

INTRODUCTION

German Memory Work in a Transnational Context



In May 2020, in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, a white police officer killed George Floyd, a Black man who had been arrested on suspicion of using a counterfeit bill. Derek Chauvin kneeled on Floyd's neck for over nine minutes as he pleaded that he could not breathe. Floyd's death sparked waves of protest worldwide against police brutality and (institutional) racism and in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. In some cities, protestors directed their rage towards a culture of memorialisation that continued to celebrate those whose wealth and power had been built on the enslavement of other human beings. Societies across the Western world were called upon to address the legacies of colonialism that still persisted in their cultures, institutions and public space, and many were looking for answers on just how that might be done.

For some, the answer was to look to Germany. In 2019, Susan Neiman published a book with the title *Learning from the Germans: Confronting Race and the Memory of Evil*, which explores what Germany's experience of dealing with the legacy of Nazism can offer to American memory culture in particular.¹ In June 2020, she repeated that argument in an opinion piece in *The Guardian* with the title 'Germany Confronted Its Racist Legacy: Britain and the US Must Do the Same'.² In her book, Neiman concludes that the German example cannot offer a simple 'recipe for confronting other historical evils' and that it is crucial to attend to cultural and national difference.³ Nonetheless, the suggestion that German memory culture represents a model that others might follow was a familiar one. Katrin Hammerstein and Julie Trappe cite Péter Esterházy as having described Germans as 'world champions

Towards a Collaborative Memory

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in mastering the past'.⁴ Mischa Gabowitsch also notes this tendency to view Germany as 'the master atoner'.⁵ However, Gabowitsch argues that for the 'German model' to be used as an international 'yardstick' for achieving atonement, it 'is typically stripped of its contradictions, short-comings, historical context, and nuance'.⁶

Gabowitsch observes that this idea of Germany as 'master atoner' is both politically and economically invested, 'atonement for the past is a prominent part of [Germany's] nation brand'⁷ – something referred to by Stuart Taberner as an element of 'soft power'.⁸ Others have described it as an 'export hit'.⁹ But if German memory is a product to be 'exported', how does this 'export' travel? What are the channels of distribution? Who are the exporters and who are the importers? Is it the same product globally? This book seeks to explore these questions and unpicks what it might mean to learn from the Germans in transnational context. Based on an analysis of approximately 800 cross-border cooperations between German mnemonic actors and actors located elsewhere in the world, it offers a detailed empirical study of how German institutions focused on the history and memory of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) – a history that I describe as occupying an 'in-between' status in German memory culture – collaborate transnationally. I explore the ways in which these institutions perceive their export of the 'German model' in different contexts and if and how those exported goods are received. The book shows how the German actors divide the world rhetorically and how those divisions structure transnational networks.

In order to do this, I develop an innovative methodological framework for the study of transnational memory, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The study of German memory in transnational context also allows me to present and explore the original theoretical concept of 'collaborative memory' and to consider if and how collaboration can support a 'decolonial cosmopolitanism' in the practice of memorialisation and transitional justice.¹⁰ The methodological and theoretical frameworks presented here have applicability well beyond the German context and might be used to study exchange of memory across borders in other geographical locations. Memory is very frequently practiced transnationally; it is the aim of this book to offer a new methodological and theoretical framework for exploring memory that is 'unbound' by borders.¹¹

From Colonial Amnesia to the Legitimacy of Comparison

If German memory culture is a finished product, ready to be picked up and used in a new context, then its flaws and blindspots will travel with it. As Neiman and others were calling for the United States and the United Kingdom to

look to Germany as the masters of memory, commentators writing principally from within Germany pointed towards Germany's 'colonial amnesia', as it was termed by Henning Melber and Reinhard Kössler. Melber and Kössler note the external perception that Germany's approach to its racist past is 'exemplary'; however, they point to several 'glaring lacunae' in this memory culture, notably Germany's experience as a colonial power between 1884 and 1919, including the genocide committed against the Herero and Nama peoples in what is now Namibia.¹² In 2015, the German government admitted that the violence had been genocidal and in May 2021 the German and Namibian governments reached an official agreement, which included an official apology and the payment of €1.1 billion in aid by Germany to Namibia. Nonetheless, that agreement has been criticised for not involving directly the descendants of the victims, for packaging the financial recompense as welfare rather than reparations and for not addressing the issue of land restitution.¹³

The Black Lives Matter movement inspired reflection and change in Germany too, notably the renaming of Berlin's Mohrenstraße to Anton-Wilhelm-Amo-Strasse in honour of Germany's first Black scholar. However, we can hardly say that the German authorities were leaders or exemplars in their response. Campaigners had long pointed towards how offensive and outdated the street name was;¹⁴ however, it was not until August 2020 that the decision was finally made to change it. Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst and Joachim Zeller argue that postcolonial activism is not well embedded in broader public discussion and there remains widespread nostalgia for, or whitewashing of, German colonial history.¹⁵ As recently as December 2019, the right-populist anti-immigration party, the Alternative for Germany (AfD), invited Bruce Gilley – the author of an article published in 2017 arguing the 'case for colonialism' – to give a public lecture in the party's chamber in the Bundestag. The lecture had the programmatic title: 'The Balance of German Colonialism: Why the Germans Don't Need to Apologise for the Colonial Era and Certainly Don't Need to Pay for It!'¹⁶ In December 2020, the Humboldt Forum (digitally) opened its museum of non-European art, which included a number of artefacts acquired from Africa and Asia during German colonialism. The museum has been controversial since its inception, igniting debates around the decision to demolish the GDR Palace of the Republic, recreate the baroque facades of the Prussian Palace (demolished by the GDR regime), and around issues of restitution and decolonising European museums – including a number of Benin Bronzes, whose repatriation to Nigeria has since been agreed.¹⁷ One contributor to the debate on the restitution of artefacts was the prominent Cameroonian scholar of postcolonialism Achille Mbembe, who argued that to truly decolonise, we must get beyond the 'corrosive' concept of ownership and possession. Mbembe proposed a 'limitless circulation of cultural artefacts', including European ones.¹⁸

In 2020, Mbembe moved to the centre of German public discussion on the nation's culture of memory.¹⁹ He was invited to speak at the Ruhrtriennale, one of the key cultural events of the Ruhr region in August 2020 (which was ultimately cancelled due to the COVID-19 crisis). However, his selection as speaker met with protests, including on the part of Felix Klein, the Federal Commissioner for Jewish Life and the Fight against Antisemitism.²⁰ Mbembe's critics pointed towards his (alleged) association with the group 'Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions' (BDS), which is viewed by many as antisemitic. Others accused him of relativizing the Holocaust in his academic work through (implicit) comparisons to apartheid in South Africa, or through equating the State of Israel with the apartheid regime.²¹ The spokesperson for cultural policy of the regional Social Democratic Party of Germany's (SPD) parliamentary group, Andreas Bialas' response is particularly revealing: 'North-Rhein Westphalia provides funds and then something is done that contradicts the basic consensus [*Grundkonsens*] of the country.'²² As prominent memory studies scholar Aleida Assmann stated in her contribution to the Mbembe debate, 'the consensus about the singularity of the Holocaust has become an affirmation that has become embedded in the identity of the nation'.²³

Mbembe's detractors extended their criticism of his work to include criticism of postcolonial studies as a whole: Alan Posener, for example, described the decision to invite him as a result of one of the 'blind spots' of 'so-called postcolonial studies'.²⁴ The responses of scholars who have worked at the intersection of Holocaust and postcolonial studies are therefore of particular interest. Prominent among them is Michael Rothberg, who published a piece focused on the Mbembe debate on the Swiss blog *Geschichte der Gegenwart* (*History of the Present*) in September 2020. Rothberg traces the development of German memory culture and, in particular, debates on the uniqueness and comparability of the Holocaust, from the 'Historians Debate' of the mid-1980s to the Mbembe debate of the 2020s. In the 1980s, the question at stake was the legitimacy of comparing the crimes of National Socialism with those of Stalinism, an effort that was underpinned by revisionist tendencies and that many saw as an attempt to relativise the Holocaust. In the intervening thirty-five years, Rothberg argues, the Holocaust has come to play a central role in German – and indeed international – memory culture. However, in the 2020s, the central position of the Holocaust in German memory has shifted under the weight of calls for 'more attention to colonialism, slavery and anti-black racism', which complicates the 'question of the centrality of the Shoah'.²⁵

