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# The Comrades' Belief: Intended and Unintended Consequences of Communism for Neighbourhood Relations in the Former GDR

*Beate Völker and Henk Flap*

Marxist societies were experiments not only in destratification but also in openness and cohesion. Of all relationships a political regime might use to create 'friendship between classes', those among neighbours may be most prone to manipulation. We examine how relationships among neighbours in the former GDR were affected by the regime's housing policy of mixing people of different classes. Our retrospective data were collected in May 1992 ( $n = 189$ ) and in April 1993 ( $n = 300$ ) among two random samples of respondents in Leipzig and Dresden. While the communist regime was very successful at creating neighbourhoods of mixed social composition, its housing policy failed to create friendship between classes. Meeting did not lead to mating: next-door neighbours were socially distinct and hardly socialized with each other. The few existing ties in the neighbourhood were largely restricted to similar others. We understand these shallow and homogeneous neighbourhood networks as the unintended effect of the party's political control of private life: one would be unlikely to invest in relations that posed a threat and with individuals one did not trust, such as neighbours, who were dissimilar to oneself and who, because they lived next-door, knew about one's private life as well. Analysis shows furthermore that being a neighbour and having a dissimilar occupation increases the chance of being distrusted.

## Institutional Steering of Housing Allocation in the Former GDR

In the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), other people figured prominently in deciding where one lived and next to whom. Unlike many important decisions that people in democratic societies are used to making on their own, in the GDR this choice was made for them by the official authorities. The ruling élites in Eastern Europe attempted – in line with their activist Marxist ideology – to create a new, socialist man who would set aside private interests for collective ones and treat others as comrades, and who would not give in to particularistic leanings. Marxism promised to bring not only equality but also 'friendship between classes'. To test these

Marxist predictions on the openness and cohesiveness of social life under communism, we inquire into the practice of the communist institutional system and its intended and unintended consequences for social relations among neighbours.

The subject of relationships among neighbours makes a particularly good research site for determining the cohesiveness and openness of a society and for testing the idea of the political malleability of private life by following a particular medium such as housing policy. Marxist élites assumed that relations among neighbours could be moulded by controlling the social composition of neighbourhoods. The totalitarian government of the GDR and its local representatives did not only have *de jure*, but also *de facto* rights to allocate residents to buildings. Of course, one could also have studied

workplace or classroom relationships because these were equally subject to manipulation.

Housing policy played a central role in the policy of the GDR regime. Having a house was guaranteed in the constitution of the GDR. In the 1960s and early 1970s ambitious five-year plans attempted to solve all current and future housing problems. Because of a declining population – the former GDR was the only country in the world whose entire history has been characterized by a shrinking population (Geißler, 1992: 286) – the shortage of housing was not as great as in other industrial countries. Nevertheless, the housing goal set out in the constitution was never fulfilled. ‘Housing’ remained a political issue until the downfall of the regime (see Kleßman, 1988: 406). Even in the last days of the regime at least 400,000 families were still waiting for their own home (Manzel, 1992: 261).

Housing policy, called ‘steering of housing’ (*Wohnraumlenkung*), was based on the 1975 law on housing. Besides assignment rules, the law defined norms concerning the number of rooms per person. Furthermore, it specified which groups were to have privileged access: refugees from the Nazi regime and their relatives, families with more than three children, and persons with ‘good performance in building socialism’ (Herbst *et al.*, 1994: 197). The housing departments of district councils made decisions on all housing requests and allocated people to state- or community-owned houses and to private houses as well. The process of getting a house was rather bureaucratic. On average there was a wait of between 6 and 8 years before a house became available (Hinrichs, 1992: 9).

Houses were rarely bought or rented on the market but allocated by the authorities. Yet, families were allowed to own a house and the construction of one’s own house was even supported by the system in its latter years. However, because of the extreme shortage of all necessary materials, it was hard to build such houses. In the cities, most houses were community or state property. Houses were not attractive as private property because they were costly and difficult to maintain. In 1989, about 40 per cent of all housing units in the former GDR were still privately owned (in the former FRG the figure was 80 per cent, see Rohlf and Schäfer, 1993: 120), 42 per cent were owned by the state or community, and the rest were the property of workers’ housing co-operations (*Arbeiterwohnungsbau-*

*genossenschaft, AWG*). Houses owned by ‘AWGs’ were also assigned by official authorities. Compared to other socialist countries such as Poland, Hungary, and China, the main difference is the lack of work-unit housing (see Logan and Bian, 1993).

