions on different treatments. It gives them a better understanding of the treatments they are offered. Access to this information makes individuals more critical of their doctor's decisions and can leave doctors feeling that their authority is undermined. According to focus group participants, while the final decision on a course of treatment rests with the general practitioner (*Hausarzt*), patients often ask for things to be explained to them.²⁵⁴

It seems that the experience of the transition has configured a perception of the health-care system which contrasts the free health-care system of the GDR with the complicated and bureaucratic system of the new Germany. The West German system is based on the continuity of the Bismarck system of the German empire. This is often perceived as a two-tier system, where those who have money receive better treatment than those without money and who are marginalised. The health focus group discussed the pressure doctors are under from health insurance and the patients because of the new systems of budgeting. For a pensioner, the transition brought them more bureaucracy in the health sector; he added:

*At the end of the month some doctors do not even take new patients, because they do not have a budget for them.*²⁵⁵

251 Focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

252 See the differences of medicine prices in the EU in comparison to Germany: Medikamentenpreise (Medicine Prices), European Consumer Centre, at <http://www.eu-verbraucher.de/de/verbraucherthemen/gesundheits-in-der-eu/der-kauf-von-medikamenten/medikamentenpreise> (accessed 16 March 2014).

253 "Budget schonen durch Generika-Einsatz? Datenanalyse aus dem Bereich der PPI" (Lowering Budgets by using generic applications? Data analysis from the area of the PPI), *JournalMed*, at <http://www.journalmed.de/newsview.php?id=19764> (accessed 16 March 2014).

254 Focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

255 Participant in focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

8.3 | HEALTH STATUS OF MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES

The relationship between lower socio-economic status, lower education, unemployment and poor health is well documented. It may not be surprising therefore that the indicators of the health status of marginalised residents in Marzahn-Hellersdorf districts highlight many issues of concern. There is an accumulation in the district of risk factors that may cause mental health problems and disorders in children, such as low socio-economic status, family breakdown, early parenthood and smoking in pregnancy²⁵⁶ among some people.

According to the director of a local community centre,

*The data from medical screening, which is done at the start of the primary school, reveals some very specific concerns about developments in poor families in the district.*²⁵⁷

The poor health of children is stressed in the district's integrated health and social report, 2012.²⁵⁸ The development of children in Marzahn-Hellersdorf in relation to their language and motor and cognitive skills are on average worse than in other districts. Children from socially disadvantaged parents are especially badly affected. Since these families live in clusters in the northern area, there is a spatial concentration of children with learning or special needs. This concerns mainly Hellersdorf-North and Marzahn-North.²⁵⁹ The report noted that inadequate dental care, poor nutrition, smoking at home, excessive and uncontrolled television consumption and the associated lack of activation and stimulation shape the domestic situation of many children.²⁶⁰

- In more than half of the families (51.6 percent) at least one parent smoked. This is the highest proportion of all Berlin districts, where the average is 38.2 percent. In families with low social status the share is 71.5 percent, which is almost five times higher than in families with high social status (14.1 percent).²⁶¹
- Only 80 percent of children were the appropriate weight for their size. Nine percent of children were overweight and 12 percent were underweight.²⁶²
- Children of German origin had more frequent deficient motor skills than children with a migrant background.²⁶³

256 Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Berlin, District Office, "Gesundheitsberichterstattung".

257 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local community center, 23 April 2013.

258 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local community center, 23 April 2013.

259 Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Berlin, District Office, "Gesundheitsberichterstattung".

260 Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Berlin, District Office, "Gesundheitsberichterstattung".

261 Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Berlin, District Office, "Gesundheitsberichterstattung".

262 Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Berlin, District Office, "Gesundheitsberichterstattung".

263 Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Berlin, District Office, "Gesundheitsberichterstattung".

- 41.6 percent of children had problems with the development of their language skills; boys had slightly more problems than girls. The proportion was higher among immigrant children than among German children. Most obvious was that the difference depended on social status.²⁶⁴
- 17.2 percent of the children had abnormal findings for social-emotional development. Again, boys (20.8 percent) were significantly more affected than girls (13.5 percent).²⁶⁵

These issues were raised in interviews with stakeholders and in different focus groups. The participant from the local community centre in Marzahn talked about the German parents who have similar problems as the migrants, namely “socio-motor deficits”. She stressed that Marzahn has the highest rate of social welfare recipients of all Berlin districts and she described many as smokers and single parents.²⁶⁶ The focus group on education also discussed the situation and social problems faced by people on social welfare (Hartz IV) in Marzahn. Several participants were critical of the number of children who they believed had their own TV.²⁶⁷ This concern about the amount of time young people spend watching television and its impact on health is supported by data in the health report. In Marzahn-Hellersdorf nearly one in four children had their own TV before they start school at the age of six. This is twice the Berlin average and higher than in any other district.²⁶⁸ According to the health report nearly two-thirds of the children in the district are spending up to two hours a day watching TV, compared with Berlin as a whole where 23 percent watch TV for two hours per day and 7 percent watch TV more than two hours per day.²⁶⁹

Age, language skills, unemployment, being single and the number of children all seem to influence people’s perception of their health status. This is exemplified by a study on women in the district.²⁷⁰ Two-thirds of the women in Marzahn-Hellersdorf described their health as good. Almost 90 percent of women up to the age of 21 were the most likely to perceive their health as good or very good, but this figure decreases with age.²⁷¹ 24 percent of German women viewed their health as very good compared with 3 percent of Russian-speaking women with migrant backgrounds (*Spätaussiedler*). The authors suggested that the higher unemployment rate among these affects their health and well-being.²⁷² Half of all women in the study felt stressed several times, one-

264 Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Berlin, District Office, “Gesundheitsberichterstattung”.

265 Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Berlin, District Office, “Gesundheitsberichterstattung”.

266 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local community center, 23 April 2013.

267 Focus group on education, 15 May 2013.

268 Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Berlin, District Office, “Gesundheitsberichterstattung”.

269 Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Berlin, District Office, “Gesundheitsberichterstattung”.

270 Heidrun Schmidtke, “Lebenslagen von Frauen in Marzahn-Hellersdorf” (Situations in life of women in Marzahn Hellersdorf), Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschungszentrum Berlin-Brandenburg e.V. (SFZ) (hereafter, Schmidtke, “Lebenslagen von Frauen”) at http://www.sfz-ev.de/index_html_files/FrauenStudie.pdf (accessed 11 July 2014).

271 Schmidtke, “Lebenslagen von Frauen”.

272 Schmidtke, “Lebenslagen von Frauen”.

fifth felt stressed during the period of the study and a third did not feel any stress. One strong influence on the perception of stress for women was the presence of children in the household. Single parents were more likely to have experienced stress in the preceding seven days (63 percent) compared with women with children and partners (48 percent). 72 percent of mothers with three or more children living in the household reported feeling stressed frequently.²⁷³

8.4 | HEALTH AND FINANCIAL SITUATION OF SOCIAL WELFARE RECIPIENTS AND ELDERLY PEOPLE

Although the health-care system provides the necessary treatment for everybody who is insured, there is a feeling that not everybody gets equal treatment. In the health focus group this question was highlighted by a story by one of the participants about one of his neighbours:

The fact is, that people on social welfare (Hartz IV) cannot pay many of the medical procedures, because it is too expensive for them.

Another participant reported that he had to pay for new (more expensive) medication himself and others agreed that many things had to be paid for by the patients themselves. In the discussion it turned out that the reasons seem to be multidimensional, related to private and public health insurance and because you pay more if you get medicine in the pharmacy.²⁷⁴ For people depending on social welfare this money is not always available, although they might have a right to claim for it. Participants in the focus group with older people discussed the emotional problems of going to the social welfare office to ask for money and help, saying it was especially difficult for older people who had worked all their lives. They talked of shame and the feeling of begging for not being able to get official entitlements.²⁷⁵

The participants in the older men's focus group discussed the pensions they received. The main problem during the transition was the transfer of the centrally organised social security system of the GDR into the differentiated social security system of the Federal Republic.²⁷⁶ There were different pension systems in the East and the West. A former policeman in the GDR and participant in the older man's focus group claimed that the pension that he would have received in East Germany would have been almost double his pension in the united Germany.²⁷⁷ Another participant and pensioner added:

273 Schmidtke, "Lebenslagen von Frauen".

274 Focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

275 Focus group with older women, 3 June 2013; focus group with older men, 5 July 2013.

276 This transition is called "DDR-Altlasten", meaning leftovers of the GDR. One of the leftovers are the pensions of the former GDR, at [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/DDR-Altlasten_\(Rente\)](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/DDR-Altlasten_(Rente)) (accessed 16 March 2014).

277 Participant in focus group with older men, 5 July 2013.

*Workers sometimes had much work, other times they had little work, it was not consistent and continuous work. Today they are poor when they reach their retirement.*²⁷⁸

A man participating in the same focus group did not share the view that East German pensioners were poor:

*East German pensioners with continuous employment record have a good pension. The spas (Kurhäuser) are full of East German pensioners.*²⁷⁹

Another participant who had worked as a policeman in the GDR and in the united Germany was happy with his pension:

*I was in the police and with this money I can live comfortably. But if you receive social welfare (Hartz IV) you have to strip yourself totally off, when you apply as a pensioner.*²⁸⁰

8.5 | QUALITY OF HEALTH SERVICES IN MARZAHN-HELLERSDORF

Participants in the health focus group were generally happy with the quality of the health treatment and hospitals, although some of them suffered severe health problems. The participants of the focus group knew about three polyclinics in the district, which they generally judged as good.²⁸¹ During the discussion their expectations of a good doctor was an underlying theme.

*He should know something about you and tell you when to go to get a check-up.*²⁸²

*He informs me where I should go and my health insurance company also informs me on when I have appointments for check-ups.*²⁸³

*A good doctor is there for you, he checks you, talks to you and gives you the feeling that you are a human being.*²⁸⁴

This perception seems to reflect the experience the focus group participants had had with doctors in the GDR. One participant was really fond of her doctor, calling her “a real GDR doctor” and describing her consultations as follows:

278 Participant in focus group with older men, 5 July 2013.

279 Participant in focus group with older men, 5 July 2013.

280 Participant in focus group with older men, 5 July 2013.

281 Focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

282 Two participants in focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

283 Participant in focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

284 Participant in focus group group on health, 5 July 2013.

*You come in and she asks you about your family and then the last five minutes she asks why you came and works out a solution.*²⁸⁵

Nearly all the participants of the health focus group had been going to the same doctor for years. Participants were reluctant to change doctors because of the time and energy this would require and the time it would take the new doctors to familiarise themselves with the patients' background and medical history. Most valued the continuity and familiarity that came from seeing the same doctor for a long period. One participant even brought her grandchildren to her doctor. She could talk to her doctor and explain what was wrong and her doctor knew her family. It was good for her to be with the same doctor for a long time.²⁸⁶ Such narratives are in contrast with the experiences of two other participants, who mentioned doctors who do not talk at all to you.

*"They just send you around everywhere."*²⁸⁷

Another participant related a similar experience:

*My doctor has no interest in the patient. He quickly goes over him and then the patient is sent away.*²⁸⁸

Another participant thought that the problem was in the attitude of the doctors:

*Some do not even speak with the patients and have no human contact.*²⁸⁹

A young participant in the health focus group worked as a nurse for older people. In her experience many of her patients were badly cared for in hospitals and when they were discharged back to the old people's home they were in a very bad state. She said that it could make a difference if she accompanied them to the doctor or the hospital. Although some of the doctors took no notice of her, others were more sensitive to the needs of the patient as a result:

*But my general experience is that doctors care less for older people and that it is all about money with the doctors.*²⁹⁰

It seems that the concept of doctors of trust and the right to a free choice of doctors which were, as already mentioned above, established under the health-care system of the GDR, continued to be part of the lived experience of the older participants of the health focus group. This is in contrast to experiences with the new system, which is

285 Participant in focus group group on health, 5 July 2013.

286 Focus group onhealth, 5 July 2013.

287 Two participants in focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

288 Participant in focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

289 Participant in focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

290 Participant in focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

characterised by difficulties in getting an appointment, long waiting times, a shortage of specialised doctors and a lack of the specific medical needs of an ageing population.

8.5.1 | APPOINTMENTS AND WAITING TIMES

Getting an appointment with a doctor was one of the core issues in the health focus group. Even when people got an appointment they reported having to wait for hours before seeing the doctor. One participant, aged 50, spoke about appointments where the interaction with the medical professionals was not satisfactory.²⁹¹ A man of the same age reported of a bad experience with a cardiologist in Marzahn.

*It took me six weeks to get an appointment. When I came to the appointment, the doctor was seeing three other patients at the same time.*²⁹²

Another pensioner in the focus group complained:

*Specialised doctors do not take enough time with the patient and there is no conversation going on, he just checks and writes a prescription.*²⁹³

Her husband added:

*Doctors are always in a hurry and have no time to explain anything.*²⁹⁴

All participants agreed that waiting times needed to be shortened, even if it means bringing more doctors into the district. Some focus group participants believed that waiting times differed depending on whether a person has private or public insurance. In the experience of the woman of 50 mentioned above, her general practitioner was closed on a Friday, because he only saw private patients then.²⁹⁵ However, one of the men, who had changed from private to public insurance, contradicted this and said he did not experience much difference in treatment.²⁹⁶

8.5.2 | SHORTAGE OF SPECIALISED DOCTORS

Participants in the health focus group had no problems finding general practitioners or dentists; by contrast there were difficulties finding specialised doctors such as psychologists, neurologists, dermatologists and orthopaedists in the district.²⁹⁷

291 Participant in focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

292 Participant in focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

293 Participant in focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

294 Participant in focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

295 Participant in focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

296 Participant in focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

297 Focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

A stakeholder in the district administration explained that the district tries to distribute the specialised doctors (*Fachärzte*) evenly:

*There are areas where there is a concentration of specialist doctors. Generally there is a key for the distribution, which says how many general practitioners and specialist doctors there have to be in one area.*²⁹⁸

The participants of the health focus group discussed the lack of doctors in relation to the image of Marzahn, which is often seen as concrete jungle (*Plattenbau*) from the outside. This negative stereotyped image, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 11, has been imposed on the district since the transition, one participant said:

*It influences the decisions of doctors, teachers, and policemen not to come here.*²⁹⁹

Another pensioner participating in the health focus group believed that many bad doctors with no experience are forced to come to Marzahn and they want to leave as soon as possible.³⁰⁰ Another added that many of them are getting older and that new doctors are needed.³⁰¹

*Many specialists do not want to come here or they leave to go to some other areas where they can make some money, like Zehlendorf, Grunewald.*³⁰²

These are wealthier districts in West Berlin. This narrative is very similar to the one in the education focus group, where participants claimed that the bad image of Marzahn-Hellersdorf is responsible for the high turnover of teachers.

The focus group with health concluded with the suggestion that politicians should react to the changes. They discussed how to get doctors to the district. One participant suggested that doctors should be required to work in the countryside or in areas where there is a shortage of doctors before they can choose where to settle down.³⁰³

8.5.3 | THE AGEING POPULATION

The changing demographic profile of the district will bring new challenges for health care in the district. While Marzahn-Hellersdorf was once the district with the youngest population, it is now ageing and the average age is increasing fairly fast

298 Stakeholder interview with district administration, 14 February 2013.

299 Focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

300 Participant in focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

301 Participant in focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

302 Participant in focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

303 Participant in focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

(see Chapter 2). The mayor highlighted this fact because he can see that Marzahn-Hellersdorf is a changing district with no experience with an elderly population.³⁰⁴

*It needs support for elderly people to live in their own homes and it needs shops where things for elderly people can be bought.*³⁰⁵

The mayor stressed that shopping is also a social event and cannot be seen as merely technical process of allocation, and so shopping facilities for elderly people need to meet this social function.³⁰⁶

In the view of participants in the health focus group there seems to be a shortage of doctors and medical services serving the needs of an ageing population. A participant, who moved to the district right at the beginning, said that this was not taken into consideration in the planning phase of Marzahn-Hellersdorf, because at the time it was a very young neighbourhood.³⁰⁷

A 17-year-old participant thought that the ageing society created job opportunities for young people. She considered that many young people would work as a nurse for elderly people (*Altenpfleger*) if such jobs were better paid. She made a point, which sounds xenophobic at first glance, but describes the current situation in the health sector:

*Instead of increasing the wages, they bring in foreigners, who work for little money.*³⁰⁸

She refers to the recruitment of nursing staff from Southern and Eastern Europe by the federal government.³⁰⁹ She is training to be a nurse for old people because she can see that there is an increasing need for this profession because of the demographic changes.