In his article, Rothberg makes the point that working through the past – or *Aufarbeitung* – has moved from being an initiative driven by civil society actors and has become state policy.²⁶ This state policy is perhaps most succinctly

defined in the Federal Memorial Concept, which was most recently updated in 2008. Here, memorial policy is defined as being based on an ‘anti-totalitarian consensus’ that sits in opposition to both the National Socialist and GDR regimes (which are thereby positioned as totalitarian). However, it simultaneously stresses the uniqueness of the Holocaust and the need to find a balance between acknowledging the human rights abuses committed in the GDR without trivialising the crimes of National Socialism in comparison. However, the Federal Memorial Concept remains silent on memory of the crimes of colonialism. It is this ‘consensus’ that the (conservative) critics of Mbembe appear to be defending; as Rothberg notes, they accept German responsibility for the Holocaust, but in a targeted way ‘in order to avoid further responsibilities and their ethical and political implications’.²⁷ Early in 2021, Rothberg himself moved to the centre of these debates following the publication of his book *Multidirectional Memory* (originally published in 2009) in German translation. *Multidirectional Memory* had long since become a standard reference in anglophone memory studies. In his work, Rothberg explores the dialogical exchange between memories of the Holocaust and of colonialism, arguing against an understanding of collective memory as a ‘zero-sum struggle over scarce resources’ and instead asking us to consider it ‘as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative’, that is, as relational.²⁸

Rothberg’s book was subject to fierce criticism by journalist Thomas Schmid in a *Die Welt* blog post published in February 2021. Schmid describes Rothberg as the ‘current guru of NGOs and left-liberal cultural milieu also in Germany, who comfort themselves with the deceptive certainty that we can connect all the experiences of suffering in the world with one another and thereby make the world a better place’. However, it is not only Rothberg’s (in Schmid’s view) naïve optimism that is the subject of criticism; Schmid also perceives a risk that a multidirectional approach will end up flattening out the differences between genocides, human rights abuses and other atrocities, and will open the door to a trivialisation of the Holocaust. Indeed, Schmid argues that antisemitism is at the core of postcolonial studies, accusing the discipline of ‘envy of the Jews (and Israel)’ for their status as victims.²⁹ Writing in the *Tageszeitung*, Tania Martini was similarly critical of Rothberg’s approach. She ascribes to postcolonial studies the argument that ‘racism is so strong because everyone is constantly preoccupied with the Shoah’, a line of reasoning that she describes as ‘foolish’. Martini has some sympathy for the view that memory of the Holocaust functions as a ‘screen memory’, blocking memory of the violence of German colonialism. However, she sees this as quite different from the view that asserting the uniqueness of the Holocaust is an attempt to distract from apparent German complicity in the expropriation of the Palestinians, which is how she characterises Rothberg’s position. She ungenerously

describes the concept of multidirectional memory as ‘mixing up everything with everything and thereby relativizing’.³⁰

There were robust defences of Rothberg’s work by, for example, Gerhard Harnloser and Micha Brumlik, who noted that a commitment to multidirectionality did not necessarily detract from the singularity of the Holocaust, or indeed other instances of genocide and mass violence.³¹ Charlotte Wiedemann argued that the comparison with the Historians Debate of the 1980s was misleading: where revisionist historians attempted to use comparison in order to relativise the Holocaust and to allow Germany to take less responsibility, what was being asked of German memory culture in 2021 was to accept more responsibility for its violent pasts. She points out that ‘no-one in Germany has to decide between a particular sensitivity towards the Shoah and empathy for the consequences of colonialism’.³² Indeed, in a piece co-authored with the historian of German colonialism Jürgen Zimmerer, whose work was also subject to criticism in the debate on Rothberg’s book, Rothberg strongly rejects the accusation that he calls into question the singularity of the Holocaust. Rothberg and Zimmerer stress that ‘singularity’ and ‘relationality’ are not mutually exclusive and that the attacks on their work present a deliberately distorted picture of it, which serves to ‘save’ German national identity by stressing the ‘normality’ of its history (including colonialism), with Auschwitz as an aberration.³³

The debate reached a peak in May 2021 with the publication of historian Dirk Moses’ article ‘The German Catechism’, which also appeared on the blog *Geschichte der Gegenwart*. Moses writes pointedly of what he considers the ‘articles of faith’ of German national memory of the Holocaust – the ‘catechism of the Germans’. He describes the response to Mbembe, Rothberg and Zimmerer as ‘nothing less than a public exorcism performed by the self-appointed high priests’ of this catechism. According to Moses, the ‘catechism’ has five elements: the uniqueness of the Holocaust as the first attempt in history to annihilate a people solely on ideological grounds; the nature of the Holocaust as a civilisational rupture and therefore as ‘the moral foundation of the nation’; Germany’s ‘special responsibility to Jews in Germany, and a special loyalty to Israel’; the distinct nature of antisemitism as a prejudice; and the belief that ‘antizionism is antisemitism’. Moses contends that these ‘articles of faith’ were initially resisted by (conservative) adherents to the old catechism, which held that the Holocaust was ‘a historical accident committed by a small group of fanatics’. However, over the course of time and as a result of numerous public debates around Germany’s Nazi past, they too had come to accept that Germany’s national image as part of its ‘geopolitical legitimacy’ was best served through acceptance of the new ‘articles of faith’. However, Moses notes that it is becoming ever more difficult for the ‘high

priests' to discipline a new multicultural generation, for whom the 'catechism' does not reflect their lifeworld. He concludes that 'the time has come to set it aside and renegotiate the demands of historical justice in a way that respects all victims of the German state and Germans of all kinds'.³⁴ There were robust responses both for and against Moses' polemic, many of which appeared on the *New Fascism Syllabus* blog, curated by Canadian scholar Jennifer Evans.³⁵ The respondents on *New Fascism Syllabus* considered the framing of Moses' argument, the particular emphasis and apparent lack of balance, the ways in which Holocaust memory has been used in battles for human rights in other contexts, and the failure of Holocaust memory to generate empathy for other suffering.³⁶

What does this all mean for German memory in a transnational context? Jonathan Bach notes that new discussions about colonial legacies, such as those described here, 'raise the stakes for the future of Germany's global reputation as a normative model for democratic confrontations with difficult pasts'.³⁷ Citing Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy's influential report on the need to confront the legacy of colonialism, in particular in European museum collections, Bach argues that what is needed is a 'new relational ethics'. He adds that 'such an ethics is not meant to rectify the "blind spot in our culture of remembrance" (as German culture minister Monika Grütters put it), but to draw attention to the ways in which blind spots are created'.³⁸ As Rothberg and Zimmerer contend in their 2021 article: 'Germany's memory culture is often presented as a model to follow. However, we must finally also name its limits and gaps.'³⁹ The analysis in this book shows how those blindspots, limits and gaps are reflected in the transnational cooperation of German mnemonic actors in the years leading up to these most recent debates, which themselves demonstrate that this 'export hit' is far from a fixed and stable 'product'.