If one owned a house, this meant little in terms of actual rights. One could not freely dispose of one’s house, i.e. sell or rent it at a price agreed between a potential buyer or tenant. The amount of rent was set by the government and at a very low level. Furthermore, rents did not depend on the age and condition of the building. This also frustrated the development of a housing market (see Szeleny, 1983). On average, only 4 per cent of the net income per head was spent on rent (Winkler, 1993: 173). To get over these hurdles people sometimes swapped homes, both parties being better off afterwards. To do this, however, one needed an official permit. Generally, therefore, housing in the GDR was always scarce and money could not be used to acquire a house (Adler and Kretzschmar, 1993).

The quality of housing left much to be desired. The number of square metres per person was low: 28 m<sup>2</sup>/person in 1988 (the figure for the FRG was 41 m<sup>2</sup>/person). So was the number of rooms per person: 38 per cent of all families with children below 16 years of age had to live in less than one room per family member (the figure for the former FRG was 19 per cent; see Weidacher, 1992: 332, 326–7). The houses had relatively few facilities: in 1986, about one-third of the housing units had no indoor bathroom and about one-quarter had no bath or shower (see Statistisches Taschenbuch, 1987: 63; Winkler, 1993: 167). By 1989/90, the situation had not changed much. In Saxony, for example, 38 per cent of housing units still had no indoor bathroom and 24 per cent had no shower. In the cities of Leipzig and Dresden, 18 and 22 per cent of units were without an indoor bathroom, and 27 and 36 per cent of units had no shower. In East Germany as a whole a telephone was available in only 16 per cent of all housing units (Winkler, 1993: 165–8).

It is harder to find information on the distribution of housing of different quality. The fact that larger houses were assigned for rent to families with more children meant that differences in income were only weakly related to differences in the size of accommodation (Hinrichs, 1992; Weidacher, 1992: 322). Logan and Bian (1993) report clear social and political

differences in access to quality housing and neighbourhoods in other socialist countries that seem to stem from the employer's influence over housing allocation and its role in the recruitment of loyal or key personnel and the rewards they received.

How successful the GDR regime was in its attempt to avoid social segregation between neighbourhoods and to promote the mixing of classes within neighbourhoods can only be glimpsed from anecdotal evidence. In fact, it was a newspaper clipping on the peculiar relationships between socially very dissimilar neighbours in Moscow that sparked our research into relationships among neighbours in communist society. Later in this paper we will present evidence on how well the GDR's Marxist regime succeeded in actually mixing social classes within the neighbourhood.

Apart from the more explicit goals of achieving welfare, equality, and friendship between classes, the regime also aimed to organize social life entirely according to the socialist ideology. This included the private sphere of family life as well as the more public sphere of work. Communist regimes intruded into the private and work spheres not only to re-educate the 'old man' and to create the 'new man' but also to control the population in order to ensure continuing power. The centralized assignment of housing was instrumental in achieving political control: loyal citizens were put next-door to those whom the regime did not trust (Childs, 1983). To break the private character of the family and support the development of a socialist lifestyle, house and neighbourhood committees were formed. Like the collectives at work, these committees were encouraged to keep diaries of their activities, to establish a programme of activities, to elect chairpersons, and to meet regularly. *Hausgemeinschaften* ('house committees') that were *Träger des sozialistischen Gemeinschaftslebens im Wohngebiet* ('pillars of the socialist community in the residential area') are illustrative of the organized political control exercised over citizens (Kleßman, 1988). Such groups organized leisure time activities such as reading, political discussions, and festivities, as well as voting.

Voters are often organized to go to the poll in groups. . . . The secretary [of the house committee] is a reliable collaborator of the National Front. . . . he keeps an eye on things in his block and attempts

to mobilize the tenants to take part in all appropriate political activities. Competitions are organized to see which block gets its full complement of voters to the polls first. Arrangements are made to get the votes of the sick or infirm, of those on shift work, or those who are, for some reason, away from home. In these circumstances a voter would feel intimidated if he had any thoughts of abstaining. He would fear being obstructed by his neighbours, people he probably did not know before he moved into the flat, people whose private political views he does not know. (Childs, 1983: 132).

The 'housebook' (*Hausbuch*), or diary of the house committee was part of the registration law: every housing unit had to have one. The particulars of all persons living in the house, including those who visited them, had to be registered in this book.<sup>1</sup> Particularly active committees were rewarded with the 'golden house number', which they could mount at the entrance of the building. In small towns the number of house or neighbourhood committees was never very great, but in the bigger cities there were many of them, particularly in new suburbs. House committees were a subtle instrument in exerting implicit and explicit social pressure to conform. They were also the expression of the regime's distrust of its own citizens.