*The job is undervalued (unterschätzt) among my friends, the job is badly paid and you have to pay €150 per month for the training.*³¹⁰

She is motivated to stay in the job because she likes elderly people and sees a future for herself, as there will be no shortage of job opportunities in this sector.³¹¹

304 Stakeholder interview a district politician, 17 April 2013.

305 Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17 April 2013.

306 Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17 April 2013.

307 Participant in focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

308 Participant in focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

309 "Fachkräftemangel: Bundesregierung wirbt im Ausland um Pflegekräfte" ("Lack of specialist: Federal Government recruits care workers abroad"), *Spiegel Online* 11 September 2013, at <http://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/soziales/bundesregierung-wirbt-in-neun-laendern-um-pflegekraefte-a-921552.html>, (accessed 16 March 2014).

310 Participant in focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

311 Participant in focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

9

POLICING AND SECURITY

This chapter begins with a brief history of the structure of the police force in Berlin and describes its history. It focuses on the gap between the statistics on crime and safety, which show that the district has, in comparison with other districts, a very low crime rate, and the perceptions of the locals, who feel that security is worse in their district compared with others. To understand this contradiction, it is necessary to look into the possible connection between the fear of crime with the perceived increasing diversity of the area.

The chapter notes how the risk of crime varies across the district and across the hour of the day. We ask what it means for policymakers when there is an apparent disconnection between the fear of crime (which is high) and the actual crime rates (which are low). The discussion in the focus groups provided an insight into how locals explain crime or violence in the district, through different local narratives on why crime happens, and explanations for particular forms of crimes.

There is a detailed examination of local views of an important case that occurred during the period of field research in the summer of 2013, concerning the creation of an asylum seeker home. The event reactivated a collective trauma stemming from the time of the transition and strongly related to the question of how security is perceived in Marzahn-Hellersdorf. Understanding the situation better requires looking back to the 1990s, the time of the transition, and looking at the history of the Vietnamese and Russian-German communities and the racist struggles going on in the district in the first half of the 1990s.

Discussion with research participants on the image and role of the police highlighted the fact that many former police and security officials of the GDR live in the district. Some of them participated in the various focus groups and gave an insight into the changing images and roles of policemen in the GDR and united Germany. The interviews noted the expectations placed on the police and the increasing number of issues they are asked to address, which have traditionally been the responsibility of other bodies. This suggests a shift in the role of policing, towards a bigger role as social engineers but without the personnel or training. The chapter concludes with a look into crime prevention and cooperation with the police. This details the joint efforts of prevention officers, social workers, street workers, the neighbourhood management, private and public associations and schools.

The data for this chapter are based on discussion in the focus groups on policing, education, young men and older men. There were also interviews with key local stakeholders in civil society, as well as people working in the police and local administration. The chapter draws on publicly available information on the structure and organisation of the police in Berlin, a study from the Max Planck Institute on

security in Marzahn,³¹² a study on new migrant communities in Berlin³¹³ and a study on everyday life and socialism in Marzahn,³¹⁴ as well as a communal study³¹⁵ and the crime prevention report.³¹⁶

9.1 | BRIEF HISTORY OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE POLICE FORCE IN BERLIN

Berlin is divided into six local police departments (directorates). Although they are different in size, they are structurally identical. The relevant areas are security, the fight against crime, traffic safety and prevention.³¹⁷ Police Directorate no. 6 is responsible for the administrative districts of Lichtenberg, Marzahn-Hellersdorf and Treptow-Köpenick in eastern Berlin and covers 282.46 square kilometres with 739,000 inhabitants in 2013. Approximately 2,000 employees work there in six sections.³¹⁸

The police force in Berlin began in 1848 with the founding of the Royal Protection Team (*Königliche Schutzmannschaft*) by King Friedrich Wilhelm IV. During the Weimar Republic, the police was reorganised in Berlin and gave up its military structure, and in 1920 the police force (*Schutzpolizei*) was established. During National Socialism, all German state police forces were disbanded and became subordinate to the Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler. The various police troops took part directly in the crimes of the Nazis. After the war, the Berlin police was initially only subordinate to the Soviet occupation forces. In 1948 normal policing started again in the western occupation sectors of Berlin. In contrast, in the Soviet sector military-led police units were established, which later included the volunteer helpers of the People's Police and the FDJ (Free German Youth, the communist youth organisation). From the mid-1950s, the civil service ranks of the police forces were called according to military ranks. The building of the Berlin wall in 1961 led to the final separation of the police forces. After

312 Tim Lukas, *Marzahn – Sicherheit nach Plan*, (Marzahn – planned security) Max Planck Institute, Berlin, February 2007 (hereafter, Lukas, *Marzahn – Sicherheit nach Plan*).

313 Wolfgang Kil and Hilary Silver, "From Kreuzberg to Marzahn. New Migrant Communities in Berlin", *German Politics and Society* 81, 24 (4) (2006) (hereafter, Kil and Silver, "From Kreuzberg to Marzahn").

314 Rubin, "Concrete Utopia".

315 ZDK Kommunalanalyse, 2003. Zentrum Demokratische Kultur (ZDK) (Hg.), „Gegen Rechtsextremismus hilft mehr Demokratie.“ Community Coaching – Kommunalanalyse und Demokratieentwicklung im Gemeinwesen (Against right-wing extremism more democracy helps. Community Coaching – local analysis and democracy development in the community), Reihe: Bulletin. Schriftenreihe des Zentrum Demokratische Kultur, 4/03, Leipzig, Stuttgart, Düsseldorf.

316 *Berliner Morgenpost*, "Präventionsbericht: Die Gewalt an Berliner Schulen geht zurück" (Prevention report: Violence in schools in Berlin is declining), 16 January 2012, at <http://www.morgenpost.de/berlin-aktuell/article1882335/Die-Gewalt-an-Berliner-Schulen-geht-zurueck.html> (accessed 16 March 2014) (hereafter, *Berliner Morgenpost*, "Präventionsbericht").

317 Der Polizeipräsident in Berlin, "Struktur und Organisationsaufbau der Polizei Berlin" (Structure and Organisation of the Berlin Police), at <http://www.berlin.de/polizei/dienststellen> (accessed 12 May 2014).

318 Der Polizeipräsident in Berlin, "Polizeidirektion 6" (Police Headquarter 6), at <http://www.berlin.de/polizei/dienststellen/polizei-in-den-bezirken/direktion-6> (accessed 12 May 2014).

the fall of the wall, the West Berlin police assumed responsibility for policing the whole of Berlin. The 20,000 employees of the police in the western part of Berlin merged with the 12,000 employees of the police in the east. In the former East Berlin two other local directorates were formed. The then seven local directorates were later reduced to six.³¹⁹

9.2 | STATISTICS AND THE EXPERIENCE OF SAFETY

In the focus group on policing people discussed perceptions of safety in Marzahn. Many participants were unhappy about security in the area, others mentioned that they had very little contact with the police. While the statistics on crime and safety show that the district is not particularly unsafe in comparison with other areas, participants felt that security was worse in their district compared with others. A participant who runs a local community centre stated that Marzahn is a very safe area and that there is a conceptual difference between the safety people feel and the crime statistics.³²⁰

It became clear during the research that there are two ways of looking at the situation in the district. One is the official representation via statistics, which would encourage the view that the indicators show that there is no reason to be worried. The other perception is that of the people living in the area, where statistics do not match everyday perceptions and experience, thus creating a feeling of being apart.

9.3 | SPACES AND TIMES OF FEAR AND SAFETY

The focus group with young men discussed crime and recognised that the risk of crime varied across the district. A local stakeholder, a construction worker, had the impression that information from the police news on the internet and information from police officers gave a very negative view of crime in the district. However, having worked in other districts of Berlin he did not see the issues of crime and security as particularly problematic here compared with elsewhere.³²¹ A stakeholder from the police stressed that there are no spaces of fear in Marzahn-Hellersdorf:

There are big streets full of light, it's clean and there is no littering, the environment is clean as well. If you go to S-Bahn (underground station) Schöneweide this is a real space of fear.³²²

319 "Der Polizeipräsident in Berlin" (The chief of the police in Berlin), at http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Der_Polizeipr%C3%A4sident_in_Berlin (accessed 16 March 2014).

320 Focus group on policing and security, 5 July 2013.

321 Stakeholder interview with a local resident, 14 February 2013.

322 Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

In another participant's view there are pleasant and unpleasant people in the district and there are clean and dirty corners. He identified "Russian citizens" as a particular problem, being noisy and drinking alcohol in public space and on the street:

There are places where the "Alkis" (alcoholics) meet, sometimes on children playgrounds.³²³

Participants in the older men's focus group identified trams as spaces of fear and insecurity, caused by the presence of young drunks. The insecurity of trams, which are automated and have no drivers or conductors and rely only on video surveillance, was contrasted to the safety in the bus where there is a driver, who can if necessary stop the bus. The impact of bad experiences on individuals was highlighted in the focus group when a pensioner who moved to the district from West Berlin 15 years ago said that he stopped using the S-Bahn after an incident in which he was harassed 10 years ago, and he called for more security in the S-Bahn.³²⁴ Among the older men in the focus groups perceptions of safety were related to the time of day rather than particular spaces.³²⁵

But younger inhabitants reported of similar experiences. One of the participants, in his 40s, who grew up in the district, talked about the image of Marzahn having a lot of "Assis" (anti-socials). He did not agree because Neukölln or Kreuzberg, both in the west of Berlin, were much worse than Marzahn. He sees similarities in the two areas:

Respect has disappeared on all sides. In Neukölln and Kreuzberg young people do not have respect and among the whites, ours, the Germans they don't have respect. They yell around and in the evening quite a few people get robbed. You have to walk very quickly during the night.³²⁶

Another participant in the focus group of older men stressed that older people do not leave home in the evenings, which can reinforce their sense of isolation. He mentioned an initiative to address this, the project called "Breaking up Loneliness", run by young seniors (65–80 years old).³²⁷ It is run by a local community centre and financed by one of the public housing companies, and organises regular "thematic breakfasts", where interesting topics for older people are discussed.³²⁸

For policymakers a key challenge is the apparent disconnection between the fear of crime (which is high) and actual crime rates (which are low). A study by the Max

323 Stakeholder interview with a local resident, 14 February 2013.

324 Focus group with older men, 5 July 2013.

325 Focus group with older men, 5 July 2013.

326 Stakeholder interview with a local resident, 14 February 2013.

327 Focus group with older men, 5 July 2013.

328 Projekt "Vereinsamung Aufbrechen" wird unter dem Titel GEMEINSAM STATT EINSAM ehrenamtlich fortgeführt (Project "Breaking up Loneliness" is continued under the title "Together instead of being lonely".), at <http://www.verein-kiekin.de/projekt-vereinsamung-aufbrechen-wird-unter-dem-titel-gemeinsam-s> (accessed 16 March 2014).

Planck Institute concluded that since feelings of insecurity and threat do not reflect crime rates their cause is unclear,³²⁹ suggesting that insecurity is self-fulfilling. As people do not leave their homes after dark, the streets are deserted and so are seen as dangerous. One way to address this is through increasing the police presence.³³⁰ Expert stakeholders in the police, housing and the neighbourhood management company interviewed for the study were keen to find other ways that would help to address this issues.

9.4 | LOCAL NARRATIVES EXPLAINING CRIME AND VIOLENCE

An important first step in understanding people's sense of insecurity may be to develop a greater understanding of their narratives of crime. Participants in the focus groups and the stakeholders often had their own explanations of why there is crime or violence, which came up in the policing focus group. One explanation the participants came up with was that people who get Hartz IV are on the lowest social level and have no way to get out of their situation. Here crime and violence are ways of releasing social frustration. People also said that the widening gap between rich and poor in Germany fuels this frustration. The resulting anger is displayed here in the district as the resentment of the poor, as an older participant of the police focus group expressed it. He held politics responsible for this development.³³¹

Another explanation was related to youth violence. Participants of the education focus group spoke of violence among primary-school children³³² and fights between juveniles.³³³ However, the stakeholder in the police reported that youth violence is decreasing in the district, but because there are no services for young people, they meet in the public space where they fight over women.³³⁴ Participants in the policing focus group and of the young men's focus group explained that most of the youth clubs are gone and young people have nothing to do. One participant in the young men's focus group compared Hellersdorf with the third world to describe the situation:

*This is not a third-world country, but for an industrial city there could be more places for youth under 18.*³³⁵

329 Lukas, *Marzahn – Sicherheit nach Plan*.

330 Lukas, *Marzahn – Sicherheit nach Plan*.

331 Focus group on policing and security, 5 July 2013.

332 Focus group on education, 15 May 2013.

333 Focus group with younger men, 4 July 2013.

334 Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

335 Focus group with younger men, 4 July 2013.

The headmaster of a higher professional school in Marzahn gave yet another explanation. He stressed that young people needed boundaries. According to him the law is too soft and there is too much empathy. Judges must show the importance of admitting mistakes and making expiation (*Sühne*). In his view a lot of crime happens under the influence of alcohol. He mentioned the central Alexanderplatz, which is a meeting point for alcoholics and youth gangs. They often meet there for ritual tests of courage (*Mutproben*).³³⁶ A local construction worker who grew up in the district knows places in Marzahn-North where drug dealing and consumption is going on, for example in a nearby gymnasium.³³⁷

Particular groups were also identified as connected to particular forms of criminal activity in both stakeholder interviews and focus group discussions. For example, older people connect young people with graffiti and vandalism. A former police officer in the GDR, who participated in the police focus group and works for one of the local community centres, described his job as regularly cleaning graffiti off their premises. He sees mostly youth causing the graffiti and mentioned a nearby bridge over Ahrensfelde station, which is covered in graffiti. He describes it as a constant and expensive battle between him and the sprayers. The newest thing, which is even worse, is scratching windows.

In contrast to this, a police officer interviewed for this research did not see this a major issue; he thought that there were less graffiti in Marzahn-Hellersdorf than in Spandau North. In his view those who see graffiti as a problem have the “mentality of a block warden”³³⁸ (*Blockwartmentalität*) and suggests that such an attitude has more to do with excessive social control than with crime.³³⁹

In the older men’s focus group the profits made by some in the aftermath of unification was seen as an economic crime that has gone unpunished. A participant in the focus group drew a distinction between gaining money and making a profit. For him there was a lot of what he called “economic crime against ‘Ossis’ (Easterners, former citizens of the GDR) and there is no concept to fight it and nobody cares about it.”³⁴⁰ One example was the sale of a leisure centre of the GDR to an investor in Leipzig. With no restriction on the sale the buyer was able to sell the business, take his money and move to South America.

336 Stakeholder interview with a teacher in a local school, 4 June 2013.

337 Stakeholder interview with a local resident, 14 February 2013.

338 This refers to the Third Reich and describes a person, who was politically reliable and reported to the police or Gestapo. Nowadays this is used for people who take everything very correct and exercise power in a neighbourhood. See: <http://dict.leo.org/forum/viewUnsolvedquery.php?idThread=177697&idForum=1&lang=de&lp=ende> (accessed 16 March 2014).