Remembering the GDR in the United Germany

The book undertakes this analysis through what might be an unexpected focus: state-mandated memory of the GDR. Rather than looking at the transnational activity of institutions dealing with the Holocaust, which (still) sits at the centre of German memory,⁴⁰ or with the history of colonialism, which sits at its periphery, I focus on memory of the GDR, which occupies a space in-between. As noted above, memory of the GDR is a key focus of the Federal Memorial Concept; however, it is framed from the outset as secondary to the memory of the Holocaust. It is worth citing the Memorial Concept at some length in this regard:

The understanding of one's own history contributes to the identity formation of every nation. For us Germans, part of that are the lessons that the founding generation of the Federal Republic of Germany drew from the criminal rule of National Socialism. The unwavering respect for human dignity, the consciousness for the meaning of freedom and the values of the Basic Law are the fundamental principles of our democratic order. The historical heritage of the reunited Germany also includes since 1990 the communist dictatorship in the former Soviet Zone of Occupation/GDR. The antitotalitarian consensus that is founded on the Basic Law binds democratic parties today in the knowledge of the inhumane character of this dictatorship.⁴¹

The Memorial Concept goes on to emphasise the 'incomparability of the Holocaust' and to assert that the genocide of the European Jews has a 'singular significance in the German, European and worldwide culture of remembrance',⁴² adding that it is 'also' the duty of 'state and society to remember the injustice of the SED dictatorship'. The Memorial Concept can be viewed as a documentation of the state-sanctioned position on German memory of the twentieth century; in it, the GDR is framed as 'totalitarian' and memory of human rights abuses committed by the Socialist Unity Party (SED) regime as a duty. However, in this document, the Federal Parliament is also very careful to set limits to any comparison between the crimes of National Socialism and state socialism through its emphasis on the uniqueness of the Holocaust and its centrality to German memory and identity.

Indeed, the assertion in the Memorial Concept that all 'democratic parties' are united in their recognition of the character of the GDR as a dictatorship in which citizens suffered manifold abuses of their human rights suggests a consensus that does not reflect reality. There continue to be significant divisions within German politics and society about what kind of society the GDR was and how it should be remembered. On the one hand, victim groups and former dissidents often argue for a greater recognition of their suffering under the SED and complain that the failures of transitional justice have frequently left them at a material disadvantage in comparison with the perpetrators of those abuses.⁴³ In some cases, this demand for recognition calls into question the apparent consensus around the uniqueness of the Holocaust and its central role in German and European memory.⁴⁴ On the other hand, former GDR citizens who did not find themselves in opposition to the regime contest the purely negative portrayal of their past that does not reflect their lived experience. The latter sometimes manifests itself in a nostalgia for the GDR, or *Ostalgie*. As Patricia Hogwood argues, 'east Germans often experience, construct and evaluate memories of the GDR quite differently from west Germans and the FRG state', but these discourses 'have lacked an equivalent state "partner" to reinforce their political weight'.⁴⁵

This nostalgia has been fuelled by a sense of resentment and an identity developed in defiance of what is perceived as western dominance or even colonisation of the former east.⁴⁶ Konrad H. Jarausch notes that ‘many East-erners were overwhelmed by the imposition of Western patterns’ and were alienated by the ‘discrediting of the GDR through media scandalization’.⁴⁷ The economic disparities between the old and new Federal states contributed to a sense among eastern Germans of being ‘second class citizens’.⁴⁸ Writing in 2013, Jarausch notes that relatively few eastern Germans had gained political prominence in the united Germany, with the evident exceptions of Angela Merkel and Joachim Gauck.⁴⁹ He concludes that ‘there is no denying that united Germany is governed by Western elites, that the media slight East-ern topics, and that disparities in wealth continue between the old and new states’.⁵⁰ Christian Schweiger connects the dominance of the ‘institutional pathway’ of the West German Federal Republic with a ‘self-perception of East Germans as dislocated, second-class citizens’ that, in turn, fuels support for anti-immigrant politics in the new *Länder*.⁵¹

Memory of the GDR in the united Germany is therefore far from settled; it is also subject to change. The processes of memorialising the victims of the GDR and dealing with the perpetrators of human rights abuses began even before the state officially ended,⁵² and the immediate post-Wende period was also marked by a number of efforts to address the recent past. One of the earliest events in this process was the passing of the Stasi Records Law in late 1991 and the foundation of the office of the Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the Former GDR (Bundesbeauftragter für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR (BStU)), one of the key institutions studied in this book. The creation of the BStU regulated access to the Stasi records for victims and, under certain circumstances, perpetrators, media and researchers. It also facilitated early lustration, that is, the exclusion from positions of responsibility of individuals who had prior involvement with the Stasi. Transitional justice was also attempted in a series of trials, initially against the direct perpetrators of state violence (notably border guards) and later against those who had created and sustained the structures in which such violence took place, including members of the GDR leadership. In 1992, the Federal Parliament launched the first of two Parliamentary Commissions of Enquiry (Enquête Commissions): ‘Working through the History and Consequences of the SED Dictatorship’. This was followed by the second Commission in 1995: ‘Overcoming the Consequences of the SED Dictatorship in the Process of German Unity’. One outcome of the latter was the creation in 1998 of the Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship – another of the central institutions considered in this study.⁵³

Official memorialisation of the GDR in the first fifteen years following unification was characterised by an emphasis on the history of repression, ideology and the dictatorial regime on the one hand, and high profile intellectuals on the other hand.⁵⁴ The third key institution studied in this book – the Stasi prison Memorial at Berlin-Hohenschönhausen – epitomises this approach. This focus on the repressive aspects of the dictatorship stood in contrast to a concentration on everyday life and a sense of ‘normality’ within the constraints of the dictatorship, which found expression in popular media and culture as well as in a number of private museum initiatives. The most successful of these is the DDR Museum in Berlin, which aims to provide an ‘interactive’ experience of history, allowing visitors to sit in a reconstruction of a typical GDR flat or pretend to drive a Trabant.⁵⁵

This emphasis in state-mandated memory was set to change in the mid-2000s. In 2005 – in the midst of debate around the role and function of the BStU, the Hohenschönhausen Memorial and the memorial in the former Stasi headquarters in Normannenstraße – Christina Weiss, then Federal Commissioner for Culture and Media (SPD), called into being the ‘Expert Commission for the Creation of a Historical Network “Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship”’. The ‘Sabrow Commission’ (named after its chair, the historian Martin Sabrow) published its recommendations in May 2006. The Commission argued that there was a continued division between eastern and western perspectives on the GDR and expressed concerns about the ‘trivialisation’ of the dictatorship, including through ‘the uncritical collections of GDR everyday culture’. As a countermeasure, the Sabrow Commission recommended the inclusion of ‘everyday life in the dictatorship’ in state-supported initiatives.⁵⁶ A shift in political constellations, especially the appointment of CDU politician Bernd Neumann to the position of Federal Commissioner for Culture and Media, meant that the impact of the Sabrow Commission report was muted, including in the subsequent revision of the Federal Memorial Concept in 2008.⁵⁷ As we have seen, the Memorial Concept emphasises the centrality of the Holocaust in German national memory culture, but also the need to remember the GDR as a dictatorship. Where memories of the everyday are included, they are to be represented within the context of the dictatorial regime.⁵⁸

It is here that this book picks up the story, in 2009, described by some as a ‘Supergedenkjahr’⁵⁹ – a ‘super commemorative year’ – marking twenty years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, sixty years since the founding of the Federal Republic (and GDR), and seventy years since the start of the Second World War. Hope M. Harrison notes key shifts in official commemorations of the GDR in this period, in particular towards a greater emphasis on the East German opposition and its role in the state’s demise. Despite some reservations, this was welcomed by many former dissidents and civil rights activists,

who had previously felt that their experiences had been neglected in official commemorations.⁶⁰ This ‘celebratory narrative’ continued into the commemorations in 2014 and was combined with a rhetoric that also recognised the contribution of non-German actors, especially in other Central and Eastern European countries, to bringing down the Wall.⁶¹ By the thirtieth anniversary of the fall of the Wall in 2019, the memory of the ‘Peaceful Revolution’ as a ‘positive founding myth’ was complicated by continued dissatisfaction among many eastern Germans and by the move to the far right of some of the civil rights activists who had fought for democratic renewal in the GDR.⁶² This included (as discussed below) some of those associated with the Hohenschönhausen Memorial.