One can therefore say that the allotment of housing in the former GDR served a number of purposes: it guaranteed a minimum level of housing for everybody; prevented social segregation; secured the mixing of social classes; and made it possible to exercise political control. Marxist élites attempted to mould actual relations among citizens by controlling the selection of people into neighbourhoods, i.e. by controlling who met whom. Bearing these considerations in mind, it would be surprising if neighbourhood relationships had not been affected by such a housing policy.

Relationships with neighbours differ from relationships individuals have with their friends, acquaintances, or colleagues, in the sense that it is actually impossible not to have neighbours. Relationships between neighbours have no predefined content and are almost never a question of an entirely voluntary choice. If there is a housing market, one can select oneself into a particular neighbourhood or even sometimes next to a particular neighbour, but in a state- or party-controlled

system, this is not feasible. Furthermore, although one cannot choose the members of one's family, one can still avoid meeting them, but one can hardly avoid meeting one's neighbours. Whether 'meeting' will lead to 'mating' is, however, another question (see Verbrugge, 1977). Before formulating hypotheses on neighbourhood relations in the former GDR, we will first review what is already known about relationships between neighbours.

## Previous Research Findings on Relations between Neighbours

The research literature on neighbourhood relations is not extensive and is mainly restricted to the US. As far as 'meeting' between neighbours is concerned, there is a specialist literature on ethnic segregation between and within neighbourhoods (e.g. Wilson, 1987; Massey and Denton, 1993), but there are few studies on the occupational segregation of neighbourhoods. Those that do exist are mainly rather dated (e.g. Duncan and Duncan, 1955). With regard to 'mating' between neighbours, there is an older tradition of studies on friendships, which showed, *inter alia*, that people tend to become friends with their nearest neighbours (e.g. Merton, 1947; Caplow and Foreman, 1950). More recent social network studies also include information on the actual social contacts between neighbours (e.g. Fischer, 1982). Recent studies on the so-called gentrification of old, rundown urban centres (e.g. Bridge, 1994) sometimes contain information on networks in the neighbourhood. Yet, from the beginning of research on neighbours, there are hardly any studies that contain information on both 'meeting' and 'mating' (see Keller, 1968).

It is hazardous to compare existing studies and to generalize from them because of the different designs and measurement tools involved and because of conceptual differences. Some studies only deal with the people living in a particular street, while others are concerned with a representative urban or national sample of inhabitants and their neighbours. Another hindrance is that the geographical scale on which segregation is measured differs from study to study, although this is known to influence the degree of segregation one will find. Studies also differ in their definition of 'neighbours'. Furthermore, the occupational status of the respon-

dent's neighbours is often not asked for or, if recorded, is measured in gross categories.

The literature on meeting among neighbours, including studies in the ecological tradition such as, for example, that of Duncan and Duncan (1955), always reports a relatively close association between what they call spatial and social distance, with increasing occupational similarity for places inhabited by people at the upper or lower end of the status scale. Although this literature is nominally about ethnic segregation, many of these studies demonstrate that occupational and income differences between ethnic groups goes some way to explaining the ethnic segregation that is found initially (e.g. Simkus, 1978). A recent study on ethnic segregation in Amsterdam (Daalen *et al.*, 1995: 38) demonstrates that there is much more ethnic segregation between Dutch and Non-Dutch and also between Turks and Moroccans at the street-level than at the neighbourhood-level, probably as a result of self-selection among immediate neighbours. If one were to study occupational segregation at different levels one would probably find similar results, that is, more segregation at the micro-level.

The second body of literature, dealing with 'mating', provides more detail. Jackson (1977: 69) found that neighbourhood friendships show, after kin friendships, the least selection for occupational similarity: 39 per cent had a similar occupational level. Here, four occupational levels were used ranging from upper white collar to lower blue collar.

Although the number of relationships one finds in a neighbourhood will depend on the nature of the instrument used in charting networks, it seems that no more than a fifth of an individual's network is drawn from people in the immediate neighbourhood. Wellmann *et al.* (1988: 143) in their community study in Toronto report that 18 per cent of network members were people from the neighbourhood, while Fischer (1982: 41) found that his respondents in urban California had an average of 1.9 neighbours in their network, i.e. 10 per cent. Busschbach (1996) reports a similar figure for the Netherlands. According to the General Social Survey (GSS), the core network of people in the US contained an average of 7 per cent of neighbours with whom personal problems were discussed (Marsden, 1990; see Burt, 1984 for more information on the GSS). The California respondents studied by

Fischer (1982: 386) had 9 per cent of their neighbours in their core networks.