339 Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

340 Focus group with older men, 05 July 2013.

A number of focus group participants thought that the Vietnamese community was connected with illegal cigarette trading. This perception of connecting crime to specific ethnic groups developed during the transition, when the biggest remaining group of former contract workers of the GDR were the Vietnamese, who were the first to lose their jobs after unification. To survive they established themselves as traders. This included cigarette trading, which soon became a part of everyday life at markets and stations in the former GDR,³⁴¹ which was officially illegal. A local stakeholder told the group about this, "But they are gone now, because they fight for the territory with the Russians." In other areas it is still going on and according to his observations the cigarette trading functions works like this:

*The transfers go via the balconies. A Polish guy drives along, opens the back and then four Fidschis [the local name for the Vietnamese with a derogatory meaning] come along, take the boxes out and nobody cares about it. Mostly Poles and Russians are involved, because the cigarettes are produced there. The Fidschis only distribute them.*³⁴²

A participant pities them:

*Those are poor guys, because now and then the police take them away, but the police is rather interested in the big shots.*³⁴³

A stakeholder from the administration complained about the double standards of society:

*The Vietnamese are made responsible for the cigarette trading and young Vietnamese are explicitly imported to do the street vending. Nobody talks about the customers. There is an established criminal structure and the police deal with it already since 20 years and therefore it is not a new problem. It's just that it is not a topic at the moment, not like in the 1990s. For the customers there is always an excuse, that they have no money, that they receive social welfare (Hartz IV), but this is not accepted for the Vietnamese traders, they get criminalised.*³⁴⁴

The policeman explained that illegal cigarette trading was seen as a matter for the customs police to deal with rather than the local police.³⁴⁵

Locals involved in the study reported of another link between ethnicity and perceived crime. Russian-Germans were linked to aggression and violence. The stakeholder

341 Stakeholder interview with a local NGO activist, 17 April 2013.

342 Stakeholder interview with a local resident, 14 February 2013.

343 Stakeholder interview with a local resident, 14 February 2013.

344 Stakeholder interview with district administration, 14 February 2013.

345 Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

in the police noted that out of the 2,000 Russian-Germans about 20 percent are social welfare recipients. They are between 20 and 40 years old and their money goes into alcohol (vodka). The most common crime among them is “doing bodily harm” (*Körperverletzung*). Mostly somebody from outside calls the police, but once the police arrive no perpetrator can be found, there is huge group solidarity and nobody reports the crime.³⁴⁶

A police officer suggested that the district shows features of what can be called “ethnicised crimes”, although he never would frame it that way, meaning that specific sorts of crimes are attributed to particular ethnic groups and those ethnic groups are pushed into specific types of crime. One example is the cigarette trading, which is on the surface a domain of Vietnamese migrants, while the supply seems to be related to Polish and Russian groups. Other examples are the attribution of problems with alcohol and violence to older Russian-Germans or of right-wing extremism to white Germans. Such structural elements of ethnicised crimes seem to reinforce the propaganda of right-wing groups, such as the NPD, that there is a problem with crimes of foreigners (*Ausländerkriminalität*) in the district.

9.5 | RACISM AND RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM AFTER TRANSITION

In the summer of 2013, events connected with an asylum seekers’ home reactivated a trauma stemming from the time of the transition, strongly related to the question of how security is perceived in Marzahn-Hellersdorf. The mobilisation of small parts of the population by the NPD reinforced existing stereotypes about the district, as described in Chapter 11. A key flash point was a public information event that had been planned for 9 July 2013 to give people information about the settlement of asylum seekers in a nearby disused school building. Those organising the event believed in the need to provide people with facts in order to begin a debate. A neighbourhood initiative under the lead of the NPD was mobilised via Facebook for this event. The district officials lost control when it was taken over by the NPD who dominated the meeting. A police officer on duty that day spoke about his experience. He recalled people coming to the meeting with their pre-existing opinions based on misinformation which were heated up further by the NPD activists. The meeting also included those who defended the asylum seekers’ home and were protesting against the NPD activists. A person working in the local police interpreted the situation as a clash of opinions between leftists and rightists, who hijacked the event and used it as a forum for their opinions, with the district administration and the police stuck between them.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁶ Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

³⁴⁷ Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

To understand the situation better, it is necessary to look back to the 1990s, the times of the transition. A middle-aged woman from a migrants' self-organisation described the situation then. For her, real racism started in April 1990 on the date of Hitler's birthday.

Organised Nazis came from the West and marched through Marzahn. There was resistance from young people at the time as well. Open racism had been severely punished in the GDR, now after the Wende it could be expressed. At that time of the Wende young people tested everything and the adults experienced insecurity with the new circumstances and had no time to look after their children living through puberty at that time. All sides had been overstretched. Those Wendekinder [children of the transition] never settled into a professional life. They had jobs, got social welfare benefits and worked illegally. There was a targeted approach of Nazis to organise them.³⁴⁸

By 1993/1994 many of the Vietnamese migrants had been thrown out of Marzahn because of their illegal dealing in cigarettes.

Their community homes (Wohnheim) have been closed and they had to move to other districts of Berlin.³⁴⁹

Later, she heard right-wing youngsters complaining that now the Russians are here instead of the Vietnamese, and they are not such willing victims as the Vietnamese. In her view little has changed since the early 1990s. Many other stakeholders inside and outside the administration rejected this position.

While today there are not 10 open attacks every day, as it used to be directly after the Wende, there is latent racism, as well in the administration.³⁵⁰

The history of the Vietnamese and Russian-German communities and the racist struggles in the first half of the 1990s is documented in a study from 2006 on new migrant communities in Berlin.³⁵¹

A stakeholder in the administration argued that there has been a reduction in crimes committed by the extreme right, but everyday discrimination and youth violence remains an issue.³⁵² Other stakeholders emphasised the changes that had occurred:

348 Stakeholder interview with a local NGO activist, 17 April 2013.

349 Stakeholder interview with a local NGO activist, 17 April 2013.

350 Stakeholder interview with a local NGO activist, 17 April 2013.

351 Kil and Silver, "From Kreuzberg to Marzahn".

352 Stakeholder interview with a local resident, 14 February 2013.

*The administration tried to change the negative image of Marzahn-Hellersdorf that emerged in the 1990s as the site for the revival of the extreme right in Germany.*³⁵³

The mayor, for example, referred to the police data that shows that in the past three years there have been a total of six far-right incidents, “that is no more than two per year”, he emphasises.

He argued that the far right has moved out of Marzahn-Hellersdorf to Köpenik and Hohenschönweide nearby.³⁵⁴ A stakeholder in the police described the changes the right-wing perpetrated in the district. Years ago there was what he called the “adventure-oriented ‘Plattenbau-Skin’”, but since 1997/1998 pressure has been exerted on the right.

*There are attempts by them to move back again into Marzahn-Hellersdorf and there is some voting potential, but today their logistic centre is in Treptow and Schöneweide, that’s where the brains and the shops are.*³⁵⁵

One indicator of change in support for the far right is the fall in the votes for the NPD in Marzahn-Hellersdorf. In comparison with the 2006 election, where the NPD had a fraction (*Fraktionsstatus*) of seats in the district parliament, their votes dropped by half in the 2011 elections. Only two NPD members are now represented in the local parliament. Half of their electorate moved over to Pro Deutschland (a populist anti-Muslim party). The mayor said:

*The NPD lost influence and their environment does not exist any more. If young men move in this direction, they have to do it outside of Marzahn.*³⁵⁶

Another stakeholder, who came to the former GDR from Bulgaria 37 years ago, recalled the discrimination she experienced. She recalled the attacks on asylum seekers in the early 1990s, which led to the asylum legislation known as the “asylum compromise” in 1992. Today, while there are some dangerous youth gangs, she did not think that there would be open attacks against homes of asylum seekers.³⁵⁷

Historically the west of Germany never experienced such waves of right-wing nationalism in the 1990s as the Eastern parts after the Wende.

353 Stakeholder interview with local youth service, 14 April 2013.

354 Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17 April 2013.

355 Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

356 Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17 April 2013.

357 Stakeholder interview with district administration, 14 February 2013.

She considers this to be sort of mistaken patriotism.³⁵⁸ Although this interview was conducted before the events connected with the asylum seekers' home, she anticipated the role the NPD was playing in some local activities.

*The nationalists of the NPD do not play a public role nowadays, but they are active at symbolic dates like 1 May (Labour Day) and it is unclear what role the NPD plays in some places.*³⁵⁹

9.6 | IMAGE AND ROLE OF THE POLICE

A study of everyday life and socialism in Marzahn-Hellersdorf showed how the allocation of apartments in GDR times still influences the composition of the current population.³⁶⁰ This is particularly relevant, as many police and security officials in the GDR lived in the district:

*There were obvious political overtones to moving to Marzahn, which were not lost on most of the residents. A large number of the apartments were reserved for members of the government, the "Nationale Volksarmee – NVA" (National Peoples Army), border patrol, Stasi, Volkspolizei (People's Police), and other organs of the state. Many were bureaucrats somewhere in the vast planning bureaucracy of the state.*³⁶¹

The focus group with policing included a retired police officer who worked for 24 years as a police officer in the GDR and 18 years in modern Germany. He found that the main differences are in terms of security and humanity. As with many older participants, he had a positive view of the old GDR. He believed that there was more security then, but there was also the Stasi in the background. He felt police officers were respected that in the GDR, but that today the police are treated as second-class citizens. He also said that police officers commanded greater protection in the past, whereas today they have to take more responsibility for their actions, which in his view creates problems with police work:

*Police officers have to think more carefully about whether their actions are legal or not.*³⁶²

He thought that all this makes being a police officer much harder now. As a consequence he was happy that he was no longer a police officer. However, other

358 Stakeholder interview with district administration, 14 February 2013.

359 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local community center, 23 April 2013.

360 Rubin, "Concrete Utopia".

361 Rubin, "Concrete Utopia".

362 Participant in focus group policing and security, 5 July 2013

participants in the focus group contradicted his view that police officers have to hide when they walk around alone in uniform today.³⁶³

A stakeholder in the police argued that many of the issues that the police are asked to address was actually the responsibility of other bodies, like schools or the district office.

People often misunderstand the power, role and responsibility of the police and look to them for help in addressing more complex social problems where other bodies feel cannot deal with the problems.

Furthermore, he noted:

*The image and experience of police is shaped by people's contact with the police which can be limited and takes place in difficult circumstances. For example, the police often only come into schools when a crime happens and that shapes the image.*³⁶⁴

He believed that a shift is taking place from what in German is called *Amtshilfe*, meaning state bodies cooperating and assisting each other (e.g. in information exchange), to *Vollzugshilfe*, meaning implementing decisions of other state bodies on their behalf by using force if necessary. For example, a student drops out of school, and then the school can ask the police to find out his current address, which would be *Amtshilfe*. If the school wants to have the student back in the class, the school can ask the police to bring him back to the classroom (if necessary by force), which then is *Vollzugshilfe*. In his view as well as that of the headmaster of the vocational and trading school (see Chapter 5), people have been given rights (*Freiheitsrechte*), but not responsibilities, which undermines the social order. He thinks the police are forced to re-establish order, which transforms the function of police to one of upholding the "social".³⁶⁵ Like schools, the police shift from their core function in providing security to a social function for which they do not have the personnel or training.

This effect of budgetary cuts in policing and in other areas was a theme in the stakeholder interviews and focus group discussions. He further reported that the police have fewer personnel for outside services (*Aussendienst*) and police stations have been closed down over the last few years. However, this decline has now been stopped and the senate is again recruiting police officers.³⁶⁶

363 Focus group on policing and security, 5 July 2013

364 Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police 10 July 2013.

365 Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

366 Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

Participants in the focus group on policing and security discussed the consultation hours (*Sprechstunden*) of the police as a helpful way of linking citizens and the police to solve small-scale problems.³⁶⁷

Consultation hours existed in both the GDR and modern Germany. They were abolished for financial reasons for a short period, but have now been introduced again. Police consultation hours take place in the local community centres and they provide an opportunity for citizens to talk to officers about worries connected to the police. The consultation hours are a chance for the police and local communities to deal with minor local problems, neighbourhood conflicts and so on.

In the policing and security focus group participants stated that the criminal inspections service has been terminated or merged with other services, which further diminished the influence of police in the local area. Criminal inspections handle crime reports until they are delivered to the district attorney. They do all the necessary evidential investigation.³⁶⁸ A former police officer explained the effects of the cuts:

*There is no police presence and the reaction time of police is now longer, because the responsible police unit is 6 km away and that makes it too long for them to react. By the time they arrive things have already happened.*³⁶⁹

9.7 | CRIME REPORTING, CRIME PREVENTION AND COOPERATION

Research suggests that the likelihood of a crime being reported depends on a number of factors:

- The minority group to which the victim belongs;
- the status the minority group has in the white, German majority group;
- previously existing experience with the police;
- the socio-spatial context in which the crime happened, which defines if a crime can be reported without consequences of being victimised.³⁷⁰

367 Focus group on policing and security, 5 July 2013.

368 Der Polizeipräsident in Berlin: "Polizeidirektion 6 – Kriminalpolizei" (Police Headquarter 6 – plainclothes police), at <http://www.berlin.de/polizei/dienststellen/polizei-in-den-bezirken/direktion-6> (accessed 12 May 2014).

369 Participant in focus group policing and security, 5 July 2013.

370 ZDK Kommunalanalyse, 2003.

The study said that right-wing motivated and racist violence often happens as a spontaneous group crime under the influence of alcohol, but this can cover up everyday bullying in the areas where the minorities are living. This creates psychosocial stress among members of the minority.³⁷¹

The role of crime prevention officer was established in 2000. The officer works with young people, foreign nationals and those with a minority background. The policeman interviewed for this report believes that the crime prevention officer, with the help of social workers and street-workers, can calm down potential flashpoints. He noted that 75 civil society associations (*Träger*) are involved in the programme and have offered to undertake prevention work. A prevention report is used to monitor the situation.³⁷² Even the neighbourhood management is involved, ensuring that the parents take good care of their children and support their education:

*The transfer of values has to start earlier ... measures against violence and Abziehen (ripping off valuable things from peers) must be done in the long term, starting already at about six years of age.*³⁷³

The police cooperate with private and public associations (*Träger*) and schools. The participant referred again to the north–south divide in the district.

*“In the area of Hellersdorf about one-third of the population receives Hartz IV and there are a whole lot of associations that work with youth unemployment, decreasing prejudices, that engage against right-wing extremism and racism and are active in creating intercultural living together.*³⁷⁴

When the police organise a soccer event, they cooperate with organisations in the area (*Stadtteilorganisation*).

*The objective is to make clear that the policeman is only a human being as well. The image of the police is, like in all other districts, not the best and the services of the public sector are often not reaching their audience and services for a middle-aged target group over 40 are totally left out. They then sit in their apartments. In the years after the Wende it was not possible to create attractive services and the generation between 30 and 50 are very much shaped by the GDR. Close to Besering Square there is a youth centre and there the police sits with them. In comparison with Charlottenburg (district in the West) the cooperation here is good and they are well prepared.*³⁷⁵

371 ZDK Kommunalanalyse, 2003.

372 *Berliner Morgenpost*, “Präventionsbericht”.

373 Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

374 Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

375 Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

The study considered that Lower-Saxony, a federal state in the west of Germany, was going in the right direction and would be a model for stabilising the situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf.³⁷⁶ It included urban planning and structural and technological change in houses, public buildings and residential areas. There, housing companies carry out social management and strengthens civil responsibility and good neighbourhoods. Housing associations should cooperate with the local police and the institutions of local government, together with local social and youth services.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁶ Lukas, *Marzahn – Sicherheit nach Plan*.

³⁷⁷ Lukas, *Marzahn – Sicherheit nach Plan*.

10

PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP

This chapter starts with a definition of German citizenship and the distinctions that are made for migrants. It describes the way the population of Germany is categorised, national minorities and the rights of German citizens in Europe.