These narrative shifts have been accompanied by developments in the memorial and museum landscape. Notably, a number of state-mandated museum projects have opened that incorporate everyday life as part of their focus. This includes the Museum in the Kulturbrauerei with its permanent exhibition ‘Everyday Life in the GDR’ and the exhibition in the departure hall at the former border crossing point on Berlin’s Friedrichsstrasse, known as the Palace of Tears. The latter originally had the title ‘Border Experiences: Everyday Life in Divided Germany’ (since changed to ‘Site of German Division’). Nonetheless, as I have shown elsewhere, the presentation of the ‘everyday’ in these sites is very much one of the extraordinary experiences of ordinary people, the penetration of the dictatorship into their daily lives, and/or their efforts to experience ‘normality’ by finding ways to escape the reach of the state.⁶³ In keeping with the emphasis on the ‘positive founding myth’ of the ‘Peaceful Revolution’ and overcoming of the dictatorship, the period following 2006 also saw a renewed focus on memory of the Berlin Wall. This included the passing of the Overarching Plan (Gesamtkonzept) for Commemorating the Berlin Wall in 2006 and the construction of the Berlin Wall Memorial and Documentation Centre at Bernauer Straße, which opened (in part) in time for the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Wall in 2009.⁶⁴ The years following 2008 were also marked by protracted discussion around the proposed Freedom and Unity Monument in Berlin, the construction of which (after numerous delays) began in May 2020.⁶⁵

In the sphere of transitional justice, the 2010s saw renewed discussions around the moving of the Stasi files from the archive of the BStU to the Federal Archive. In 2014, the Federal Parliament tasked a commission of experts to discuss the future of the BStU in this regard. The Commission’s recommendations were published in April 2016. They included moving the administration of the Stasi files to the Federal Archive (albeit retaining the name and location(s) of the Stasi Records Archive).⁶⁶ In 2019, the Federal Parliament confirmed its decision to follow these recommendations, although the Stasi Records Law itself will remain in effect. The reform was finalised in

November 2020 and the move of the files was complete on 17 June 2021. The Federal Commissioner for the Stasi files became the Federal Commissioner for the Victims of the SED Dictatorship, a transformation that is seen by some as marking a ‘normalisation’ of GDR memory. In the words of Richard Schroeder, Vice Chair of the Expert Commission, ‘such a special authority [i.e. the Stasi Records Authority] is something for special times. It is not something for normal times’.⁶⁷

Remembering the GDR in Transnational Context

How does remembrance of the GDR in Germany relate to the transnational or supranational context? In an article published in 2007, Andrew Beattie observes parallels between German debates about memory of National Socialism and communism and those taking place at a European level. In both, a ‘widespread sense of western superiority’ is challenged by eastern perspectives that appear to contest the dominant view of the Holocaust as a singular event with a unique position in national and European memory. Beattie argues that in the German and European contexts, an ‘inaccurate east-west dichotomy legitimises pressure on the eastern side to conform to a seemingly unquestionable but, in fact, contested western norm’.⁶⁸ Similarly, Harrison describes Germany as occupying ‘a fault line in debates over memory policy ... with the West German focus on Holocaust memory being challenged by a new East German focus on communist memory’. She notes that it was more difficult for Germany, as a perpetrator nation, to explicitly (or indeed implicitly) compare National Socialism and communist crimes than it was for other countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Nonetheless, given the dominance of Holocaust memory, eastern German actors felt compelled to engage in such comparisons in order to have their voices heard.⁶⁹

As indicated by Beattie, this conflict between East and West also took place at a supranational level. In an essay published in 2012, Aleida Assmann describes two ‘memory hotspots’ (*Erinnerungsbrennpunkte*) in Europe: the Holocaust and the Gulag. She adds that the apparent incompatibility of these two ‘hotspots’ prevents the formation of a common European identity founded on a common culture of memory.⁷⁰ Both Assmann and Claus Leggewie describe the Holocaust as the ‘negative founding myth’ of Europe, something that Leggewie considers is based on the ‘template’ provided by Germany’s coming to terms with the past.⁷¹ Leggewie calls for Europeans to commemorate not only the Holocaust and the Gulag, but also other genocides and mass violence, including the crimes of colonialism. However, in his seven concentric rings of European historical consciousness, the Holocaust

occupies the centre, the crimes of communist regimes and parties the second ring, and the memory of colonialism the fifth. In short, in European memory, as in German memory, the Holocaust is at the core and colonialism at the periphery: memory of the human rights abuses committed under communism sits at a place in-between.⁷²

Nonetheless, the accession to the EU in 2004 of countries formerly on the Eastern side of the Cold War divide was followed by shifts in the EU's politics of history, driven principally by actors from Central and Eastern European countries. Mnemonic activists from the region sought to have their perspective on the history of the twentieth century incorporated at a European level and contested the dominance of Holocaust-centred memory. Here too, there was an equation of the 'German' model with the European: Aline Sierp notes that 'what seems to be feared most is that the same nation that caused the destruction of large parts of the European continent [i.e. Germany] will now try to impose its "negative nationalism" upon the rest of Europe'.⁷³ Several scholars have traced these efforts to 'wrench the "European mnemonical map" apart' and the (albeit limited) transformation of EU memory politics as a result.⁷⁴ Maria Mälksoo describes Eastern European actors as 'subalterns' in this context, 'seeking recognition from and exercising resistance to the hegemonic "core European" narrative of what "Europe" is all about'.⁷⁵ It should be borne in mind that these 'subalterns' were also institutional actors within the structures of the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, the EU Council and the European Commission.⁷⁶

Laure Neumayer describes the results of this mnemonic activism as 'a gradual, albeit contentious, change in the official remembrance of Communism'.⁷⁷ Evidence of this change can be seen in a series of (highly contested) declarations and resolutions in the mid-2000s. In 2005, the European Parliament issued a resolution with the title 'The Future of Europe Sixty Years after the Second World War', which acknowledged explicitly (and for the first time) the suffering and injustice experienced by Eastern European countries under Stalinism.⁷⁸ In January 2006, this was followed by a resolution by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe that condemns the crimes committed by totalitarian communist regimes and states that the victims of those crimes 'deserve sympathy, understanding and recognition for their sufferings'.⁷⁹ In 2008, the 'Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Totalitarianism' was adopted at a conference organised by the Czech Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (ISTR) and signed by prominent former dissidents, human rights activists, historians and representatives of national memory institutes, including Joachim Gauck (former head of the BStU). The Declaration demanded that 'consciousness of the crimes against humanity committed by the Communist regimes throughout the continent

must inform all European minds to the same extent as the Nazi regimes crimes did', adding that there 'are substantial similarities between Nazism and Communism in terms of their horrific and appalling character'. It called for 23 August to be adopted as a day of national remembrance of the victims of totalitarian regimes and the establishment of an Institute of European Memory and Conscience.⁸⁰

In April 2009, the European Parliament published the 'Resolution on European Conscience and Totalitarianism', which, Neumayer argues, represents 'an undisputable discursive shift towards an interpretation of Communism centred on its criminal nature and its structural proximity to Nazism'.⁸¹ The Resolution did not respond to all the demands of the Prague Declaration and stressed the singularity of the Holocaust. Nonetheless, the outcomes of the Resolution included the establishment of 23 August as a day of remembrance, something that is controversial in Germany,⁸² and the creation of the pan-European network, the Platform for European Memory and Conscience.⁸³ The Platform networks mnemonic actors from across Europe, but with a distinctly Central and Eastern European focus and with an emphasis on the history and memory of communism.⁸⁴ As the unification of Germany challenged and transformed the dominant national memory culture, so did 'the accession of Eastern European states [allow] for a competing interpretation of the past – that of "Nazism and Stalinism as equally evil" to gain ground'.⁸⁵ In both the German and EU contexts, the dominant framework is still that of the uniqueness of the Holocaust. Nonetheless, the emphasis on Central and Eastern Europeans as the victims of communism, often presented as an external and alien ideology, has fed (and been fed by) a nationalist politics of memory in post-socialist countries. In these narratives, memory of the Holocaust (and especially local complicity in the genocide of the European Jews) is marginalised, or the focus is on positive memory of local acts of heroism.⁸⁶