A general finding in modern community studies (e.g. Fischer, 1982; Héran, 1987; Wellman *et al.*, 1988) is that the absolute and relative number of neighbours mentioned as network members decreases as the degree of urbanism increases. Fischer (1982: 102) suggests that small-town residents turn to neighbourhood contacts because of a lack of alternatives and city residents turn to neighbours only if they are compatible concerning lifestyle or social background. This explains why the closeness of the relationships among neighbours in a personal network increases with the degree of urbanism. Campbell and Lee (1992: 1987), in their study of ties between neighbours in a few city blocks in Nashville, demonstrated that ties between neighbours are typically not that strong or multiplex.

Campbell and Lee (1992) and Bridge (1994) show that the number of neighbours mentioned differs among social groups. For instance, young and old people have more neighbourhood contacts than others. Families with children and women are more involved in their neighbourhood. In addition, length of residence is an important factor in explaining neighbourhood relationships. According to Fischer (1982: 100) homogeneity of lifestyles is a particularly important factor leading to neighbourhood involvement. Because lower-income neighbourhoods are often rather diverse with regard to racial, occupational, and other characteristics, these places tend to be characterized by less neighbourhood involvement while higher-income groups and those with a higher level of education more often mention neighbours in their network. In addition, persons with a higher income and education have more freedom of choice, that is, they can arrange to live next-door to similar others. Yet, the larger neighbour network of persons with a higher education or a job with higher occupational prestige is not accompanied by more intense or frequent contact with these neighbours. People of a higher social class mention more neighbours, but have little face-to-face contact, whereas people of the lower classes do not mention many neighbours but activate these networks more frequently and have closer relationships with their neighbours. Campbell (1990) also reports that people who own their house have more 'elaborate' social relations within their neighbourhood.

The studies of neighbour relationships reviewed above either concentrate on the social composition of neighbourhoods, i.e. the different chances of meeting one's neighbours or they consider actual ties existing among neighbours as a part of an individual's personal network, i.e. mating. To our knowledge there are only three studies that analyse both 'meeting' and 'mating' between neighbours.

Athanasίου and Yoshioka (1973) in a study of 300 households in a new settlement tried to determine how much variation in friendship formation is due to propinquity and how much to similarity in social class. Friendships are influenced by propinquity: more numerous and more intense friendships are formed with immediately adjacent neighbours. Class was not a factor in differentiating friendship choice for next-door neighbours, however, at greater distance it did become a factor.

In his study of 22 city blocks of 12 houses in Amsterdam ( $n = 196$ ) Nauta (1973: 107–42) reported that the social dissimilarity of people living there was not very high, that they actually interacted with on average almost 7 other neighbours. Furthermore, existing differences in occupational status between neighbours had no influence on intimate contacts, but they did decrease the exchange of instrumental help. An interesting finding in this paper is that quarrels between neighbours do not vary according to social class (Nauta, 1973: 68–9).

Laumann (1966: 70–4) reports in his study on the cities of Cambridge and Belmont that next-door neighbours were quite similar in occupational status (35 per cent of all pairs of neighbours shared the same status position when a scale with five status positions is used). Compared to friendship choices, immediate neighbours showed the least degree of status similarity, with family relationships (with fathers and fathers-in-law) being in between friendship relations and next-door neighbours according to social selectivity. Considering our research problem, it is important to note that actual social relations between these next-door neighbours were quite numerous and, moreover, not strongly associated with occupational status differences. 28 percent said they were good friends with their direct neighbours or frequent visitors in their homes. Actual interaction was strongly associated with the length of residence and type of dwelling. Detached dwellings promoted interaction. Although not

explicitly recognized by Laumann, a comparison of the occupational similarity of immediate neighbours and of pairs of immediate neighbours actually interacting with each other provides a simple way of measuring the influence of the chance of meeting similar and dissimilar others on the chance of mating between these others.<sup>2</sup>