The chapter looks at the voter turnout over time for different national elections in the former West Germany, the GDR and post-unification Germany as well as voter turnout in the district. The voting behaviour in the north of the district shows islands with high numbers of votes for the right-wing nationalists in a sea of high results for the left. There are different explanations for this phenomenon. To identify ways out of the current situation, the report looks for participation opportunities beyond elections.

Many participants discussed participation in terms of economic participation, giving positive and negative examples on how this can be achieved. Increasingly, participants view consumption as the primary way to participate in society; this of course is more difficult for those with little money. The findings suggest bitterness about the process of German unification. In particular, those interviewed for this report felt excluded from participation in the creation of a new constitution.

The chapter identifies the opportunities for participation for different groups in the district and notes the impact of cuts in public-sector funding for participation.

A case study on a public information event organised by the district concerning the settlement of asylum seekers in a school showed some of the limits of participation. Although participation was the aim, nationalist activists hijacked the event, causing suspicion of the nationalists. The interplay between the district administration, the strategy of the police and the media led to a reinforcement of the existing stereotypes about Marzahn-Hellersdorf. The outcome was a limitation of refugees to those who are publicly accepted, like currently refugees from Syria.

It is necessary to identify what may prevent participation as well as ways to activate the local population. The asylum seekers event led to the conclusion that although there was a wide range of participation opportunities in the district, a whole group of people were being left out. There are many explanations of why people do not participate and have the feeling of not being heard and having no voice. Measures to activate the population were highlighted in the interviews and discussions.

Participation was a recurrent theme across all focus groups: older men's and women's, younger women's and younger men's, the participation focus group itself and the education focus group. The analysis in this chapter also draws on newspapers, expert literature, government and district websites, documentation about art in

public spaces, storytelling book on Marzahn,³⁷⁸ YouTube videos and interviews with stakeholders inside and outside the administration.

10.1 | DEFINITION OF CITIZENSHIP IN GERMANY

Several distinctions are made in the definition of citizenship in Germany. First, a German national is anyone who has German nationality according to the Nationality Act of 1913. It can be acquired by birth, declaration or adoption. Since 2000 children of foreign parents born in Germany acquire German citizenship by birth, if a parent has been lawfully resident in Germany for eight years. After reaching adulthood, the person must decide within five years whether she or he wants to keep their German nationality (option model). Second, a German is also a refugee or displaced person of German ethnicity or their spouses or descendants, who had found refuge in the territory of the German Reich after 1937.³⁷⁹ Russian-Germans fall into this category, as well as the 12 million ethnic Germans who had to leave Eastern Europe and Russia after the Second World War.

The term “immigrant” (*Migrant* in German) consists of various categories:

- A person who does not have German citizenship or was born outside the current borders of the Federal Republic of Germany;
- A person who immigrated into the present territory of the Federal Republic of Germany after 1949 or has at least one parent born outside the current borders of the Federal Republic of Germany;
- A person whose parent/s immigrated after 1949 into the present territory of the Federal Republic of Germany;
- A subset of immigrants are ethnic Germans from eastern Europe and the former USSR (*Aussiedler, Spätaussiedler*), if they, their spouses or their descendants acquired German nationality and immigrated into the present territory of the Federal Republic of Germany after 1949.

Everyone, therefore, is either a migrant in the real sense (having migration experience) or has been born in Germany (having no migration experience).

Persons living legally in the territory of Germany fall into one of the following groups. They are:

- Foreigners without personal experience of migration

378 Rohnstock, Katrin (editor) (2004): *Marzahn erzählt* (Keine) Platten Geschichten (Marzahn does (not) tell concrete stories). Berlin (thereafter: Rohnstock, *Platten Geschichten*).

379 Springer Gabler Verlag (editor), “Gabler Wirtschaftslexikon, Stichwort: Staatsangehörigkeit” (Gabler economic dictionary, glossary word: Nationality) at <http://wirtschaftslexikon.gabler.de/Archiv/1022/staatsangehoerigkeit-v11.html> (accessed 18 September 2013).

- Foreigners with migration experience
- Germans with their own migration experience, including ethnic Germans
- Germans without experience of migration but with a migration background derived from the migration of their parents
- Germans without an immigrant background.

Additionally there is the definition of minorities according to the 1995 Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, ratified by Germany in 1998. The convention prohibits any discrimination against a person because of their membership of a national minority or assimilation against their will.³⁸⁰ These national minorities in Germany are the Frisian ethnic group, the Danish minority, the Sorbian people and the German Sinti and Roma.³⁸¹ There is also a German minority in Denmark since the referendum in 1920 and there are still German minorities in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in the successor states of the former Soviet Union today, where it is estimated that there are approximately 1.2 million. Around 500,000 people are in Russia, approximately 300,000 in Poland and about 180,000 in Kazakhstan.³⁸² This group is referred to in this report as Russian-Germans.

10.2 | PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS

A key indicator of civil participation and citizenship is voting in democratic elections, which in state and federal elections in Germany is limited to those with German citizenship. Citizens of EU member states can participate in local and European elections.³⁸³ But basically voting is a key act and a privilege of citizenship rights in Germany. The voter turnout for federal elections in the whole of West Germany was mostly over 85 percent until 1983. After 1987 it dropped below 80 percent. For the elections in the federal states it is generally over 50 percent, in local elections over 45 percent and in the last European elections participation was 43 percent. The highest turnout in free elections happened in the former East German parliament elections

380 Bundesministerium des Innern – BMI (2014): “Nationales und internationales Minderheitenrecht” (National and international minority rights) at http://www.bmi.bund.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Verfassung/Nationale-Minderheiten/Nationales-internationales-Minderheitenrecht/nationales-internationales-minderheitenrecht_node.html (accessed 11 July 2014).

381 Bundesministerium des Innern – BMI (2013): “Minderheiten in Deutschland” (National minorities in Germany) at http://www.bmi.bund.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Verfassung/Nationale-Minderheiten/Nationale-Minderheiten-Deutschland/nationale-minderheiten-deutschland_node.html (accessed 19 September 2013).

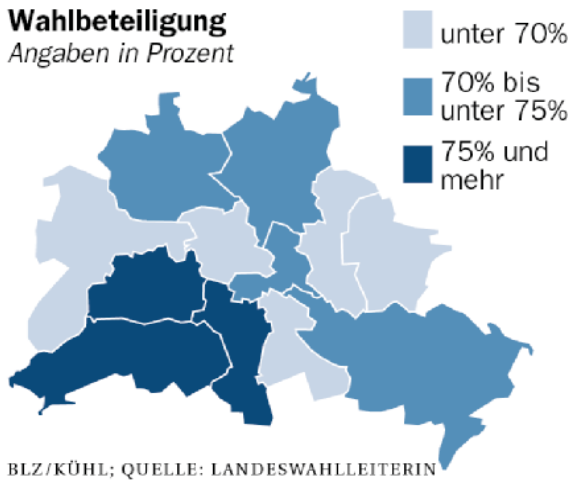
382 Bundesministerium des Innern – BMI (2014): “Deutsche Minderheiten in Europa und den Nachfolgestaaten der UdSSR” (German minorities in Europe and the successor States of the USSR) at http://www.bmi.bund.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Verfassung/Nationale-Minderheiten/Deutsche-Minderheiten-Europa/deutsche-minderheiten-europa_node.html (accessed 11 July 2014).

383 See Wikipedia, “Ausländerstimm- und wahlrecht” (Foreigner’s Voting Right), http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ausl%C3%A4nderstimm-_und_wahlrecht#Situation_in_Deutschland (accessed 12 May 2014).

in 1990, which reached 93.4 percent. Closest in the West was the election for the Bundestag in 1972 with a turnout of 91.1 percent. Those were the elections where Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* was at stake. The lowest turnout was in the Bundestag election of 2009 with 70.8 percent.³⁸⁴

Marzahn mostly had a lower turnout for elections compared with the general turnout. In the 2013 federal election the turnout was 65.1 percent and in 2009 it was 63.4 percent.³⁸⁵ Marzahn-Hellersdorf was part of a cluster of districts in the West and the East of Berlin with a turnout below 70 percent.

FIGURE 2. PARTICIPATION IN FEDERAL ELECTIONS IN BERLIN, 2013



Source: Berliner Zeitung, “Wahlergebnis Ost-Berlin” (Election results East Berlin), 23 September 2013, at <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/grosse-koalition/wahlergebnis-ost-berlin-nichtwaehler-sind-die-groesste-gruppe,20889098,24407348.html> (accessed 16 March 2014).

(Translation: Top left: Election turnout, results in percent, top right: under 70 percent, 70 percent until under 75 percent, 75 percent and above)

An important characteristic of the voting patterns in Marzahn-Hellersdorf is the strong support for the left. In Marzahn-Hellersdorf and the neighbouring district of Lichtenberg the Left Party is by far the biggest party and sometimes generates almost an absolute majority.³⁸⁶ The candidate directly elected by the constituency of Marzahn-

384 See Wikipedia, “Wahlbeteiligung”, (Participation in elections) at <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wahlbeteiligung>, (accessed 19 September 2013)

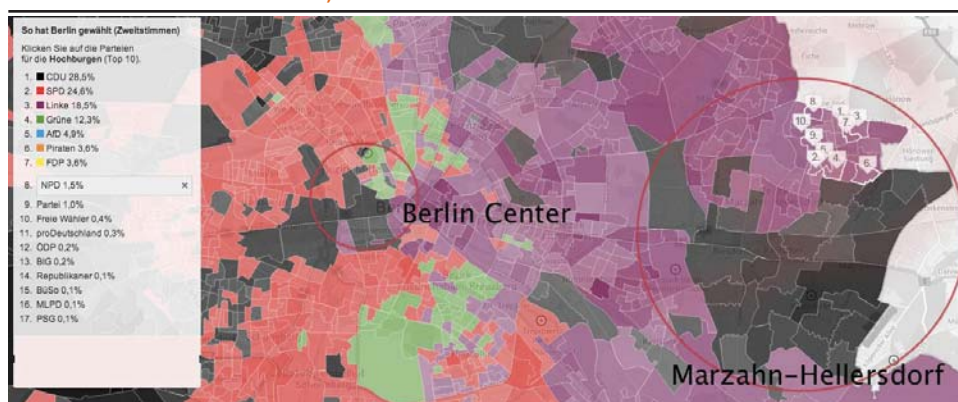
385 Deutscher Bundestag, “Wahlkreis 13” (constituency), at <http://www.bundestag.de/bundestag/wahlen/wahlkreise13/index.html> (accessed 16 March 2014).

386 In the last elections for the Berlin Parliament (*Abgeordnetenhaus*) in 2011 the Left Party, the CDU and the SPD each won one voting district in Marzahn-Hellersdorf. The map at <http://www.morgenpost.de/berlin-aktuell/article1768373/Ergebnisse-der-Berliner-Abgeordnetenhauswahl-2011.html> (accessed 11 July 2014) provides information on the voting results for each of the districts in Berlin.

Hellersdorf for the federal parliament is Petra Pau from the Left Party.³⁸⁷ She won the voting district in the last federal elections of 2013 with 47.7 percent of the votes.³⁸⁸ She was one of the chairs of the parliamentary inquiry committee for the NSU killings³⁸⁹ and was vice-president of the federal parliament.

The following map shows the division in the district according to voting behaviour. In the purple north the Left Party dominates, while in the black south the conservative CDU is the leading party. The map also shows the 10 polling stations for the last federal elections in 2013 with the highest votes for the NPD for all Berlin.

FIGURE 3. 10 POLLING STATIONS WITH HIGHEST NUMBER OF VOTES FOR THE NPD, 2013



Source: Berliner Morgenpost, „Bundestagswahl 2013 in Berlin. Alle Stimmen der 1709 Wahllokale“ (Election to the Bundestag 2013 in Berlin. All voices of the 1709 polling stations), at <http://berlinwahlkarte2013.morgenpost.de/#partei=8> (accessed 18 March 2014).

(**Translation:** left: Berlin has voted (second votes), click on the parties for their Top 10 voting areas)

With the large areas of high voting results for the Left Party, there are islands showing high votes for the NPD. Table 3 shows the results of the areas with highest and lowest results for the NPD.

387 CDU 19.4 percent, SPD 16.1 percent, Greens 5.7 percent, FDP-Liberals 5.5 percent and all others 5.6 percent: see <http://www.bundestag.de/bundestag/wahlen/wahlkreise09/wahlkreise/wko86.html> (accessed 19 September 2013).

388 Election results for federal election 2013, at <http://www.bundestag.de/bundestag/wahlen/wahlkreise09/wahlkreise/wko86.html> (accessed 19 September 2013).

389 NSU stands for “National Socialist Underground”. A trio of neo-Nazi killers (two men, one woman) killed small shopkeepers of mainly Turkish background and one German policewoman since 1998. While the two males committed suicide after their discovery, the woman is currently on trial in Munich. The federal parliamentary inquiry commission looked into the cases and the structures of the German polices and secret services. Although the commission in its closing report did not mention any reference to institutional racism, individual members of the commission recognised unofficially the existence of institutional racism in the security sector.

TABLE 3. 10 POLLING STATIONS WITH THE HIGHEST AND THE LOWEST VOTES FOR THE NPD

Polling station 1 (highest no. of votes)	Polling station 10 (lowest no. of votes)
2013 participation 40.3%	2013 participation 48.6%
2009 participation 41%	2009 participation 47.9%
Left Party 29.9% (202 votes)	Left Party 35.8% (358 votes)
SPD 17.8% (120 votes)	SPD 18.1% (181 votes)
CDU 17.6% (119 votes)	CDU 17.4% (174 votes)
NPD 12.4% (84 votes)	NPD 8.3% (83 votes)
AfD 7.8% (53 votes)	AfD 8.2% (82 Votes)
Piraten 4.3% (29 votes)	Piraten 2.7% (27 votes)
Greens 2.1% (14 votes)	Greens 2.1% (21 votes)

Source: Berliner Morgenpost, „Bundestagswahl 2013 in Berlin. Alle Stimmen der 1709 Wahllokale“ (Election to the Bundestag 2013 in Berlin. All voices of the 1709 polling stations), at <http://berlinwahlkarte2013.morgenpost.de/#partei=8> (accessed 18 March 2014).

In the 2013 federal elections, a new party, the Alternative for Germany (AfD), emerged as an “anti-Euro” party, viewed by political analysts as a right-leaning populist party, opting for leaving the Eurozone. In that case 16–20 percent of the votes were for the right wing. In 2011 the highest votes for the NPD during the local elections were in voting district 303 where they achieved a 32 percent share, but on a very, very low turnout.³⁹⁰ This low turnout and high proportion of votes for the NDP was mentioned by local stakeholders:

*That's in the north of Marzahn and while the general turnout for local election is anyway low at 50 percent it was 30 percent in the north. It is different in the south.*³⁹¹

*The fact that the NPD is represented in the local parliament with two parliamentarians is due to the fact that there is a low turnout for elections, which favours small parties, who can activate their electorate. Therefore increasing participation in elections helps keeping the extreme right out of parliament.*³⁹²

³⁹⁰ Stakeholder interview with district administration, 14 February 2013.

³⁹¹ Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17 April 2013.

³⁹² Stakeholder interview with district administration, 14 February 2013.

One study suggests that the increase in votes for right-wing parties in former GDR areas is a consequence of the social imbalance created by the migration of young women from remote parts of eastern Germany to mainly urban areas in the west. One of the consequences, says the study, is that in areas with a high surplus of men right-wing parties get their best election results.³⁹³

While the district of Marzahn-Hellersdorf is home to an average of 1.15 percent of migrants coming from the former Soviet Union and its successor states and is slightly under the Berlin average, the area of Marzahn has one of the highest proportions of Russian-German immigrants, although the areas of Hellersdorf, Biesdorf and Kaulsdorf/Mahlsdorf have a low proportion. Comparing this with the election results, support for the NPD was high in areas where the proportion of people of Russian-German origin is high. Stakeholders described two tendencies in the voting behaviour of Russian-Germans in Marzahn-Hellersdorf. According to them, many do not vote at all and those who do, vote for the CDU. It was suggested that few vote for the left (former Communists) and little is known about levels of support for the SPD. They also highlighted the need for Russian-Germans to be represented.