There is another structural similarity between German national memory and memory at the European level. Oriane Calligaro traces the memory politics of the EU from its focus on memories of the Holocaust to the addition of memories of the crimes of communism. She notes that 'essential aspects of this dark side of European history remain absent from this new approach, especially concerning the negative action of Europeans abroad, like slavery, imperialism and colonialism'.⁸⁷ Charles Forsdick, James Mark and Eva Spišáková argue that the successful advocacy for memory of the crimes of communism actually further occluded the memory of colonialism by reinforcing 'the importance of the suffering of Europeans over those who had been the victims of European imperialism'. Sierp also notes the dearth of commemoration of the violence of colonialism at the EU level in comparison to the vig-

orous condemnation and remembrance of the crimes of National Socialism and communism.⁸⁸ The focus on memory of the Holocaust and Stalinism, she argues, has translated into a form of colonial amnesia, which assumes its worst form in racist stereotypes. As in the German national context, she perceives a shift in debates within European institutions around this issue, although these have not yet translated into significant policy initiatives.⁸⁹

The Case Studies

The extent to which German mnemonic actors cooperate across borders is vast; I have therefore selected three case studies to form the basis of my study. Gabowitsch notes that part of the German model of ‘success’ relates to ‘an unusually dense network of institutions dedicated to atonement, ranging from individual memorials to large-scale foundations, most of which work closely with international partners’.⁹⁰ This is no less true of memory of the GDR and it is three of these institutions that form the focus of this study: the Federal Commissioner for the Files of the State Security Service of the Former GDR (BStU), the Memorial Berlin-Hohenschönhausen and the Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship (Stiftung Aufarbeitung). These three organisations are either federal institutions or are supported financially by the federal government, and can thus be regarded as ‘state-mandated’.⁹¹ They have different functions: that of archive, memorial and state-mandated institute respectively. As will be seen, they also occupy different political different positions with regard to German and European memory cultures, making a comparison of their activity particularly fruitful.

The BStU, Hohenschönhausen and the Stiftung Aufarbeitung engage extensively in transnational collaboration, as will be seen throughout this study. Jarausach argues that ‘in the German context the transition was ... overshadowed by the discussion of the progress of unification, which inhibited a comparative perspective’.⁹² If we consider the processes and institutions of transitional justice and memorialisation, we can see that there have in fact been efforts to include the GDR in a number of comparative analyses, particularly with regard to other Central and Eastern European countries.⁹³ There have also been studies that take a transnational perspective on the cooperation of state-mandated memory institutes, some of which consider the BStU as a model for other actors.⁹⁴ Nonetheless, transnational cooperation remains under-researched, particularly when the partnerships are with actors outside of Europe.⁹⁵ This is a further empirical gap that this book seeks to fill. In what follows, I will sketch the history and function of these institutions and how they position themselves politically.

Federal Commissioner for the Files of the State Security Service of the Former GDR

Securing access to the files of the hated East German secret police, the Stasi, was one of the key aims and achievements of the civil rights activists of 1989 and was by no means straightforward.⁹⁶ The creation of the office of the Federal Commissioner for the Files of the State Security Service of the Former GDR (BStU) to administer access to the files and the passing of the Stasi Records Law in 1991 to regulate that access has been described as ‘an unprecedented act of civic empowerment’.⁹⁷ The remit of the BStU was focused on the administration of the files for victims, lustration, media and research; however, it also extended beyond that to include a public history function involving events, exhibitions and publications.

The BStU was a Federal institution, supported financially and institutionally by the state. However, it was also part of the legacy of 1989 and the efforts towards democracy of the civil rights groups that were so central to bringing down the GDR regime. The institution saw this legacy as central to its identity. Permanent exhibitions in its national and regional headquarters combined a focus on the history of the Stasi with an emphasis on the storming of the Stasi archives in 1989/1990.⁹⁸ In the decision to move the Stasi archives from the BStU to the Federal Archives, the authors stressed the symbolic value of the BStU as ‘the greatest achievement of the Peaceful Revolution’.⁹⁹ The selection of Commissioners has also reflected this role. Joachim Gauck (served 1991–2000) is a former GDR civil rights activist and was spokesperson for New Forum (Neues Forum), an oppositional political group that emerged in the wake of the regime’s collapse. Marianne Birthler (served 2000–2011) is also a human rights activist, cofounder of the group Church Solidarity (Solidarische Kirche), which campaigned for more democracy in the GDR, and a politician of Alliance ’90. Roland Jahn (served 2011–2021) was also active in the opposition in the GDR and in 1982 was imprisoned for displaying the flag of the Polish union movement Solidarity. In 1983, the GDR regime revoked Jahn’s citizenship; he was forcibly expatriated to West Berlin, where he continued to support East German dissidents.

The BStU was therefore both integrated into the pan-German institutional approach to remembering the GDR and positioned itself as a representative of the former GDR opposition, the proponents of which are not always in alignment with the dominant narrative about memory of state socialism, and how it can and should fit into memory of the twentieth century. How does the BStU negotiate this position in its publications in the period under investigation here (2009–2016)? In the ninth activity report, covering the period from May 2007 to March 2009, the BStU constructs itself explicitly as part

of the emerging network of institutions in Central and Eastern Europe that have been set up to manage the files of the communist state security services. Indeed, it describes the German approach as ‘exemplary’ for other countries in this context and the BStU as the initiator for the European Network of Official Authorities in Charge of the Secret Police Files (ENOA). The report notes that the work of the ENOA has been supported by the fact that the ‘European Parliament is addressing for the first time the era of communist tyranny in Europe and in a resolution in April 2009 made clear statements about working through this past’.¹⁰⁰ In the tenth activity report, covering the period from April 2009 to December 2010, the BStU is explicit about perceived deficits in German and European cultures of memory:

Just as the West is a long way from recognising the GDR as a part of German history, so it seems that the history of the former communist-ruled countries in Central and Eastern Europe do not belong to European history from the perspective of Paris, Stockholm or Rome.

The report cites a speech by Jorge Semprún, a former prisoner in the Buchenwald concentration camp in Weimar, given on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the camp: ‘We hope that by the next commemoration in 10 years’ time, 2015, the experiences of the Gulag will be integrated into our collective European memory. We hope, that next to the books of [Holocaust survivors] Primo Levi, Imre Kertész or David Rousset, the ‘Story from Kolyma’ by [Gulag survivor] Warlam Schalamow will have taken its place.’ The report goes on to emphasise that the BStU is viewed in Germany and internationally as a role model in this context.¹⁰¹ In its self-presentation, the BStU thus positions itself as a central part of Germany’s global reputation as the ‘masters of atonement’, and yet also as critical of a memory culture within Germany and Europe that – in this narrative – does not yet allow sufficient space for memory of the crimes of communism alongside those of National Socialism.

The Memorial Berlin-Hohenschönhausen

The Memorial Berlin-Hohenschönhausen is located in the largest former remand prison in the GDR. The site was also used as a special camp (*Speziallager*) by the Soviet occupation and as a remand prison of the Soviet People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) and the Ministry for Internal Affairs (MVD) between 1946 and 1951. The complex was closed in 1990 and, following pressure from former prisoners and civil rights activists, the prison buildings were listed as protected in 1992. The site

was made accessible to those interested in its history from 1995, initially with the support of victim organisations. In line with the recommendations of the second Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry, in 2000 the Berlin Parliament passed the Law for the Creation of the Foundation ‘Memorial Berlin-Hohenschönhausen’.¹⁰²

The Director of the Memorial from the inauguration of the Foundation in 2000 until 2018 was the historian Hubertus Knabe.¹⁰³ In that period, Knabe was a prominent figure in memory-political debates regarding the GDR and (as we will see) was very much the public face of the Memorial, strongly influencing the ways in which it was presented and received. In press interviews given at the beginning of his tenure, he described the prison as the ‘Dachau of communism’, and National Socialism and SED socialism as two sides of the same totalitarian coin.¹⁰⁴ In this way, he positioned himself firmly on the side of those victims of the SED regime who advocated for a recognition of their suffering alongside (and in some cases as equal to) that of the victims of Nazism. The publication by Knabe in 2007 of *Die Täter sind unter uns* [*The Perpetrators Are among Us*], which fiercely criticised the (in his view) failure to bring to justice the perpetrators of human rights abuses in the GDR, is exemplary of his position as a victim advocate.¹⁰⁵ This narrative about the GDR past is reflected, to a significant extent, in the exhibition of the Memorial¹⁰⁶ and, as will be seen in Chapter 3, in the texts produced by the institution in relation to cooperation with (especially) Central and Eastern European and post-Soviet partners.