To have some kind of bench-mark against which we could compare our findings on neighbours in the former GDR, we provide a rough-and-ready summary of the research on neighbours of people in Western democratic industrial societies following the literature reviewed above. We have deliberately neglected all differences in the methodologies used.<sup>3</sup> First, people are selected or select themselves into neighbourhoods inhabited by socially similar others. In addition, selection is likely to be even stronger when next-door neighbours are concerned. Secondly, there is quite an extensive interaction with next-door neighbours and other people in the neighbourhood, which declines in intensity as distance increases. Generally, 10–20 per cent of an individual's network is made up of people from the neighbourhood, but their share in the core network of more intimate ties is somewhat less. Although people also choose their friends among their neighbours, and even more among their immediate neighbours, their ties in the neighbourhood are generally not intensive or multiplex. Thirdly, however, social class does not seem to matter very much for the choice of people to actually interact with, at least not for next-door neighbours, although class is more important in the case of people in the wider neighbourhood.

## Relations with Neighbours as Social Capital

Even if a regime were successful in mixing the neighbourhood socially,<sup>4</sup> it cannot be taken for granted that 'meeting' implies 'mating', and less so, we will argue, in a communist society. People's interactions are not totally determined by the supply side (Marsden, 1990). Of course, Blau's one-liner that 'one cannot marry an Eskimo, if no Eskimo is around' is an important truth, but people also select among those who are available. The idea of an individual's social network as a sort of social capital

suggests ways in which relations are a kind of resource: the more social capital people have, the better they can achieve their goals (Bourdieu, 1981; Flap, 1988; Coleman, 1990). It also implies an investment theory of social relations: ties come about because people invest in other people taking into account the present value of future support. The value of future support inherent in particular relations depends on two interacting aspects: individual needs and institutional social conditions. If one assumes that one will need a bricklayer, building constructor, or carpenter tomorrow, it will be better to start a social relationship with such a person today rather than with anybody else. Such a need is often institutionally conditioned, e.g. by the shortage of goods such as building materials in communist societies.<sup>5</sup> If the political system provides ample and free housing, there would not be much need to maintain a special tie with a bricklayer.

There are at least two ways in which personal networks in all societies are instrumental in the achievement of better life chances, that is, for achieving physical well-being and social approval. Although the sociological theory of social approval is still underdeveloped, it is probably correct to assume that in general similar others are more important in attaining social approval if only because it is easier to communicate with similar others. A more diverse network is, in general, probably more instrumental in achieving physical well-being. We argue, however, that the instrumental value of networks in producing these goals is conditioned by their specific institutional conditions in the former GDR.

A dominant characteristic of communist societies was that the communist command economies induced an 'economy of shortage' (Kornai, 1980), which constantly posed problems for individuals in terms of guaranteeing a basic level of material well-being. A common solution to these problems was the creation of a personal network that could provide an individual with a variety of goods and services that were difficult to obtain, since they could not be got in the shops or through official channels. Such provision networks were well known in the former GDR and are often referred to in the literature (e.g. Voigt *et al.*, 1987; Kleßmann, 1988; Gutenberg and Neef, 1990; Srubar, 1991; Völker *et al.*, 1992). In an economy of shortage a diverse net-

work is practically indispensable in guaranteeing and even increasing one's well-being, because such a network would provide access to a greater variety of scarce goods and services that cannot be attained otherwise. Previous research has shown (e.g. Die-wald, 1995) that people did indeed create 'provision networks' (*Beschaffungsnetzwerke*) to compensate for the economy of shortage. Moreover, it has been shown that these provision networks were occupationally very dissimilar (see Völker, 1995; Völker and Flap, 1995b). Therefore, even apart from the stimulating effect of nearness on interaction, if it were only for the economy of shortage and if the official housing policy were only half-way successful in providing equal access to housing for people with different social backgrounds, and given the instrumental value of occupationally diverse networks, we can expect to find *many contacts among neighbours in the former GDR before the political upheaval*.

As already mentioned, social relationships also provide approval, another major human goal. Although social relations in every society contribute to social approval, by providing company and helping to create an identity, the institutional context of a communist society also has specific consequences for the kind of networks instrumental in producing this goal in everyday social life. This other system-induced characteristic of communist societies that greatly affected social relationships was the regime's extensive apparatus of control. Neighbourhoods could easily be kept under surveillance and controlled by placing the 'right' people next-door to each other. In our pilot study, in spring 1991, it turned out that people were aware of this state control. They assumed that in every house committee and work collective at least one person was an informant working for the security police, the STASI. Respondents described this feeling in statements like: 'Whenever more than ten people came together, one of the group worked for the Stasi'. We do not exactly know how many unofficial informants the STASI employed. Estimates vary from 12.5 per cent (see Fef-fer, 1992: 82, quoting the *New York Times* and *Esquire*) to 1 per cent of the total population (news-reels on German public television broadcast on 8 February 1994). We will probably never know the exact figure, but the numbers were certainly quite considerable.