*There is a small group of dedicated people who do that work and there are representatives in the local parliament and on the cultural advisory board, but it's not enough and they are always the same ones.*³⁹⁴

Before the election, one participant in the older men's focus group said,

*The politicians are friendly, there is a lot of talk and promises, but afterwards not much is happening. There have been promises to improve social politics, but nothing happens up to now.*³⁹⁵

The low turnout for elections was discussed with stakeholders and in the focus group on participation.³⁹⁶ A stakeholder in the neighbourhood management team referred to the 70 percent who did not vote and noted the need to reach out to this part of the population.³⁹⁷ Another participant in the older men's focus group referred to the election campaign reimbursement (*Wahlkampfkostenerstattung*), which is based on the number of votes a party receives and brings in money to the parties gaining high votes. He suggested to include the numbers of non-voters into the distribution of the parliamentary seats to "give non-voters a vote", which would make representation more real. Non-voters have the right to vote because they are German citizens, but

393 Steffen Kröhnert & Reiner Klingholz "Not am Mann – Von Helden der Arbeit zur neuen Unterschicht?" (Worst comes to worst – from heroes of labor to a new underclass), Berlin Institut für Bevölkerung und Entwicklung, at <http://www.berlin-institut.org/publikationen/studien/not-am-mann.html?type=98> (accessed 19 September 2013).

394 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local NGO, 19 April 2013.

395 Participant in focus group with older men, 5 July 2013.

396 Stakeholder interview with district administration, 14 February 2013; focus group on participation, 21 May 2013.

397 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local NGO, 06 May 2013.

they do not exercise it. Most non-voters, he added, come from the poorer strata of society.³⁹⁸ This argument is supported by a stakeholder from the local community centre, who reported that a lot of social welfare recipients live in the north and they are hard to motivate, they are not interested in politics and the TV programmes they constantly watch are not very political.³⁹⁹

Another stakeholder in the administration emphasised that teaching democracy has to start on a small scale, early, in KITAS and schools.⁴⁰⁰ In September 2013, just one week before the federal elections, around 190,000 children and young people between 12 and 15 years of age voted nationwide in more than 1,500 polling stations in the so-called U18-elections, where young people under 18 can give their vote. 2.55 percent of young people voted in all Berlin for the NPD. With a turnout of nearly 17,000 young people the party got 924 votes in all Berlin. In Marzahn-Hellersdorf and Treptow-Köpenick the NPD managed to come above the 5 percent hurdle with 5.32 percent and 7.3 percent. Concern was expressed by a member of the *Mobile Beratungsteam gegen Rechtsextremismus MBR* (mobile counselling team against right-wingers):

*The right-wing spectrum has performed well in those areas, where these parties otherwise get good results as well. Nevertheless, there is cause for concern when right-wing parties perform better among adolescents than in real elections.*⁴⁰¹

He attributed the results to the fact that in these districts a right-wing environment already exists and that children follow their parents.⁴⁰²

10.3 | OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL

Over nearly 10 years the district administration has developed a tradition of first annual and then biannual citizens' participation in open tenants' council meetings (*Stadtteilversammlungen*) in nine regions of the district,⁴⁰³ although the mayor said that these councils suffered from low participation. To increase participation the district parliament changed the format in 2013 from following formal topics in each

398 Focus group with older men, 5 July 2013.

399 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local community center, 23 April 2013.

400 Stakeholder interview with district administration, 02 May 2013.

401 Alexander Fröhlich & Sidney Gennies (2013): "U18-Wahl in Berlin und Brandenburg. NPD mobilisiert Jugendliche" (Under 18 elections in Berlin and Brandenburg. NPD mobilises young people), *Tagesspiegel*/Berlin, at <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/u18-wahl-in-berlin-und-brandenburg-npd-mobilisiert-jugendliche/8805684.html> (accessed 20 March 2014) (hereafter, Fröhlich & Gennies, "U18-Wahl in Berlin und Brandenburg").

402 Fröhlich & Gennies, "U18-Wahl in Berlin und Brandenburg".

403 Dagmar Pohle, "Wie viel Bürgerkommune ist erwünscht?" (How much civic community is desired?), *Informationsblatt links Bezirksverband Marzahn-Hellersdorf*, 2013, at http://www.dielinke-marzahn-hellersdorf.de/fileadmin/marz-hell/Bezirksverband/MaHeLi/maheliz2013_06_web.pdf (accessed 16 March 2014) (hereafter, Pohle, "Bürgerkommune").

meeting to irregular meetings, when “burning topics” arise.⁴⁰⁴ The participation of the citizens is guaranteed by other mechanisms, such as the citizen consultation hour (*Bürgersprechstunde*) with the district mayor and the district councillors, the citizen question hours (*Bürgerfragestunde*) with the district parliament, the citizens’ participatory budget (*Bürgerhaushalt*) and themed information events.⁴⁰⁵ At the citizen consultation hour people can meet the mayor or councillors and report their problems directly to them. Citizen can still ask for an open tenants’ council meeting if they hand in a request to the district parliament.⁴⁰⁶

According to an official in the administration, the citizen consultation hour is intensively used by the inhabitants, in contrast to the open tenants’ council meetings.

*The participation rate in the citizen consultation hour is equal in North and South Marzahn, but the topics brought up are different ... General topics like how to build the community, or how to deal with a planned bypass motorway (Umgehungsstraße) come up in the richer south, while in the poorer north individual problems, like how to get a bigger apartment for a pregnant mother with several children, are addressed.*⁴⁰⁷

The stakeholder involved in the area’s management reflected that the official participation process for the bypass motorway, which affects 3,000–5,000 people had 300 people participating, which he thought was a significant number.⁴⁰⁸

10.3.1 | PARTICIPATION IN BUDGETING AND PLANNING

Stakeholders referred to participation mechanisms targeting the participation of local citizens in budgeting and administrative planning, such as the participatory budget.⁴⁰⁹ This is not a fixed budget as such, but provides transparency about which are fixed items in an existing budget. Certain ideas cannot be implemented.⁴¹⁰ The focus group

404 Bezirksamt Marzahn-Hellersdorf (2013): “Moderne Bürgerkommunikation—ab jetzt themenorientierte Einwohner-versammlungen in Marzahn-Hellersdorf” (Modern citizens communication from now themed residents’ meetings in Marzahn-Hellersdorf), Press release 17 June 2013, at <https://www.berlin.de/ba-marzahn-hellersdorf/aktuelles/presse/archiv/20130617.1530.386184.html>, accessed 20.3.14.

405 Pohle, “Bürgerkommune”.

406 Pohle, “Bürgerkommune”.

407 Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17 April 2013.

408 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local NGO, 06 May 2013.

409 Stakeholder interview with district administration, 14 February 2013.

410 Bezirksamt Marzahn-Hellersdorf (2011): Vorlage zur Kenntnisnahme für die BVV, Vorschläge von Bürgerinnen und Bürgern des Bezirkes Marzahn-Hellersdorf zum Haushalt 2012/2013 (Bürgerhaushalt) (Template for the attention of the District Asembly [BVV], suggestions of citizens of the district of Marzahn-Hellersdorf to the budget 2012/2013 [participatory budget]), at http://www.berlin.de/imperia/md/content/bamarzahnellersdorf/ba-beschlusse/2011/vzb-bv1316_.pdf?start&ts=1300887424&file=vzbbv1316_.pdf (accessed 16 March 2014).

on participation discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the participatory budget.⁴¹¹

Under the participatory budget process, citizens can hand in suggestions on how money should be spent, but these are only recommendations, which are not binding. The citizens carry out the prioritisation of all the suggestions. In the experience of the participant working in the local community centre, there is a lot of lobbying in the district over which projects should be supported.⁴¹² The objective, according to the mayor is to increase participation. In 2013, 200 proposals were collected and 3,000 people participated. The involvement of local citizens means that the administration knew which projects were supported by citizens as they prepared the 2014/2015 budget and wanted to implement at last half of the 46 highest-rated proposals.⁴¹³ Although the participatory budget is seen as politically controversial, as one of the stakeholders in the administration said,⁴¹⁴ the participatory budget process will continue with its objective of increasing participation.⁴¹⁵

The urban renewal programme for the east also included the need for citizens to participate through a participatory budget. Through the participatory budget, the website of the districts claims, a significant improvement in the quality of living was achieved in recent years.⁴¹⁶

10.3.2 | ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

The focus group participant who runs a local community centre reported that since the transition there have been two tendencies among her employees, either to vote in the new system or abstain from voting. She thinks that being active on the different boards of associations (centre for girls, women and business founders) is important participation, since they have created employment in the area since the 1990s, after the end of the GDR and when state employees of the GDR had no job opportunities any more.⁴¹⁷

Another issue of economic participation, which was more related to the whole of Germany, came up in the older men's focus group, where participants said that there

411 Focus group on participation, 21 May 2013.

412 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local community center, 23 April 2013.

413 Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17 April 2013.

414 Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17 April 2013.

415 Bezirksverordnetenversammlung Marzahn-Hellersdorf (2013): Drucksache – o819/VII, Überarbeitung des Strategie-papiers 2012-2016 (Printed matter – o819/VII, Revision of the Strategy Paper 2012-2016), at <http://www.berlin.de/ba-marzahn-hellersdorf/bv-online/voo20.asp?VOLFDNR=5102&options=4> (accessed 12 July 2014).

416 Bezirksamt Marzahn-Hellersdorf (2012): "Ein Kurzportrait" (A short profile), at <http://www.berlin.de/ba-marzahn-hellersdorf/derbezirk/zahlenfakten/kurzinfo.html> (accessed 12 July 2014).

417 Focus group on participation, 21 May 2013.

was a tendency among policymakers to prefer prestigious objects one wants to have, but cannot achieve and afford.⁴¹⁸ This refers to the current mismanagement of big building projects in Stuttgart (Stuttgart 21, the restructuring of the railway station), Hamburg (Elb-philharmony, a prestigious and ambitious concert hall) and Berlin (a new airport for the capital).

A common theme in these projects is the perceived lack of public participation in their development and design and lack of control over costs. Another participant in the participation focus group agreed:

In former times before the Wende, nobody believed how Westerners lived. Everybody was seen as rich there. There have been high expectations in the GDR connected with the lifestyle living in Germany. The unification at the end happened through the election of the CDU (main conservative party) and the SPD (Social Democrats).⁴¹⁹

He was referring to the mode of unification, which was not executed through a referendum for a new German constitution, but through an administrative act of joining the old Federal Republic of Germany, with its preliminary constitution (*Grundgesetz*) established in 1949. The unification was then indirectly legitimised through the elections of 1990. Focus group participants felt that this procedure excluded the participation of the population in the establishment of the united Germany.

According to the participant from the local community centre, austerity is undermining the participation of citizens. She asked how infrastructures could develop if there are more and more cuts in the public sector and if there are fewer public servants. Everything is then turned over to civil society associations and NGOs (*Trägerschaft*), leading to competition. The continuity of services is no longer guaranteed.

The public sector is losing control and the district cannot influence anything anymore because everything is transferred to free associations/NGOs.⁴²⁰

According to the participant from the community centre there are problems recruiting staff, the connections with the district administration are getting weak, the citizen has no one to relate to in person, and nobody cares any more about the services for citizens:

Labour market measures are getting cut down more and more in the job centres (local unemployment offices). So-called Bedarfsgemeinschaften (people living together with a welfare recipient are seen as one household) are on the increase.

418 Focus group with older men, 5 July 2013.

419 Participant in focus group with older men, 5 July 2013.

420 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local community center, 23 April 2013.

*In the Office for Public Order (Ordnungsamt) 15,000 complaints piled up and nobody can look after them any more.*⁴²¹

She mentioned that the lack of justice in taxation (*Steuergerechtigkeit*), affects the budget in general. In comparison with other German states with a big territory (*Flächenländer*), cities like Berlin or Hamburg lack their own community finance department.

*After the merger of the two districts (Marzahn and Hellersdorf), there was less money in the districts. They had more things to do, but had to do it with less money and less personal resources, with the effect that, for example, the Green Area Office (Grünflächenamt) has less money because of the cuts and that's why it is less clean in the district.*⁴²²

She sees the effect of this in her daily work for the centre, which delivers activities and services on a volunteer basis. They provide, for example, advice on legal problems, pensions and social affairs. They organise outreaching consumer protection (*aufsuchender Verbraucherschutz*) in Russian as well as German and provide services for the elderly.⁴²³ Another project is JULE for single mothers, which helps them with their welfare applications and to access their right to social benefits. They also provide the counselling hour of the local police department. Participants of the younger women focus group thought that the services provided by the project were very helpful. The experiences showed that when someone from JULE accompanies the young mothers to help them with their applications, things progressed faster. JULE also helps single mothers who need a place to stay.⁴²⁴

A stakeholder from the area management reported the incidence of debt counselling (*Schuldnerberatung*) and noted the high rate of personal bankruptcies (*Privatinsolvenz*). He suggested that these trends were the consequence of people wanting to participate in consumption (*Teilhabe über Konsum*) but who could not afford it.⁴²⁵ As mentioned earlier in Chapter 8 for older people shopping is a social event, not merely way of buying goods. While this is especially true for elderly people,⁴²⁶ it is also important for nearly everyone. In the older women's focus group the advantages and disadvantages of shopping at different shopping malls like East Gate, Spree Centre or Alexanderplatz were intensely discussed.⁴²⁷ In the education focus group the role of the media (TV, mobile, computer) in the lives of young children was discussed as problematical. There is peer pressure among them, which leads to the question of conformity within

421 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local community center, 23 April 2013.

422 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local community center, 23 April 2013.

423 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local community center, 23 April 2013.

424 Focus group with younger women, 6 June 2013.

425 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local NGO, 6 May 2013.

426 Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17.04. April 2013.

427 Focus group with older women, 3 June 2013.

the group. Having a certain brand of mobile constitutes inequality, if parents do not invest the money.⁴²⁸

10.3.3 | PARTICIPATION IN URBAN PLANNING

Neighbourhood management is a process in urban development and is used in planning and monitoring cities and suburbs.⁴²⁹ The four neighbourhood management offices (Marzahn Northwest, Hellersdorfer Promenade and Mehrower Allee)⁴³⁰ have responsibility for regeneration programmes and are part of an approach in urban development to involve the local population.⁴³¹ In Germany neighbourhood management started in districts between the 1970s and 1990s. For example in Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen, urban development started in particular affected neighbourhoods and should be understood as an answer to the squatters' movement of the time.⁴³² Neighbourhood management is characterised first by bringing together the actors from the areas of administration, local politics, the private sector, local organisations and ordinary residents. The objective is to integrate the different aspects of economic development, social empowerment and structural neighbourhood development.⁴³³ Neighbourhood management should lead to the active participation of the inhabitants in the improvements. It is about empowerment, the development of responsibility for their own city district and strengthening long-term and self-supporting residents' associations.⁴³⁴

The stakeholder from the local community centre is active in a citizens' initiative as well, which wants to change a residential street into a business and shopping street. There are already active community centres (*Stadtteilzentren*) there and the process of renovating the street is about visual appearance, playgrounds for children and a market being established.⁴³⁵

This involves, for example measures to reduce the number of empty shops in the area. To change this artists have been given the empty shops. They bring in

428 Focus group on education, 15 May 2013.

429 A comprehensive overview can be found at the German Wikipedia under "Quartiersmanagement" (neighbourhood management), at <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quartiersmanagement> (accessed 16 March 2014) (hereafter, "Quartiersmanagement").

430 Bezirksamt Marzahn-Hellersdorf, "Quartiersmanagementgebiete im Bezirk" (Neighborhood Management areas in the district), https://www.berlin.de/ba-marzahn-hellersdorf/verwaltung/bauen/stapl_quartiersm.html (accessed 16 March 2014).

431 Focus group on participation, 21 May 2013.

432 "Quartiersmanagement".