This stance has long been controversial.¹⁰⁷ However, in 2018, the position of the Memorial in relation to the state socialist and National Socialist pasts moved to the centre of public discussion. The Memorial felt compelled to distance itself from its own support association (Förderverein) following statements by its Chair, Jörg Kürschner, in support of the AfD. This was viewed as especially problematic, given the AfD’s tendency to trivialise National Socialism and compare the GDR to the present-day Federal Republic.¹⁰⁸ In the same year, Hohenschönhausen sacked one of its long-standing tour guides (and former political prisoner), Siegmund Faust, after statements he made in an interview with the *Berliner Zeitung* that appeared to support Holocaust-denier Horst Mahler and suggested a need to draw a line under the memory of National Socialism.¹⁰⁹ In the autumn of 2021, the Memorial was once again in the national and regional press. This was not only in relation to the ongoing controversy surrounding Knabe’s dismissal following allegations of sexual harassment against his deputy, Helmuth Frauendorfer,¹¹⁰ but also after the discovery that AfD representative Rainer Schamberger had been posing as a victim of the Stasi and working as a guide at the Memorial since 2017.¹¹¹

Nonetheless, despite this critical position towards the dominant memory culture in Germany, in the period under investigation here, Hohenschönhausen simultaneously positions itself as a representative of that memory culture and highlights the esteem in which it is held internationally. In the fifth activity report of the Memorial, covering the years 2009–10, Klaus Wowereit (SPD) – then Mayor of Berlin – noted Hohenschönhausen’s very recent collaborations with partners in post-‘Arab Spring’ countries.¹¹² He highlighted that Berlin memorial institutions are sought-after for advice and practical support. He went on to suggest that this international collaboration was taking place in a context in which memory of the GDR was settled in German and European memory cultures, and was now being exported:

Following a phase of inner-German debate and discussion about the SED dictatorship and a European comparison [*Abgleich*] of experiences of communist dictatorships, this discourse – it seems – is now gaining a global dimension.¹¹³

In the sixth activity report (covering the years 2011–12), Knabe stresses the ‘exemplary’ status of the Memorial for other countries and extends this to German memory culture as a whole.¹¹⁴ The seventh activity report (2013–14) links the two, claiming: “Aufarbeitung made in Germany” enjoys an excellent reputation worldwide, is also due to the Memorial Berlin-Hohenschönhausen.¹¹⁵

Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship

Created in 1998, the Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship (Stiftung Aufarbeitung) is one of the key outcomes of the two Parliamentary Commissions of Enquiry related to the GDR past that took place in the 1990s (see above). The Stiftung Aufarbeitung has a mandate to promote the ‘comprehensive reappraisal of the causes, history and consequences of the dictatorship in the Soviet Zone of Occupation and the GDR, to accompany the process of German unity and to contribute to the reckoning with dictatorships at an international level’.¹¹⁶ Carola S. Rudnick divides the duties of the Stiftung into six areas: advancement of initiatives aiming to work through the GDR past; support for victim groups; delivery of its own educational initiatives, particularly against ‘totalitarian tendencies’; promotion of research; archiving of materials; and establishment of a culture of commemoration with regard to the GDR past.¹¹⁷ The Stiftung fulfils this remit through its own activities – organising events, exhibitions, networking and maintaining archives; however, it also plays a central role in distributing

government funding to other actors, including academics, memorials, museums and victim organisations.¹¹⁸ Anselma Gallinat notes that the Stiftung Aufarbeitung has a wider remit than the BStU and ‘is able to initiate and influence national events’, but adds that ‘it appears to have little visibility in local and national media, as well as the grassroots of society’.¹¹⁹

In its activity reports in the period under investigation here (2009–16), the Stiftung Aufarbeitung emphasises that it is a creation of the German Parliament and that its role is to promote ‘broad society-wide discussion around the causes, history and consequences of communist dictatorships in the Soviet Zone of Occupation, GDR and Central and Eastern Europe, as well as about German and European division, including its end’.¹²⁰ This self-conception places German history, including the history of the GDR, firmly in the context of the history of Central and Eastern Europe. Indeed, the Stiftung Aufarbeitung describes itself as ‘a mediator between institutions working through the past at home and abroad, and as a co-ordinator of international cooperation in the process of dealing with dictatorships’.¹²¹

The Stiftung Aufarbeitung is the institution in which we see the closest alignment between the narratives about the twentieth century emphasised in documents such as the Federal Memorial Concept and the narratives within the self-presentation of this organisation. Indeed, Rudnick describes the Stiftung as ‘representing institutionally the pan-state/national history and memory politics with regard to the Soviet Zone/GDR’.¹²² The introduction to the Stiftung’s 2009 activity report, which emphasises the importance of the twentieth anniversary of 1989 in that year, is instructive in this context. As in the national celebrations around 2009, the focus is on celebrating the achievements of the revolutions across Central and Eastern Europe, ‘which created the conditions not only for the self-democratisation of East Central Europe and the overcoming of European division, but also for the unification of Germany’.¹²³ This celebration is prefaced with a recognition of German guilt: ‘without the Second World War, begun by Germany in 1939, there would have been no European and German division, the people in East Central Europe would not have had to live under communist dictatorships for more than four decades’.¹²⁴ As in the ‘official’ memory, the need to remember the GDR and its end is emphasised; however, this does not displace the centrality of the Second World War and the Holocaust in the national culture of remembrance. As will be seen in the course of this book, the Stiftung Aufarbeitung works closely with actors and groups who take what might be considered the ‘Eastern’ position in European memory debates, and it organises and is involved with events that reassert that position. Nonetheless, within those events and collaborations, representatives of the Stiftung Aufarbeitung itself often reiterate the ‘western’ position espoused by the Memorial Concept and, at the same time, assert the status of Germany as a model for remembrance.

The Structure of This Book

The remainder of this book will proceed in six chapters. In Chapter 1, I position the study in the context of existing research on transnational memory and outline the theoretical framework used to explore the cross-border collaborations of the three central institutions. The framework draws on concepts developed in relational sociology to show how those ‘transactions’ can be understood as relationships embedded within a network structure that is determined by (and reinforces) cultural blueprints about the relationship between East and West, and North and South. Together, the structure, relationship cultures and cultural blueprints make up the ‘meaning structure’ of the networks. I outline the original concept of *collaborative memory* and suggest that in order for memory to be ‘truly’ collaborative, it must be underpinned by a ‘decolonial cosmopolitanism’. The chapter goes on to explain the new methodological approach developed for this study, which combines quantitative social network analysis with qualitative narrative research.

Chapter 2 presents the key results from the quantitative social network analysis. It gives an overview of the constitution of the networks with regard to the regional location of the actors and actor type. It uses measures of ‘betweenness centrality’ to show which actors are in positions of brokerage within the networks. Analyses of components and homophily demonstrate that the cross-border collaboration of the three central institutions takes place within relatively discrete ‘memory zones’; that is, actors from a given region are far more likely to be brought into collaboration with actors from the same region than actors from a different one. However, this is not the case for Western European actors: Western Europe does not, to any significant extent, represent a ‘memory zone’ in these networks and German actors coded as ‘western’ function as ‘brokers’ in potential positions of power between them.