Moreover, the fear instilled by a secret police force and their hidden informants is not a linear function

of their number, as a small number of persons who cannot be trusted can already cause considerable fear. The problem of whom to trust arose because individuals did not know who in fact worked for the STASI. After the STASI archives were opened many people learned that they had put too much trust in individuals they thought were their friends.

Many tried to escape this control and collectiviza-tion by retreating into a cocoon of trusted friends and family members. These 'niches' were not only a refuge from the way government meddled in the lives of citi-zens, but can also be seen as the solution to the system-induced problem of whom to trust. Inten-sive, long-standing relationships with others, embedded in strong ties, are less dangerous because people learn many things about each other directly or through common friends. Similarity probably also enhanced trustworthiness. Moreover, a strong tie gives people some leverage over each other, because they can always threaten to withhold support in the future. Everybody outside this inner core, this niche, could be dangerous or could become so. Thus approval could only safely be produced in 'niches' consisting of strong ties (see Völker, 1995).

The assumptions just mentioned are an important caveat for the well-known 'strength-of-weak-ties' argument. Although weak ties generally do not provide much information, they pose a risk in one-party states where being labelled a dissident or an enemy of the state has severe negative consequences for one's life chances and those of one's family. In societies ruled by state socialism the meaning of 'life chances' sometimes has to be taken literally. In such societies people probably developed a practical knowledge about the possible danger of weak ties, they knew that these ties might lead them into unfa-miliar, and possibly the wrong circles. In addition, a weak tie does not give much leverage when it comes to influencing the decisions of others. Hence, the strength-of-weak-ties argument has quite other, and negative implications in communist societies than has generally been assumed. Many novels and even everyday expressions describe the strategies of GDR citizens as they tried to deal with the reality of political control and tried to keep niches separated from other, weak, and potentially risky relationships (such expressions are for example *sich bedeckt halten* – keeping oneself covered or *mit zwei Gesichtern leben* – living with two faces).

The political control did not only lead to a distrust of those one did not know very well, it also made individuals wary of those they were forced to meet because of the institutional circumstances, such as for example co-residents of the neighbourhood. Concerning next-door neighbours there were probably other relevant factors: because they were in each other's vicinity almost all the time, and willingly or unwillingly they learned much about each others' private lives, including politically sensitive information such as whom they invited back to their homes. The regular meetings in neighbourhood committees and the relative lack of geographical mobility further increased opportunities to observe each other. Assuming that the state successfully prevented social segregation and was able to mix neighbourhoods, install party representatives on housing committees, and secretly place informants in the neighbourhood and on these committees, one might be justified in expecting *few contacts among neighbours and especially among direct neighbours*.

Although our assumption about the necessity of a diverse network as a means to ensure physical well-being led us to precisely the opposite hypothesis, we think that the problem of whom to trust overrode the other consideration, at least in the context of the neighbourhood. People will, we argue, adapt their provision network accordingly. To sum up our assumptions: we assume, first, that next-door neighbours were relatively dissimilar from each other with regard to their social background. Second, we expect that people attempted to avoid interactions with direct neighbours and probably also with other persons in the neighbourhood. The number of neighbours within the network will have been rather small, in an absolute and relative sense. Third, neighbours will not have been included in the core network, let alone in the 'niche'. In line with this, we expect that ties with neighbours will have been rather weak, or at least they will have been strong very rarely. Fourth, if there were contacts with neighbours, these would have been instrumental, weak relationships, and probably with others not too dissimilar from oneself. Fifth, if an individual did not have many others for the provision of scarce goods, and if neighbours could provide such resources, neighbours were more likely to be included as a substitute.

## Design and Measurements

A pilot study was conducted in Spring 1991 to test a preliminary version of the questionnaire as well as to gather more background information on the situation in the former GDR before and after the political upheaval. In May 1992 we started the first fieldwork and conducted the first sample of interviews. This sample was reinterviewed in April 1993 when we also interviewed a new sample for the first time. In April and May 1994, the 'new' sample of April 1993 was reinterviewed and the 'old' sample of May 1992 was interviewed for the third time. The 1992 sample as well as the 1993 sample were randomly selected in Leipzig and Dresden by the civil service of the local municipalities. Criteria for inclusion were that respondents had to be between 30 and 55 years of age and to have been in employment before the political change.