433 "Quartiersmanagement".

434 "Quartiersmanagement".

435 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local community center, 23 April 2013.

*modern art, such as conceptual art, but none of the inhabitants understands this kind of art.*⁴³⁶

Art in the public space should play an important role in the regeneration of the district. “But only a few people participate in the initiative,” she complained.

A publication on art in public spaces in Marzahn-Hellersdorf discusses the role art is playing in urban renewal as follows:

*As an issue affecting the general public, art in large housing projects requires the cooperation of property owners and users of public space. If art and artistic involvement in large housing projects are understood as an alliance of spatial and social questions and stimulates public discourse, it fulfils more than a decorative purpose.*⁴³⁷

An older local stakeholder and activist in the district made a critical remark about the similarity between the GDR’s participation structure and structures in the united Germany, which most people interviewed for this report would strongly reject. In his view there should be a value-free remembrance. Often there are more continuities than ruptures, but this cannot be spoken about because the united German identity depends on an ideological distance from the two dictatorships (National Socialism and Communism). But he considered that neighbourhood management is similar to the National Front of the GDR, but using capitalist means to achieve the same goal. (The National Front was a mass organisation in the GDR, which arranged community activities and was part of the socialist state and party apparatus.)

*We did parks together in the GDR, everything was prepared and we then built the park.*⁴³⁸

There are different ways in which inhabitants can get involved in the regeneration projects. There is a special budget for a neighbourhood (*Quartiersfond*) and a neighbourhood council (*Quartiersrat*), which consists of 15 inhabitants and 10 partners from the neighbourhood development department (*Quartiersentwicklung*), for which people can be nominated. The stakeholder from the area management concluded:

It’s a formalised process, which does not reach those who should be reached.

It is like a mini-city council with its own interests, where new things are often fended off. According to him, there are formal discussions and the elite of the area meet there.⁴³⁹

436 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local community center, 23 April 2013.

437 Thorsten Goldberg, Ellena Olsen, Martin Schönfeld, Andreas Sommerer (2008): Kunst in der Großsiedlung, Kunstwerke im öffentlichen Raum in Marzahn und Hellersdorf (Art in the large housing estate, works of art in public space in Marzahn and Hellersdorf), Berlin.

438 Stakeholder interview with a local activist, 8 May 2013.

439 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local NGO, 6 May 2013.

The local activist talked about the historical development of the different participatory mechanisms. According to him the neighbourhood councils were introduced in 2005/2006, when the old structure, the inhabitants' advisory board (*Bewohnerbeirat*), was replaced.

When the inhabitants' advisory board first met there were only 10 inhabitants, but they created nine committees! But the inhabitants' advisory board dealt 100 percent with the area (Stadtteil) and the neighbourhood councils only 60 percent and the main focus there is money.⁴⁴⁰

According to him, until 2005 the inhabitant's advisory board was the spokesman for the inhabitants. Although he officially left the participation field of activity in 2006 he unofficially continued until 2009 and stopped "when the main beneficiary of the process was made the head of the process," he mentioned critically, since the constellation of power had changed and the carrier of power had shifted.⁴⁴¹

He described the struggle to change the regeneration programme for Marzahn-Hellersdorf. New plans for the reconstruction (*Rückbau*), instead of the demolition of whole housing blocks supported by the citizens' advisory board, were presented in 2002.⁴⁴² In 2003 letters, petitions and press releases were also published in opposition. The senator in charge of housing in Berlin at that time was in favour of demolition, asking,

Who wants to move into Plattenbau [building made with precast concrete slabs]?⁴⁴³

There were collisions between the old structure of the citizens' advisory board and the new structure of the area advisory board. Four hundred inhabitants attended a protest meeting; they wrote a letter asking the neighbouring mayor of Ahrensfelde if they could be administratively coopted into his village. This captured media attention with headlines of "Flight to Brandenburg", using the image of flight in the cold-war context of fleeing from East to West Berlin.⁴⁴⁴ (This story was part of a story-telling event, in which the most successful story was published in a book.)⁴⁴⁵

A participant in the young men's focus group suggested something else, that is, encouraging citizen self-organisation, and said that the best projects are those running on their own:

440 Stakeholder interview with a local activist, 8 May 2013.

441 Stakeholder interview with a local activist, 8 May 2013.

442 Stakeholder interview with a local activist, 8 May 2013.

443 Stakeholder interview with a local activist, 8 May 2013.

444 Stakeholder interview with a local activist, 8 May 2013.

445 Rohnstock, Platten Geschichten.

*The state itself is much too inflexible for good and simple recommendations. For example, if you have a child you should be able to bring it to work and parents can help each other in childcare. Students of higher school classes can transfer their knowledge for little money to younger students.*⁴⁴⁶

10.3.4 | OTHER PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS

The participation focus group was told about various other possibilities available, for young and old.⁴⁴⁷ A number of these are noted below.

1. Agency for volunteers (*Freiwilligenagentur*), which places volunteers for institutions and NGOs and vice versa. It has a big database of volunteers and organisations.⁴⁴⁸
2. Places of diversity: Marzahn-Hellersdorf is one of the Places of Diversity (*Orte der Vielfalt*) set up by the federal government, a title carried by 100–150 cities all over Germany. The programme is involved with people from Russia and Vietnam.⁴⁴⁹ Another of these Places is the Gardens of the World (*Gärten der Welt*).⁴⁵⁰ The title stands for acting against right-wing extremism and for democracy and diversity.⁴⁵¹ The criterion for being a Place of Diversity is that it must be where there is active, progressive and experimental integration, as in Berlin.⁴⁵²
3. The district programme called Democracy Development (*Bezirksprogramm Demokratieentwicklung*). This is a civil society programme funded with federal money and implemented through the local education and economy action plans. However, economic enterprises have chosen to be neutral actors, a stakeholder in the administration said, although they are seen as important actors in the development of democracy. The stakeholder saw the need to involve them in the public administration and civil society. The action plan on education focuses on living, the neighbourhood and public space. They do a democracy audit in cooperation with the nearby Alice Salomon University in Hellersdorf-Central, which is financially supported by the lottery. Their motto, the stakeholder reported,

⁴⁴⁶ Focus group with younger men, 4 July 2013.

⁴⁴⁷ Focus group on participation, 21 May 2013.

⁴⁴⁸ Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local NGO, 2 May 2013.

⁴⁴⁹ Stakeholder interview with district administration, 14 February 2013.

⁴⁵⁰ Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local NGO, 2 May 2013.

⁴⁵¹ Bezirksamt Marzahn-Hellersdorf, "Polis – Bezirkliche Koordinierungsstelle für Demokratieentwicklung am Ort der Vielfalt Marzahn-Hellersdorf" (Polis – District coordinating body for the development of democracy in the place of diversity Marzahn-Hellersdorf), at http://www.berlin.de/ba-marzahn-hellersdorf/verwaltung/haushalt/migrba_polis.html (accessed 12 July 2014).

⁴⁵² The district integration program defines 7 fields for action, see: Bezirksamt Marzahn-Hellersdorf, "Bezirkliches Integrationsprogramm Marzahn-Hellersdorf" (District integration program Marzahn-Hellersdorf), at http://www.berlin.de/lb/ads/diversity/beispiele/migrba_lenkint.html (accesses 12 July 2014).

is “What have we got and what do we need?” He presented it as a coherent strategy until 2016, which is not officially enacted yet.⁴⁵³

10.4 | CHALLENGES OF THE INCIDENT OF THE ASYLUM SEEKERS' HOME

Very shortly after the end of the research fieldwork the location of an asylum centre in the district became a critical political and media issue. An information event was held on 9 July 2013 in Hellersdorf, after which the discourse on the asylum seekers' home developed dynamically as the federal elections came close. According to a media report 750–1,000 people identified as inhabitants of the area demonstrated, “shouting loudly” against the proposed asylum centre. The senator of social affairs, Mario Czaja (CDU), condemned the undifferentiated propaganda of right-wingers and was sure that neo-Nazis had “shamelessly exploited xenophobic slogans” and “instrumentalised the information needs of the citizens”.⁴⁵⁴ Stakeholders from the police and the district administration were at the public information event. The following day they described the issue as being about the settling of up to 400 refugees in a former school building in Marzahn-Hellersdorf,⁴⁵⁵ where 170 had already been living for some time without significant problems⁴⁵⁶. Another stakeholder interviewed before the event had noted that there is an infrastructure in the area for refugees and for the local population, the consultation hour, to sort out problems.⁴⁵⁷

Asylum seekers and refugees had also been a topic in the younger men's focus group, where one participant claimed that Marzahn had become more tolerant.⁴⁵⁸ The stakeholder present at the event said that a lot of right-wing politicians from the surrounding area of Brandenburg and other parts of Berlin came and disrupted the meeting. They wore T-shirts with the date of the Rostock-Lichtenhagen pogroms of 1992 and the slogan “No to the home” (*Nein zum Heim*). According to the mayor, about 70 people from the right, 150 leftist and 400–500 neighbours came, but there was no chance to ask questions or to inform the neighbours.⁴⁵⁹ The whole event was posted on YouTube.⁴⁶⁰

453 Stakeholder interview with district administration, 02 May 2013.

454 Die Tageszeitung (TAZ), “Protest gegen Asylbewerberheim, Pogromstimmung in Hellersdorf” (Protest against refugee center, pogroms in Hellerdorf), 10 July 2013 at <http://www.taz.de/Protest-gegen-Asylbewerberheim/119659/> (accessed 12 July 2014).

455 Stakeholder interviews with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013 and a district politician, 17 April 2013.

456 Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17 April 2013.

457 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local community center, 23 April 2013.

458 Focus group with younger men, 4 July 2013.

459 Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17 April 2013.

460 Video on information event of 9 July 2013 in Marzahn-Hellersdorf: see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xia4sKtIC3E> (accessed 17 September 2013).

According to the stakeholders in administration, the district administration was only told about the settlement of the refugees one month before the refugee centre was opened and so they held the information meetings as soon as they knew about it. They planned the meeting for the neighbours, in order to involve local people.⁴⁶¹ The timing of the event during the summer holidays made some people suspicious. A participant from the district administration explained that people did not understand that the decision had been taken by the state of Berlin, which had informed the district administration a couple of days later. The district had to explain and execute the decision.

The administration was surprised that the intervention of the Nazis was so professionally organised. The right-wing activists appeared as a “Citizens’ initiative” (*Bürgerinitiative*) and no one realised until the information event had started that the NPD was behind it. Even the national leader of the NPD in Berlin attended the meeting unrecognised by officials or police. He was able to take the microphone and began to speak. However, he was then recognised and the microphone was taken away from him. The event organisers interviewed for this report explained that they did that on the grounds of having the right to refuse entrance (*Hausrecht*). They did not refer to legal restrictions on his right to speak (e.g. hate speech, *Volksverhetzung*). Afterwards he sent in his wife and two other women, who were not known and therefore could not be identified by officials, and the three women were able to speak. People were afraid and left the information event.⁴⁶²

The press framed the event as “Hellersdorf against the asylum seekers”, but it was the right-wingers who hijacked the event. The mayor now recognises that it was a mistake to make the information event a public event.⁴⁶³ Another younger stakeholder in the district administration working on right-wing extremism and democracy development said he saw the current situation as a challenge.⁴⁶⁴ For him, the publicity surrounding the event undermined 10 years of work improving the image of the area. The main challenges were not the organised right-wingers, but the minds of the people. In his view there are political opinions, which destroy democracy.⁴⁶⁵ The mayor sees the influence of diffuse fears.

*There is no difference in how newspapers portrait the district now, they reinforce the existing stereotypes about Marzahn-Hellersdorf. The media following the baseline, that only bad news is news. This perpetrates the negative image of Marzahn.*⁴⁶⁶

461 Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

462 Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

463 Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

464 Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

465 Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

466 Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

But there are activities to counter the far right. The day after the information meeting a Facebook site was set up where young people came out in support of the refugees. They also argued that support for refugees should not be limited to those refugee groups that were seen as acceptable, which at the moment are those from Syria, Iran and Iraq. "Action was taken at all levels from the local up to the mayor," a participant said.⁴⁶⁷ Limiting the refugees to those from Syria, Iran and Iraq was a strategic countermeasure, according to some of the stakeholders. The separation of the NPD from the local neighbours was also a key countermeasure, according to local officials. To avoid creating further opportunities for organised protests by right-wing groups from outside the area they opted to have smaller, local events with personal invitations to local residents. The company that runs the asylum centre will open the doors for the neighbours in the future.⁴⁶⁸ The strategy of the police, a stakeholder in the police said, was to counter discussion by providing facts, meaning objective numbers.⁴⁶⁹

10.5 | OBSTACLES PREVENTING PARTICIPATION

Looking at the choreography of the asylum seekers home event different facets can be viewed. Although there is a huge variety of opportunities to participate in the district, obviously some people are left out. The stakeholders and focus group participants gave manifold explanations on why people do not participate. A participant of the education focus group reported, for example, of being sceptical of demonstrations, because he feels uncomfortable with large numbers of people.⁴⁷⁰ In the older men's focus group the participants discussed the issue of participation as well. They articulated a specific view on those who are in charge:

Those who have studied have a say. Worker cannot rise up and don't get asked. Workers cannot participate. Politicians are lobbyists and get influenced.⁴⁷¹

Another participant said that people were fed up with politics, to illustrate that he talked about a hall which would be transformed into a gym for women only in October 2014 against the will of the majority of the citizens, according to him. He attributed this to the influence of lobbyists.⁴⁷² The hall, which currently can be used by both genders, will exclude men from Monday to Friday. A citizens' initiative named "Hall for All" was set up to stop these plans. They collected around 1,000 signatures to present a resident application, which must then be discussed in the district assembly. The initiative argues that the plan to exclude men is discriminatory.⁴⁷³ A stakeholder

467 Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

468 Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

469 Stakeholder interview with a person working in the local police, 10 July 2013.

470 Focus group on education, 15 May 2013.

471 Focus group with older men, 5 July 2013.

472 Focus group with older men, 5 July 2013.

473 Focus group with older men, 5 July 2013.

involved in urban renewal framed it in another way: “People want to be heard. Politics must give them a voice.”⁴⁷⁴

The local stakeholder working as a construction worker gave an explanation from his everyday experience of why people did not get involved in participatory events. “People are busy with their own lives,” he said. He referred to experiences with their son in the Kita.

*Other parents don't even come to the parents' events (Elternabend). They come totally stressed from work, they have a contract with the Kita based on a certain amount of time in the Kita for their child and therefore they try to get the children there on time. But more participation is not possible for them because they often have low-paid flexible part-time jobs.*⁴⁷⁵

In the older men's focus group the contradiction between conformity and independence was discussed in relation to the GDR and united Germany. On the one side they said that citizens were getting more intelligent, more sceptical and more careful, and that is why they do not vote. On the other hand it was suggested that citizens are a herd who give their votes every four years. One of the very critical participants thought:

*This is not different from the GDR. This has nothing to do with democracy. You have to do something yourself.*⁴⁷⁶

This view was challenged by another participant of the focus group. He saw the need for more education in independence (*Selbständigkeit*). He thought that participation (*Mitbestimmung*) was misunderstood as an adaptation to the existing conditions by the citizens. This in his view undermines independence. There is a pressure to conform from early childhood and therefore independence needs to be supported and in his view it increases the quality of life. People were influenced by the media and therefore continued to swim with the mainstream.⁴⁷⁷

10.6 | ACTIVATION

A stakeholder in the neighbourhood management considered it is necessary to find ways of activating people, small-scale measures with a foreseeable time horizon. He also thought that key people needed to be identified and then they needed to be qualified. He thought there might be a problem of special interest in connection with

474 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local NGO, 6 May 2013.