Chapters 3 and 4 explore these ‘memory zones’ in more detail by examining the actors, activity types and topics dominant within them, and the stories told by the German actors about the collaborations in a given zone. In this way, I build up a picture of how the German actors perceive the relationship culture within the cooperations and how they structure the world rhetorically. Chapter 3 shows how the Central and Eastern European/post-socialist zone is presented as being based on a culture of exchange between equals, motivated by a desire to move the memory of communism further to the centre of national and European memory cultures. A similar narrative is dominant in the post-Soviet zone; however, when the collaborators are located outside of or on the periphery of Europe, they are positioned rhetorically as junior partners and as catching up with the German expertise. Finally, Western Europe is shown to exist everywhere and nowhere in the networks. Western European

actors (especially German ones) are present; however, Western European history is only rarely a referent, unless it is in relation to the history of the East.

Chapter 4 turns to the memory zones located outside of Europe: East Asia and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Here we see a dominance of official visits by governmental actors and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), accompanied by a narrative of non-German actors learning from a supposedly model German memory. In the East Asian memory zone, the focus is not on the past, but on an imagined future time in which the dictatorship in the Democratic Republic of Korea will be overcome, or on the present and the human rights struggles in the contemporary People's Republic of China. The focus in the MENA zone is also on the present; the BStU and Hohenschönhausen become agents of transitional justice and democratisation rather than agents of memory. They narrate the collaborations as being motivated by the export of German experiences of transition to passive recipients in the post-'Arab Spring' world.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I turn my attention to the perspectives of other central actors within the networks. Chapter 5 explores the involvement of German governmental and paragonovernmental actors as transzonal brokers between the memory zones. The chapter demonstrates that the BStU, Hohenschönhausen and the Stiftung Aufarbeitung are transformed by these brokers into agents of transitional justice and democratisation. The central institutions become representatives of German memory as a product to be exported and as an instrument of 'soft power'. Chapter 6 turns its attention to the intrazonal brokers within the networks – that is, the actors who play a central role in specific memory zones. It explores how the 'exports' of memory are received in different contexts and shows that in this reception, the specificity of the national is reasserted in the context of the transnational. It identifies the potential for 'true' collaboration in the networks under study, but argues that this is undermined if both sides are not transformed.

The Conclusion brings these threads together and explores in particular the questions raised by the 'epistemic coloniality' evident in the ways in which the German actors rhetorically structure the world – that is, the assumption that Western constructions of knowledge are universal. It asks what is lost through this epistemic perspective and what might be gained by a provincialisation of the European (or German) approach. In this vein, it considers how we can work towards a 'decolonial cosmopolitanism' and what role the construction of a truly collaborative memory might play in that process.

Notes

1. Neiman, *Learning from the Germans*.
2. Neiman, 'Germany Confronted Its Racist Legacy'.
3. Neiman, *Learning from the Germans*, 376.
4. Hammerstein and Trappe, 'Aufarbeitung der Diktatur', 9. See also Taberner, 'Contrite Germans?', 308.
5. Gabowitsch, 'Replicating Atonement', 9. Christoph Cornelissen also notes this tendency to view Germany as a model, but argues that the development of the German approach to coming to terms with the past was part of a broader transnational (Western European) development. See Cornelissen, 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung', 34.
6. Gabowitsch, 'Replicating Atonement', 7.
7. Gabowitsch, 'Replicating Atonement', 13.
8. Taberner, 'Contrite Germans?', 311.
9. Willenkemper, 'Exportschlager Aufarbeitung'.
10. Mignolo, 'Cosmopolitanism and the De-colonial Option', 127.
11. Bond, Craps and Vermeulen, *Memory Unbound*.
12. Melber and Kössler, 'Colonial Amnesia'. See also Melber and Kössler, 'Koloniale Amnesie'.
13. Melber, 'Germany and Namibia'; *BBC News*, 'Germany Officially Recognises Colonial-Era Namibia Genocide'; *Neues Ruhrwort*, 'Historiker'.
14. Steckenbiller, 'Berlin's Colonial Legacies'.
15. Bechhaus-Gerst and Zeller, 'Einführung', 16.
16. Melber, 'Germany and Namibia', 9. See Gilley's speech at: <http://www.web.pdx.edu/~gilleyb/BundestagTalkFull.pdf> (retrieved 22 February 2022).
17. See Bach, 'Colonial Pasts in Germany's Present', 62–65; Zeller, 'Weltkulturmuseum?'; *BBC News*, 'Benin Bronzes'; Zimmerer, 'Germany Is Returning Nigeria's Looted Benin Bronzes'.
18. Cited in Zeller, 'Weltkulturmuseum?', 599.
19. I am very grateful to Johanna Krefit for providing me with access to her carefully curated list of contributions to these debates.
20. See, for example, Klein, Gerk and Aguigah, 'Schwere Vorwürfe'; Klein, Buschow and Dudin, 'Auf Staatskosten Hass auf Israel verbreiten lassen?'.
21. See, for example, Hoffmans and Laurin, 'Wer diese Haltung unterstützt'; Bahners, 'Unter Antisemitismusverdacht'.
22. Cited in Hoffmans and Laurin, 'Wer diese Haltung unterstützt'.
23. Assmann, 'Polarisieren oder solidarisieren?'.
24. Posener, 'Es reicht mit dem steuerfinanzierten Israelhass!'. See also Elbe, 'Die postkoloniale Schablone'. For a defence of postcolonial studies in this context, see Melber, 'Mächtige Mentalitäten'.
25. Rothberg, 'Vergleiche vergleichen'.
26. Rothberg, 'Vergleiche vergleichen'.
27. Rothberg, 'Vergleiche vergleichen'. See also Rothberg, 'Das Gespenst des Vergleichs'.
28. Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 3.
29. Schmid, 'Der Holocaust war singulär'.
30. Martini, 'Diffuse Erinnerung'.
31. Hanloser, 'Bloß nicht multidirektional'; Brumlik, 'Verschränkte Archive'.
32. Wiedemann, 'Lob der Verunsicherung'.
33. Zimmerer and Rothberg, 'Enttabuisiert den Vergleich!'.
34. Moses, 'The German Catechism'.