Table 1 depicts the research design for our study. At t1 we paid more attention to personal networks before the political changes and posed fewer questions on the actual situation. At t2 we focused strongly on the actual situation and only asked a subset of questions on the time before the political changes to allow us the option of checking on possible biases in our data caused by memory effects. Of course, we studied changes between t1 and t2 as well as the occurrence of life events, such as marriage, giving birth and becoming a father or a mother, or the death of persons to whom an individual had felt very close.

We opted for this somewhat unorthodox design because it allowed us to control for the biases that might result from using retrospective questions (see Bernard *et al.*, 1984). If there is no bias because of cognitive filtering, respondents will mention similar retrospective networks at each point of measurement. Actually, we found no indication of systematic memory bias, except with regard to network size. In retrospect, people reported a somewhat larger retrospective network in 1992 than in 1993. In 1992 they stated that the mean size of their networks before the political upheaval in 1989 was 12.4 (sd = 5.4, median = 12). One year later, in the 1993, sample mean size was recorded with an average of only 10.6 (sd = 4.0, median = 10). This bias results from the different numbers of persons mentioned as being important for the

**Table 1.** *Design of the project on changing personal networks in the former GDR, before and after the political upheaval, 1989–1994*

	May 1992	April 1993	March 1994
first sample ( $n=189$ )	first measurement: data on t0 (=1989) and t1 (=1992)	second measurement data on t2 (=1993) control qns. for t0, t1 $n=126$	third measurement data on t3 (=1994) control qns. for t0, t1, t2 $n=83$
second sample ( $n=300$ )		first measurement: data on t0 (=1989) and t2 (=1993)	second measurement: data on t3 (=1994) control qns. for t0, t2 $n=226$

provision of goods: in 1992 the mean size of this part of the personal network was 3.4 (sd = 3.2, median = 3) and in 1993 it was 2.1 (sd = 1.4, median = 2). Persons who delivered goods through informal contacts seem more likely to be forgotten. The numbers of network-neighbours mentioned in the retrospective networks at both points of retrospective measurement do not differ significantly.

Table 2 presents the composition of our sample and shows the way it compares with the general population. As can be seen, vocational training is somewhat overestimated in our samples. It is, however, comparable with figures for larger cities in the former GDR (see Roski, 1991). Therefore, no weighting procedure was applied.

The questions used for the delineation of personal networks were based on Fischer's exchange method (Fischer, 1982). Of course, we adapted the name-eliciting questions to the situation in East Germany and to our particular research interest (see Appendix 1). Names or initials were asked of interaction partners who shared an activity with the respondent in a particular social situation such as giving advice about problems at work, helping to get a job or a house, providing scarce goods, spending leisure time with, or discussing personal or political matters. We also asked for the names of those who were not trusted. Ties to persons with whom one discussed personal matters are considered to be core ties. Ties that were important for the discussion of personal as well as political matters were thought to constitute the niche. In total we used 18 name-generating questions to describe how the networks of our respondents appeared in the situation before November 1989. Moreover, respon-

dents were encouraged to mention 5 names per question, but it was also possible to mention more. The time frame for each question was six months (March 1989–September 1989).

All name-eliciting questions focused on authentic situations, not on hypothetical situations in which one might need another's help. One drawback of our method might be that answers depend on actually encountering the need for this type of help: for example, if one had not been ill during these six months, it did not make much sense to answer a question about who provided help in cases of illness. However, not only did we employ a multitude of name generators, our items also referred to problems most people have a fair chance of meeting during a six-month period. Moreover, because we asked for real interactions we can be reasonably sure that we are not dealing with figments of the imagination.

Once names had been elicited, additional questions were asked about the relationship between the person named (referred to as the 'alter') and the respondent (frequency of contact, duration, closeness, role relation, etc.) and personal characteristics of the alter (education, occupation, age, sex) to interpret the names mentioned and to establish how much and what kind of social capital a tie represented.