475 Stakeholder interview with a local resident, 14 February 2013.

476 Focus group with older men, 05 July 2013.

477 Focus group with older men, 05 July 2013.

ethnic groups, so that measures should focus on social milieus. He also suggested enrolling parent representatives in the early childhood education field, using parent-child bond to persuade them to get activated. Services like help with homework (*Hausaufgaben*) or career counselling are other measures that might encourage people to get involved.⁴⁷⁸

The participant suggested other methods of direct communication with people via public relations exercises. A strategy should be developed to reach out to all groups of the population, learning from marketing techniques. Support from local associations is needed and cultural interpreters in early childhood education, like the Vietnamese, need to be supported.⁴⁷⁹ Some of the participants in the participation focus group discussed the same things. They too suggested reaching out, for instance to East Gate (a big shopping mall), organising events, like cooking with children, celebrating festivals and counselling.⁴⁸⁰

The same participants suggested identifying common interests, like a consultation hour in vet clinics (*Tierarztsprechstunde*), because there are many dogs in Marzahn-Hellersdorf and owners can be reached via their dogs.⁴⁸¹ Participants in the older women's focus group reported that much more went on during GDR times. There were clubs with pubs (*Clubgaststätten*), some of which still exist. Now there are new places to replace the old feeling of belonging, like the cinema in Hellersdorf-Central, techno parties and the carnival of cultures (*Karneval der Kulturen*) in Kreuzberg-Friedrichshain.⁴⁸²

478 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local NGO, 6 May 2013.

479 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local NGO, 6 May 2013.

480 Focus group on participation, 21 May 2013.

481 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local NGO, 6 May 2013.

482 Focus group with older women, 3 June 2013.



ROLE OF THE MEDIA

Social scientists exploring the role of mass media are mostly in agreement that news does much more than simply reflect the existing social reality. Editors and journalists in news media select news topics, prime those issues considered more newsworthy and allot them more prominent space and frame the news according to their own ideologies. In this way they affect public perception of social reality and direct the way in which consumers of media information engage with the world around them:⁴⁸³

*In choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position.*⁴⁸⁴

Because of this presumed influence over the audience, the media become, to quote Gurevitch and Levy, “a site on which various social groups, institutions, and ideologies struggle over the definition and construction of social reality”.⁴⁸⁵

But consumers of news have an active role in the process:

*People are not cultural dopes, passively reading texts as the producers intend. Texts in general, and media imagery in particular, can be read in different ways—to use the jargon, they are polysemic. Texts may have a preferred meaning and point of view, which the reader is invited to accept. But many readers decline the invitation, either entering into some negotiation with the dominant meaning or rejecting it outright with an oppositional reading.*⁴⁸⁶

Readers therefore engage with a text and attempt to decode it in an active manner, which has a potential to subvert the message offered by a person writing the text. Individual differences, such as age, gender, education, degree of involvement, knowledge of the topic, interactions with friends and family, development of critical thinking skills, etc., all influence the way a text is read by a particular person. People thus always bring an individual touch to the media they encounter and construct their own social reality by negotiating the text in complex ways that we are only beginning to understand.

In order to address the issue of how media influence perceptions of reality among the local population in Marzahn-Hellersdorf and how it affects the processes of social inclusion of marginalised majority communities, it is necessary to first present a

483 For a discussion of selection, priming and framing in the news media see D.A. Scheufele and D. Tewksbury “Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming.” *Journal of Communication* 57 (2007), p. 9–20.

484 Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, “The agenda Setting Function of Mass Media”, *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36 (2) (Summer 1972), p. 172.

485 M.Gurevitch and M. Levy, “Introduction”, in M Gurevitch and M. Levy (eds), *Mass Communication Yearbook* 5, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, CA, 1985, p. 12.

486 William A. Gamson, David Croteau, William Hoynes and Theodore Sasson, “Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality”, *Annual Review of Sociology* 18 (1992), p. 388.

brief overview of the different ways the district has been portrayed by the local and national media from its inception until the present day. The chapter will also present the various actors involved in the struggle over the district's media image and possible reasons for the different ways in which they portray the area. Then the ways in which media reports on Marzahn-Hellersdorf are received by the local population and how this process of reception shapes their perceptions of reality will be addressed.

Reading of the media content is by no means a simple process. People are more or less engaged with the media and use different kinds of media in order to get informed. Moreover, people also read the news in divergent ways depending on their particular socio-demographic characteristics and their individual position in a society. During the research in Marzahn-Hellersdorf it became apparent that age, education and familiarity with the district significantly affect the way news about Marzahn-Hellersdorf is consumed and processed by the people interviewed for this study. Therefore, the section which discusses how people read the media content will focus on these three socio-demographic aspects and their effects. The chapter also attempts to offer some limited recommendations for improving media engagement that could help various stakeholders in their work on the inclusion of marginalised majority communities living in the area.

11.1 | MEDIA PORTRAYALS OF MARZAHN-HELLERSDORF THROUGH TIME

Given their location in the capital of the GDR and their enormous size, it is not surprising that the East German state apparatus made sure that Marzahn and Hellersdorf were reported on in a very positive way by official media outlets. Marzahn especially was turned into a symbol of the promised real existing socialism and the GDR's struggle to combat the pressing housing shortage and provide its citizens with good-quality, mass-produced housing.⁴⁸⁷ This process was facilitated by regular visits to the area by important East German politicians (such as Erich Honecker) and public figures (such as the first East German astronaut Sigmund Jähn), which were often turned into media spectacles that some of the people participating in our focus groups still proudly remember.⁴⁸⁸

In such widely publicised events, the two newly constructed districts were sharply contrasted with the crumbling inner city areas of East Berlin such as Prenzlauerberg and Friedrichshain in order to demonstrate the dramatic improvements in the quality of housing and the general standard of living in the GDR. Often this was done by emphasising the modern amenities, such as running water, central heating or separate

⁴⁸⁷ Rubin, "Concrete Utopia".

⁴⁸⁸ Focus group on health, 5 July 2013.

rooms for children, which the newly built new construction settlements provided. Inhabitants of the GDR were also exposed to advertisements presenting the various new possibilities offered by living in the newly constructed settlements, which were often far removed from the reality of what people settling these areas could afford to obtain, or even find, in the East Berlin stores.⁴⁸⁹

More important, the new constructed settlements were also imagined by politicians—and reported on by the GDR information channels—as environments conducive to building new forms of community and communal living through the active involvement of their inhabitants in the beautification and development of the areas, which were often not completely finished when people moved in, due to the lack of funding and hastiness of the building process. This idea of the new collective community, which was supposed to spring into existence in places like Marzahn and Hellersdorf, is most clearly represented in the slogan “From I to We”, that one of the initial settlers remembers being written on the wall of his stairwell when he arrived in Marzahn.⁴⁹⁰

The radical modernist architecture of settlements such as Marzahn was also presented as embodying the egalitarian principle of socialism, which was seen as the core ideological advantage of the East German state in comparison with its neighbour to the west. Thus, the new settlements were imagined to be a solution to the class divisions which supposedly persisted in the old, bourgeois (pre-second world war) inner city neighbourhoods.⁴⁹¹ Echoes of this ideology are still heard today when initial settlers of Marzahn-Hellersdorf reminisce about the pre-transition time when workers used to live next door to professors and other better paid members of East German society. A GDR TV series about the life in Marzahn called “Moving into Paradise” (*Einzug ins Paradies*), produced in 1983 and shown in 1987, elegantly summarised all of the hopes that the East German government had for the newly constructed district: good-quality housing, new forms of participation, community and comradeship spontaneously established by the new settlers, along with the complete erasure of the class differences represented by the protagonists of the series. Unfortunately, the processes that were unleashed by the unification of the two Germanys in 1990 soon dashed these hopes.

Immediately after the demise of the GDR the media portrayal of the two districts underwent a radical transition which still influences the lives and identities of many of the people living in the area. The Western media outlets, especially the ones owned by the Springer publishing company, started reporting on a variety of social problems that were supposedly endemic to the large housing blocks areas such as Marzahn and Hellersdorf. The main subjects were (in chronological order): the resurgence

489 Rubin, “Concrete Utopia”.

490 Rubin, “Concrete Utopia”.

491 Rubin, “Concrete Utopia”.

of skinheads and other right-wing groups in the east, portrayals of inhumane living conditions in grey and decaying prefabricated housing estates (which were now dismissively called *Plattenbausiedlungen*). Such portrayals were soon expanded to include the people living in the area. As local administration, a representative of district press office stated, the prevalent media stereotype of Marzahn in the 1990s was “grey people living in grey buildings”.

In this way the images of physical decay of the area were moralized and transposed on to its population. In doing so the Western media masked the once diverse socio-economic composition of the area and people were depicted in a paternalistic fashion as poor helpless dummies and (more recently) as lazy parasites living on social welfare and rejecting any kind of active participation in society.⁴⁹² This most recent stereotype is reinforced by the reality shows on TV channels such as “RTL” (which one of the participants in the media focus group called Hartz IV TV, Welfare TV) and by the hugely popular comedian Ilka Bessin, whose TV persona “Cindy from Marzahn” embodies many of the Western stereotypes about the so-called Ossi (the Easterners). Predominantly, these portrayals of life in Marzahn-Hellersdorf are based on decontextualised simplifications of the reality and rarely attempt to analyse the political and socio-economic reasons for the deteriorating conditions in the former GDR.

There are two main explanations for the way in which Western media reported on Marzahn and Hellersdorf throughout the 1990s. As one of the stakeholders stated, the district fitted perfectly into the Western schema of social housing areas which in the West were usually inhabited by the lower classes. This was reinforced by the many outward similarities between Marzahn-Hellersdorf and the social housing areas that were built in West Berlin, such as Gropiusstadt or Märkisches Viertel.⁴⁹³ Since all of them were built in a similar architectural style using similar materials (prefabricated concrete slabs), Western observers failed to notice that the housing estates in East Berlin were initially settled by much more diverse, and far better educated, people than in the social housing estates of West Berlin. However, once this schema was applied, it quickly turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy as people who did not want to be associated with the stigma of belonging to the lower working class in a new society, where workers did not have the status they had had in the GDR, left the borough in large numbers.

Secondly, many of the people interviewed for this report claimed that there was a deliberate attempt by Western politicians and their media outlets to defame Marzahn-Hellersdorf. As Natalia, one of the participants in focus group on housing claimed:

492 Focus group on media, 25 July 2013.

493 Stakeholder interview with a district politician, 17 April 2013.

*One could not allow that the only real GDR district, the only district created during GDR times, to be seen in a positive way. I see that as political decision.*⁴⁹⁴

Another participant in the same focus group connected the deliberate defamation of the area to the fact that since unification Marzahn has consistently voted for political parties such as the Party of Democratic Socialism (Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus, PDS) and the Left Party, the successors to the Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED), which was the official Communist party in the GDR.⁴⁹⁵ This also partly explains the often confusing media coverage of the politics in the area: on one side the district is presented as dominated by the right-wing extremists and Nazis, while on the other side it was also seen as the red stronghold (*Rote Hochburg*). What is clear is that the negative and one-dimensional media reporting on the area has created much resentment among the local population, who feel victimised and robbed of their once proud identity in a process which many claim persists to this day, despite recent improvements.

While the district government and its press relations office, along with certain local newspapers and journalists, attempted to counteract such reports by presenting more positive aspects of living in Marzahn-Hellersdorf, they were often helpless in the face of the near complete hegemony of the Western media outlets and their entrenched prejudices towards the eastern parts of the newly unified Germany. Nevertheless, there are certain signs that in the last ten years media reports on the district are becoming more balanced,⁴⁹⁶ although one stakeholder complained that the district is now very rarely reported on except in the crime section.⁴⁹⁷ Individuals interviewed for this report, including officials in local government, explained that this development is a result of the radical visual changes that Marzahn-Hellersdorf has experienced in the last 10 years as a result of the massive regeneration project and the fact that many of the apartments that emptied in the 1990s are now occupied again, which enables private housing communities to invest more money in the improvement and beautification of the area. This development, which in the opinion of one stakeholder efficiently hides widespread poverty and other social problems,⁴⁹⁸ has also effectively prevented media outlets from using images of grey urban decay in order to project these images on to the population, as was often the case in the 1990s. Nevertheless, as one of the stakeholders working for the district's press office claimed, certain newspapers still often search for images of grey decaying buildings when reporting on problems in Marzahn-Hellersdorf. And when they do not find them, they resort to using old stock photos of Marzahn from the 1990s.

494 Focus group on housing, 13 June 2013.

495 Focus group on housing, 13 June 2013.

496 Stakeholder interview with a journalist, 6 May 2013.

497 Stakeholder interview with a journalist, 17 April 2013.

498 Stakeholder interview with local youth service, 14 April 2013.

11.2 | PRESENT-DAY IMAGE OF MARZAHN-HELLERSDORF

Most of the interviewees agreed that Berlin-based radio stations and newspapers are realising that the district is changing and that the negative stereotypes they promoted in the past did not contribute to the wellbeing of the locals. How much this change in editorial policies is a result of pressure from the district government and local businesses in their efforts to make the district more attractive to housing investors and other businesses is not clear. However, interviews with stakeholders showed that the local government has been aware of the problem and has persistently worked on trying to change the negative image that especially Marzahn evokes in the minds of the outsiders. Along with changing the media picture of the district, local officials interviewed for this report believe that it is also necessary to bring more people into the area in order for them to see that it is changing for the better. Officials place many of their hopes on the biggest tourist attraction in Marzahn-Hellersdorf, the Gardens of the World, a park built in 1987. In 2017, this park will host the International Garden Exhibition (IGA), which is expected to bring in an estimated 2.4 million people and, as one stakeholder stated, could result in new, more positive, images coming out of Marzahn-Hellersdorf.⁴⁹⁹

11.3 | RECEPTION OF THE MEDIA IMAGES BY THE LOCALS

The study revealed some important differences in how the local population reads the news about their district, based on their socio-demographic characteristics. Older and more educated people mostly rely on traditional news sources such as Berlin's most prominent newspapers and the TV news. Younger people seem to be more detached from classical news channels and rely on their peer networks and the internet for obtaining information.⁵⁰⁰ Furthermore, while older people frequently read local newspapers such as *JWD* and *Die Hellersdorfer*, younger people rely much less on such newspapers for getting their information about what is happening in the area.

These differences are important to keep in mind in order for stakeholders to develop strategies for reaching different sections of people. Thus, as a representative of the district's press office, stated:

In order to reach a wider population one has to put the information in Berliner Woche, Berliner Abendblatt, Berliner Zeitung, on the radio, evening news and hang a poster on the wall.⁵⁰¹

499 Stakeholder interview with a person working in a local NGO, 6 May 2013.

500 Focus group on media, 25 July 2013.

501 Stakeholder interview with local administration, 18 April 2013.

What is conspicuously missing from this statement is a strategy for reaching the ever-growing number of people who predominantly rely on the internet to obtain their news. This is especially important since, despite the established belief among some representatives of local government who seemed to suggest older people do not regularly use the internet, the study showed that the older generation is slowly but surely embracing it as a main channel for receiving news and information about their local area as well as about the wider national and international scene.⁵⁰² Moreover, as one of the journalists interviewed for this study stated, due to declining editorial resources and subsequent lack of in-depth analysis of the local situation, in-depth discussion about the district is happening on the various blogs, Facebook groups and other internet forms of communication.⁵⁰³ Local officials working on how to reach people in Marzahn-Hellersdorf should pay more attention to such channels of communication and develop strategies for reaching people online.

There are also important differences between the generations in the way they read news reports on Marzahn-Hellersdorf. Most important, the older generation, which had been living in the area for the last few decades, is more critical of the stereotypical portrayals of the area. In the focus groups, the older people often complained that the area was stigmatised as a welfare district or as being dominated by right-wing elements and argued that the reports were false.⁵⁰⁴ They also more often complained about “Cindy from Marzahn”, who in their opinion contributes significantly to the bad image of the area.⁵⁰⁵ While many of the younger people interviewed for this study also noted the persistent focus of the media on negative aspects of life in Marzahn-Hellersdorf, they were less critical and accepted them as more or less accurate descriptions.⁵⁰⁶ The difference also correlates to the difference in the way the two generations relate to the area (see Chapter 4).