35. *New Fascism Syllabus*, 'The Catechism Debate'.
36. See Jennifer Evans' excellent summary of the debate: Evans, 'Ends and Beginnings'.
37. Bach, 'Colonial Pasts in Germany's Present', 59.
38. Bach, 'Colonial Pasts in Germany's Present', 64.
39. Rothberg and Zimmerer, 'Enttabuisiert den Vergleich!'.
40. See Langenbacher, 'Still the Unmasterable Past?', 35.
41. Deutscher Bundestag, *Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption*, 1.
42. Deutscher Bundestag, *Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption*, 2.
43. Clarke, *Constructions of Victimhood*, 8–9; Wüstenberg, *Civil Society and Memory*, 237.
44. Clarke, *Constructions of Victimhood*, 18. See also the discussion of the debates on the commemoration of the victims of communism in the Federal Parliament in the early 2000s in Harrison, *After the Berlin Wall*, 225–35.
45. Hogwood, 'Selective Memory', 37.
46. Cooke, *Representing East Germany*.
47. Jarausch, 'Growing Together?', 1 and 3.
48. Jarausch, 'Growing Together?', 7. Following the conventions of much Anglophone scholarship in the GDR, I will use the lower case 'eastern German' to mean the territory of the United Germany that was formerly the GDR, and the upper case 'East German' to refer to the state that existed between 1949 and 1990.
49. Jarausch, 'Growing Together?', 5. See also McAdams, 'The Last East German', 59.
50. Jarausch, 'Growing Together?', 17.
51. Schweiger, 'Deutschland einig Vaterland?', 18.
52. See Assmann, *Das neue Unbehagen*, 119; Faulenbach, 'Eine neue Konstellation?', 42; Wüstenberg, *Civil Society and Memory*, 239.
53. There is a wealth of literature exploring processes of transitional justice in post-socialist Germany. Major examples include Beattie, *Playing Politics with History*; McAdams, *Judging the Past in Unified Germany*.
54. Großbölting, 'Die DDR im vereinten Deutschland', 35.
55. See, for example, Arnold-de Simone, "'The Spirit of an Epoch'"; Bach, *What Remains*, 45–89; Ludwig, 'Representations of the Everyday'; Wüstenberg, *Civil Society and Memory*, 229–31; Zündorf, 'Vitrine oder Wühltisch'.
56. Sabrow et al., *Wohin treibt die DDR-Erinnerung?*, 34–35.
57. Rudnick, *Die andere Hälfte der Erinnerung*, 100.
58. Clarke with Wölfel, 'Remembering the German Democratic Republic', 9–10; Beattie, 'The Politics of Remembering the GDR', 32–33; Christoph, 'Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur', 30.
59. Großbölting, 'Die DDR im vereinten Deutschland', 39.
60. Harrison, *After the Wall*, 376.
61. Harrison, *After the Wall*, 380. Wüstenberg also notes the significant development of Checkpoint Charlie as a complex site of remembrance. See Wüstenberg, *Civil Society and Memory*, 231–34.
62. Harrison, *After the Wall*, 408.
63. Jones, '(Extra)ordinary Life'; Jones, 'Uneasy Heritage'.
64. See Harrison, 'The Berlin Wall'; Saunders, *Memorializing the GDR*, 243–48; Schlusche, 'Remapping the Wall'.
65. See Saunders, *Memorializing the GDR*, 268–80; RBB24, 'Bau des Einheitsdenkmals beginnt'.
66. Deutscher Bundestag, *Bericht der Expertenkommission*.
67. See Deutscher Bundestag, *Beschlussempfehlung*; BStU, 'BStU in Zukunft'; Schroeder cited in Leinemann, 'Ende der Aufarbeitung?'.

68. Beattie, 'Learning from the Germans?'. See also Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution*, xv–xvii.
69. Harrison, *After the Wall*, 227.
70. Assmann, *Auf dem Weg*, 41.
71. Assmann, *Auf dem Weg*, 29; Leggewie, 'Seven Circles of European Memory'.
72. Leggewie, *Der Kampf um die europäische Erinnerung*, 12–14. The seven rings are (in order from centre to periphery): Holocaust, gulag, ethnic cleansing, war and crises, colonial crimes, history of migration, and European integration.
73. Sierp, *History, Memory, and Trans-European Identity*, 138.
74. Mälksoo, 'The Memory Politics of Becoming European', 653.
75. Mälksoo, 'The Memory Politics of Becoming European', 655.
76. Neumayer, 'Integrating the Central European Past'.
77. Neumayer, 'Integrating the Central European Past', 347.
78. See Mälksoo, 'The Memory Politics of Becoming European'.
79. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 'Resolution 1481 (2006)'.
80. Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, 'Prague Declaration'.
81. Neumayer, 'Integrating the Central European Past', 356.
82. Wüstenberg, *Civil Society and Memory*, 258; Assmann, *Das neue Unbehagen*, 165.
83. European Parliament, 'Resolution of 2 April 2009'.
84. Neumayer, 'Integrating the Central European Past', 358. On the Platform of European Memory and Conscience, see: Platform of European Memory and Conscience, 'Agreement Establishing the Platform of European Memory and Conscience'; Büttner and Delius, 'World Culture'. Mano Toth notes that those Western European members of the Platform (including President Göran Lindblad and Stéphane Courtois) were 'known more widely for their strong positions on communism than for voicing their views about other totalitarian systems' – Toth, 'Challenging the Notion', 1045.
85. Littoz-Monnet, 'The EU Politics of Remembrance', 1183.
86. E.g. Clarke and Duber, 'Polish Cultural Diplomacy and Historical Memory', 52; Hackmann, 'Defending the "Good Name"', 587–606; Kridle, 'Polityka Historyczna'; Subotić, 'The Appropriation of Holocaust Memory'.
87. Calligaro, 'Which Memories', 64.
88. Sierp, 'EU Memory Politics'.
89. Forsdick, Mark and Spišáková, 'Introduction'.
90. Gabowitsch, 'Replicating Atonement', 14.
91. Beattie uses this term to differentiate it from 'official memory' and to indicate 'where state organs subsidize or otherwise endorse the activities of third parties'. In this study, I will use it to include both government and government-supported institutions. See Beattie, 'The Politics of Remembering the GDR', 25.
92. Jarausch, 'Growing Together?', 2.
93. For example: Barahona de Brito, González-Enríquez and Aguilar, *The Politics of Memory*; Bernhard and Kubik, *Twenty Years after Communism*; Borneman, *Violence, Justice, and Accountability*; McAdams, *Transitional Justice and the Rule of Law*; Rosenberg, *The Haunted Land*; Stan, *Transitional Justice in Eastern Europe*; Stan and Nedelsky, *Post-communist Transitional Justice*.
94. For example, Dujisin, 'A History of Post-communist Remembrance'; Welsh, 'Beyond the National'.
95. Some exceptions are my own publications on this topic. See Jones, 'Cross-border Collaboration'; Jones, 'Memory Relations'; Jones, 'Towards a Collaborative Memory'.
96. For a detailed account, see Miller, 'Settling Accounts with a Secret Police'.
97. Müller, 'East Germany', 266.
98. See Jones, *The Media of Testimony*, 103–4.

99. Deutscher Bundestag, *Beschlussempfehlung*, 1.
100. BStU, *Neunter Tätigkeitsbericht*, 6.
101. BStU, *Zehnter Tätigkeitsbericht*, 10.
102. For a description of the history and development of the Memorial, see: Rudnick, *Die andere Hälfte der Erinnerung*, 227–331; König, *Die Gestaltung der Vergangenheit*, 254–78; Verheyen, *United City, Divided Memories?*, 163–73.
103. Knabe was removed from office in 2018 after accusations of sexual harassment were made against his Deputy Helmuth Frauendorfer. Knabe was held responsible for not having taken appropriate action when the accusations were first made.
104. Rudnick, *Die andere Hälfte der Erinnerung*, 292.
105. Knabe, *Die Täter sind unter uns*.
106. See Jones, *The Media of Testimony*, 130.
107. For critical views on Hohenschönhausen's approach, see Hofmann, 'Zur Auseinandersetzung'; Kappeler and Schaub, 'Mauer durchs Herz'.
108. Beitzer, 'Wenn AfD-Anhänger über Diktaturen aufklären'.
109. Decker, 'DDR-Dissident'.
110. See, for example, Wurtscheid, 'Untersuchungsausschuss'.
111. See, for example, Wittge, 'AfD-Mann als falsches Stasi-Opfer enttarnt'.
112. Indicating that he was writing as the report was being published in 2011–12.
113. Gedenkstätte Hohenschönhausen, *5. Tätigkeitsbericht*, 7.
114. Gedenkstätte Hohenschönhausen, *6. Tätigkeitsbericht*, 9–10.
115. Gedenkstätte Hohenschönhausen, *7. Tätigkeitsbericht*, 6.
116. Stiftung Aufarbeitung, 'Stiftungsauftrag'.
117. Rudnick, *Die andere Hälfte der Erinnerung*, 77.
118. See Wüstenberg, *Civil Society and Memory*, 213.
119. Gallinat, *Narratives in the Making*, 44.
120. Stiftung Aufarbeitung, *Tätigkeitsbericht 2009*, 9.
121. Stiftung Aufarbeitung, *Tätigkeitsbericht 2012*, 9.
122. Rudnick, *Die andere Hälfte der Erinnerung*, 80.
123. Stiftung Aufarbeitung, *Tätigkeitsbericht 2009*, 6.
124. Stiftung Aufarbeitung, *Tätigkeitsbericht 2009*, 6.