A related difference in how people read media reports on the district is that between the established inhabitants and the outsiders or newcomers, who more often accepted the negative news reports as an accurate description of the social situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf and even repeated them in their own descriptions of the area.⁵⁰⁷ This difference shows how important familiarity with the area is for a more critical approach to reading the news. It also confirms the belief of local officials that the long-held prejudices that outsiders have about Marzahn would most efficiently be counteracted by becoming more familiar with the area. How this can be achieved is a problem that the district administration will have to face in the future. The often proposed idea of lobbying for public structures (such as a cultural centre or a football

502 Focus group with older women, 3 June 2013.

503 Stakeholder interview with a journalist, 6 May 2013.

504 Focus group with older men, 5 July 2013.

505 Focus group with older women, 3 June 2013.

506 Focus group on media, 25 July 2013.

507 Focus group on media, 25 July 2013; focus group with younger women, 6 June 2013.

stadium) that would bring more Berliners to Marzahn, is a good start, but might not be enough. In the meantime, various stakeholders will have to develop better strategies for combating the persistent negative image of Marzahn-Hellersdorf. The first step is to emphasise and publicise the many positive developments and successful projects of the last decade.

INTERNET NEWS PORTAL LICHTENBERGMARZAHN+

A number of prominent East Berlin journalists (such as Birgit Eltzel, Andrea Scheuring, and Klaus Tessmann among others), whose lives have in one way or another been connected either to the district of Marzahn-Hellersdorf or to the neighbouring district of Lichtenberg, have, in December 2013, started an online portal called LichtenbergMarzahn+. This news portal is mainly focusing on the two above mentioned East Berlin districts and thus attempts to overcome the lack of in-depth journalistic reporting on the two East Berlin districts, while, at the same time, trying to stimulate local engagement with, and debates on, important issues facing these areas. While the portal is still in its early stages, it had more than twenty-five thousand visitors in the first month alone – testifying to the viability of a locally based internet portal as a means for local residents to get their news about their district and their neighbourhoods.

12

CONCLUSIONS

As stated in the introduction, this report focuses on the life experiences and modes of economic, social, political and cultural participation of white working-class people within the district of Marzahn-Hellersdorf that are suffering from high levels of socio-economic exclusion, in areas such as Marzahn-North, Hellersdorf-North and Hellersdorf-East. More specifically, it attempts to identify barriers to socio-economic participation and possible factors leading to the marginalization of economically vulnerable, white, working-class communities living in the above-mentioned areas.

Given the limitations of the methodology used, the report refrains from offering a set of definite conclusions about the conditions in the area containing more than 150,000 people and will instead present a number of themes that emerged from the analysis of interviews with local stakeholders and residents in the area, statistical data from local and federal statistical offices, and previous research. Three closely interconnected themes bear important consequences for processes of social, economic, political and cultural inclusion of people living in the areas of Marzahn-Hellersdorf that this study was concerned with. These themes are: a) the continuing socio-economic, cultural and political consequences of the process of German re-unification in the district, b) effects of a particular generational constellation resulting from the relatively recent large-scale settlement of the area and c) emerging new forms of participation.

12.1 | THE LONG SHADOW OF THE REUNIFICATION IN MARZAHN-HELLERSDORF

Despite recently celebrating 25 years since the beginning of the process of German reunification, which started with the fall of the Berlin Wall and symbolically ended ten years later, in 1999, when the national parliament of the German Federal Republic moved from Bonn to the Reichstag building in Berlin, the consequences of processes unleashed by the reunification are still acutely felt in Marzahn-Hellersdorf. This is because the district—which, as one of the participants in one of the focus groups stated, is “the only real GDR district, the only district created during GDR times”⁵⁰⁸—has in many ways been a district on the losing side of the historical process of unification.

The aftereffects of the unification in Marzahn-Hellersdorf have included a massive wave of unemployment following the demise of the East German economy in the 1990s followed by the political disenfranchisement of what was, until the transition period, an economically and politically privileged population. This was accompanied by a discursive repositioning of (especially) Marzahn, from being a shining example of the new socialist way of communal living to what many outsiders (especially from West Berlin and West Germany) saw as the “Bronx of Berlin” and an archetype of the

508 Focus group on housing, 13 June 2013.

failed socialist ideology embodied in the so-called *Plattenbauten*, which were soon condemned as being unlivable by urban planners from the West. This process led to a significant outflux of the more prosperous residents from the district, followed by a process of urban regeneration, during which about 4000 apartment units along with 142 buildings that housed various social institutions such as schools, kindergartens and youth clubs were demolished. Last but not least, the years after unification also brought about the arrival of various new immigrant groups (especially Russian-Germans) and highlighted the presence of the already established groups, such as the Vietnamese community, whose members were now allowed to leave the confines of the worker's homes where they lived during the GDR period. This change was followed by two important developments that further negatively influenced the social cohesion of the district in the mid-1990s: the emergence of the far-right violence in the area and the increased perception of the district as being unsafe by its residents, and – especially – by other Berliners and by people from other parts of Germany. These negative views were influenced by the prevalent sensationalistic and stereotypical picture that Western news media presented to the wider German public when discussing the district and its problems.

All of the above-mentioned changes have also crucially affected the processes of identity formation and feelings of belonging among the remaining local population. Along with the demise of the East German economy and the advent of precarious and undervalued working relations, which seriously limited the possibility of personal identification with one's employment, the once proud worker's identity lost its central role in people's self-conceptions. It was slowly being supplanted by consumerism as a way of economic participation in the new market-driven society, or—in the case of people who never gained footing in the new society—by their slow acceptance of the welfare dependence lifestyle. Moreover, with the advancement of social relations conditioned by the capitalist modes of production and increasing socio-economic problems that the northern parts of the district had to face, the emphasis on community, which was cherished—and sometimes even imposed—during the GDR times now gave way to the wave of individualism as people abandoned old social structures while new ones had not yet been built. According to many, the changes that occurred in the 1990s, have seriously corroded the social cohesion of the area and are still effecting the attempts of various stakeholders at building viable communities in Marzahn-Hellersdorf.

However, the hardships that people in Marzahn-Hellersdorf experienced in the first decade after the unification and the German-wide stigma they had to deal with also had some positive effects. For example there is a strong sense of resilience and pride in the district, as people rely on themselves and their fellow residents in order to deal with the various problems they face in their lives. Moreover from the ashes of old social institutions, a new “social economy” has been built in the form of numerous non-governmental organizations, associations and social clubs. In connection with

the improving housing and economic situation of the district, these organizations are likely to contribute to continued recovery of the district in the near future.

12.2 | PARTICULAR GENERATIONAL CONSTELLATION OF THE DISTRICT

As described in the chapter on demography, the district of Marzahn-Hellersdorf became what it is today as a result of a radical housing development project, which brought an estimated 250,000 (mostly young) people to the district between 1975 and 1989. This has crucially affected its age distribution, which has an unusual two peak structure with a large number of people in their late 50s and another large number of people in their mid-20s. As a result of the dramatic changes that the district went through since 1989 (see above), these two generations have two very different perspectives on their own district and the social, political, economic and cultural processes that are occurring in it. The older generation was shaped by the old GDR regime and has seen the slow and painful re-positioning of Marzahn-Hellersdorf in the wider social space of the newly unified Berlin. On the other hand, the younger generation has only experienced the more troubled times in the district and had to deal with the stigma of living in the so-called welfare district since their birth. This condition creates a wide gap between the two generations and is a source of substantial mistrust between members of the so-called *Gummistiefel* Generation (Wellington boots generation) and the *Wendekinder* (children of unification)

Thus, the older generation often complains about the lack of work ethic, diminished political involvement, excessive consumerism and lack of respect for authority among the younger generation. Conversely, members of the younger generation see their parents' generation as being stuck in the past, nostalgic for an idealized life in the GDR and incapable of accepting the changes which their immediate environment went through in the last quarter of a century. In terms of socio-economic participation, this constellation has had the negative effect of preventing the two generations from attempting to solve the problems that the district faces in a unified way and leads to a) exclusion of the younger generation (and recent arrivals to Marzahn, who are also often excluded based on their ethnicity) from various associations, local councils and other points of decision-making in the district and b) to the establishment of parallel structures of social participation that are mostly led by young people and often organized on-line and thus completely under the radar of both the older generation and local government. Moreover, exclusion of members of the younger generation from various centers of local decision-making exacerbates the feeling of not having any say in the district and is – along with the economically precarious situation in Marzahn-Hellersdorf and a widespread stigma that Marzahn carries in the eyes of their peers from other parts of the city – one of the main reasons for young people wanting to leave the area and try their luck somewhere else.

Last but not least, as a result of its specific age distribution, Marzahn-Hellersdorf is the most rapidly aging district in Berlin. Given that, as many local officials admitted, the local structures needed for addressing the issues of an aging population are not sufficiently developed, this has important consequences for the processes of social and economic exclusion of older people in the district.

12.3 | NEW FORMS OF PARTICIPATION

The last theme that this concluding chapter focuses on are the ways in which people in Marzahn-Hellersdorf have been able to establish new forms of participation under conditions in which traditional mechanisms of economic, political, social, and cultural participation seem to have broken down. In terms of political participation in the management of the district, many of the local residents expressed their frustration with what they see as the impossibility of having their voices heard. They complain that most of the projects realized in the area are conducted in a very paternalistic, top-down fashion. A good example of this are the initial housing regeneration plans, which (as the chapter on participation shows) were modified only after a strong grass-roots campaign by the local community concerned with what they saw as destruction of their homes. The more recent protest against the asylum seekers home can be seen as another example, which, despite certain xenophobic undertones, was also very much a reaction against what people saw as yet another top-down decision by the local and city governments. As explained above, especially young people are struggling against such forms of policy-making by organizing themselves in a non-hierarchical and often very dispersed way, to which local institutions are not adapting fast enough. In addition, many of the official participation mechanisms (such as Quartiersmanagement or Bürgerhaushalt) have been criticized by many interviewed stakeholders as mechanisms which pretend to ensure inclusion of local residents in the decision-making process in the district, but are in fact only superficially doing so. They are seen to be rooted in the new ideology of participatory policy making, which is sweeping across the city and the district governmental offices, and/or as an insufficient tool to react to political apathy and the wide-spread opinion that present-day politics are hopelessly removed from people's own needs and interests.

In terms of economic participation, many stakeholders mentioned that one of the primary problems is the lack of paid employment, which was considered to be the main vehicle for economic inclusion. Marzahn-Hellersdorf is experiencing high structural unemployment and the social welfare reforms of 2005 (Harz IV reforms) have had serious negative effects on economic participation by isolating and demotivating a large sector of the local population. Unemployed people are placed in an economically dependent position in relation to the wider society, which, on the other side, often discursively (through media) blames them for a number of social problems, widening the gap between them and the local population still lucky enough

to have employment. There are a number of ways in which people in the district deal with this situation: Primarily, as the example of Freiwillige Agentur shows, many people try to find their way back into paid employment through voluntary work and underpaid employment in the various organizations in the district. Secondly, as is the case with other economic classes of society, people try to obtain signifiers of success, which they believe will secure them a degree of economic and social belonging in the new society they live in. Especially with unemployed and underemployed, this strategy of securing social acceptance often backfires and leads to serious financial problems.

During the research we also found out that, for the older generation, the longstanding housing communities of tenants who often lived in the same apartment block since they moved there in the 1980s, still function as the foundation for their social relations and for their involvement with their neighborhood. In fact, many of them have served as a base for various associations and social clubs that are spread all over the northern part of the district. However, as positive as these associations are for their members, they seem to function in a quite exclusionary fashion for newcomers to the district and even for members of the younger generation, which often cannot relate to the ways of thinking and acting of the older generation who were brought up during the socialist times. Nevertheless, these organizations, with their wide-reaching social networks, their ideology of active participation and political engagement along with a sense of ownership over the district should be seen as a crucial asset that need to be cultivated and transmitted to the new generation.

For the future development of the area, it is necessary to also address one of the fundamental problems that prevents wider participation of the local population in political, economic, social and cultural issues of the district – the entrenched top-down methods of decision making, reaching from the federal level down to the local government. In Marzahn-Hellersdorf, this method of governing can clearly be seen in the federal, city and local programs that have been implemented in last two decades. As one of the participants of the stakeholder meeting said, most of these programs are driven by a problem-related gaze at the district. It is sure time to start focusing on the amazing social potential that is hidden, and currently seriously underused, in Marzahn-Hellersdorf.

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Annex 2. Focus group dates and stakeholders

FOCUS GROUP DATES AND ROUNDTABLE DATE

Education, 15 May 2013
Participation, 21 May 2013
Older women, 3 June 2013
Employment, 4 June 2013
Younger women, 6 June 2013
Identity, 11 June 2013
Housing, 13 June 2013
Younger men, 4 July 2013
Older men, 5 July 2013
Policing and security, 5 July 2013
Health, 5 July 2013
Media, 25 July 2013
Roundtable discussion, 10 February 2014

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW DATES

Local administration, 18 April 2013
Local youth service, 14 April 2013
A teacher in a local school, 4 June 2013
A person working in a local NGO, 6 May 2013
A local politician, 26 April 2013
A journalist, 17 April 2013
A local politician, 25 April 2013
A person working in a local NGO, 2 May 2013
A journalist, 6 May 2013
A local activist, 8 May 2013
A person working in a local NGO, 19 April 2013
A local resident, 14 February 2013
A person working in the local police, 10 July 2013
A district politician, 17 April 2013
A person working in a local community centre, 23 April 2013

A local NGO activist, 17 April 2013

District administration, 3 May 2013

A district politician, 17 April 2013

District administration, 14 February 2013

District administration, 02 May 2013

STAKEHOLDERS DESCRIPTION

Blau, Michael, resident of Marzahn, interviewed in Marzahn.

Bryant, Thomas, head of POLIS (District Coordination Office for Development of Democracy in Marzahn-Hellersdorf), interviewed in Hellersdorf.

Eltzel, Birgit, journalist for BZ (major Berlin newspaper), interviewed in Berlin (centre).

Gollbach, Jochen, director of Freiwillige Agentur (organisation promoting voluntary civic engagement), interviewed in Marzahn.

Gräff, Christian, district council member responsible for Economy and City Development, interviewed in Hellersdorf.

Heidrich, Eckhart, headmaster of OSZ Marzahn (secondary vocational school), interviewed in Marzahn.

Hentschel, Tamara, director of Reistrommel (Vietnamese Association), interviewed in Marzahn.

Jahn, Rita, representative of Marzahn-Hellersdorf Youth Services, interviewed in Hellersdorf.

Knape, Michael, police chief, Polizeidirektion 6 (Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Lichtenberg, Treptow-Köpenick), interviewed in Marzahn.

Komoß, Stefan, mayor of Marzahn-Hellersdorf, interviewed in Hellersdorf.

Lampe, Jörg, head of Quartiersmanagement Marzahn Northwest, interviewed in Marzahn.

Marburg, Elena, head of Marzahn-Hellersdorf Integration Office, interviewed in Hellersdorf.

Moll, Michael, representative of Social Welfare Office, interviewed in Hellersdorf.

Nachtmann, Ralf, journalist on JWD (local newspaper), interviewed in Biesdorf.

Pohle, Dagmar, district council member responsible for Social Services and Health, interviewed in Hellersdorf.

Preußing, Thorsten, journalist and member of the former citizens' advisory board, Marzahn Northwest, interviewed in Marzahn.

Schilling, Renate, head of Marzahn-Central community centre and local parliament representative for the Left Party, interviewed in Marzahn.

Stegemann, Rosemarie, head of Marzahn-Hellersdorf press office, interviewed in Hellersdorf.

Witt, Juliane, district council member responsible for Youth, Family and Culture, interviewed in Berlin (centre).

Wunder, Lutz, project leader at Kulturring (cultural association), interviewed in Marzahn.



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