Like Fischer (1982) and most other students of neighbours, we left it to the respondents themselves to define 'neighbours', except in the cases where those who were reported as neighbours lived more than 5 km. away. These network members were not included in the analyses.<sup>6</sup> In addition to neighbours in the network we also asked some questions about

**Table 2.** *Sample composition of the research project on changing personal networks in the former GDR after the political upheaval (%)*

Variable	Sample 1992/1993	Statistics for East Germany
Gender <sup>a</sup>		
Male	44.9	47.5
Female	55.1	52.5
Vocational training		
Unskilled	4.4	4.0 <sup>b</sup>
Skilled	44.4	59.0
Technical college	31.4	23.0
University degree	16.9	9.0
Other	2.5	5.0
Marital status		
Married	82.4	70.0 <sup>c</sup>
Unmarried	17.6	—
Children		
None	19.0	18.0 <sup>c</sup>
1	26.4	82 <sup>c</sup>
2	43.8	
3+	10.6	
SED membership	25.05	2.3 million <sup>d</sup> (i.e. c. 15%)

<sup>a</sup>East German figures from *Staatliche Zentralverwaltung*; Leipzig: male=46.6%, female=53.4%; Dresden: male=48.8%, female=53.2% (Beyme, 1988). All figures relate to 1985.

<sup>b</sup>Datenreport 1992; numbers refer to the whole population.

<sup>c</sup>*Statistisches Bundesamt Wiesbaden* (1993); figures relate to 1990/1.

<sup>d</sup>Winkler (1993).

Note: For the sample,  $n=489$ .

immediate neighbours and their jobs. In this way we checked for neighbourhood segregation. One could not avoid meeting these people, but one did not necessarily have to interact with them.

We call the two different 'types' of neighbours 'network-neighbours' and 'next-door neighbours'. We did not pose a follow-up question that gave direct information about the extent of interaction between next-door neighbours. Actual ties between immediate neighbours could be stated in response to each name-generating question asked. In total we have data on 5466 actual social relations in personal networks in the days before the downfall of the Marxist regime. Among these there are 1479 core ties, and 122 relations with neighbours. In addition, we have data for the old days on 414 next-door neighbours.

The multiplexity of a tie between two persons was measured by the number of relational functions fulfilled by this tie. Tie-strength was detected in the

second step. According to Marsden and Campbell (1984) the best indicator of tie-strength is the measurement of closeness or intensity, since it is the only indicator that is not confounded by other measures. Frequency measurements overestimate the importance of neighbours and colleagues and duration overestimates the importance of family members. In this study, the measurement of the strength of a tie is the answer to the question how intensive a relationship with a particular person was on a scale from 'not really intensive' (1), 'not intensive' (2), 'relatively intensive' (3), and 'rather intensive' (4) to 'really intensive' (5). We abbreviated this scale by taking the first two categories together as weak ties and the last two as strong ties, while the third category was thought to indicate a tie of medium strength.

Heterogeneity was measured by the index for qualitative variation (see Agresti and Agresti, 1978). This index (IQV) measures the likelihood of categorical differences between two randomly selected network

members. Thus, the closer the IQV is to 1, the higher the heterogeneity in the network, with a value of 0 implying maximal homogeneity. The IQV is defined as:

$$IQV = \frac{1 - \sum_{i=1}^k p_i^2}{1 - \frac{1}{k}}$$

where  $k$  = number of categories and  $p_i$  = the fraction of observations (alters and ego) in category  $i$ . Since it is hard to establish homogeneous networks with regard to specific occupations, we sometimes did not use all four digits of the occupational code, but only the first two, indicating the employment sector (see Mayer and Solga, 1993, and below).

Measuring other characteristics of the egos and alters was straightforward: educational level was measured as highest educational certificate attained; occupation was determined using the occupational codes, which were especially devised for the occupational titles of the former GDR, since an ordinary occupational prestige scale had never constructed for the former GDR (Mayer and Solga, 1993). The codes also include a measurement for the qualification needed in a certain occupation (unskilled/skilled worker, skilled craftsman, technical college, or university). Persons with a political function were given a separate code. The codes can be compared with the ISCO codes for occupations (see ILO, 1990). However, they do not provide information on the prestige of an occupation. Therefore we also coded the data according to the German version of Treiman's international prestige scale (Treiman, 1977, 1979). Finally, we also asked the respondents whether they felt politically controlled, whether they lacked any goods in their household, and what arrangements they made to meet certain kinds of eventualities. All interviews lasted between 2 and 2.5 hours.

## Results

### The Distribution of Quality Housing

If the GDR policy of mixing social classes had been reasonably successful, one would expect that characteristics like prestige or level of education were of little account in getting a better house. So, we started

by inquiring into what counts as attaining a good house. It turns out that there are no significant differences between different social groups of unskilled workers, neither between skilled workers and skilled craftsmen nor between those with a technical college, or a university degree nor between those with and those without a political function (see Mayer and Solga, 1993, for these categories) in general standards of living, as measured by a multi-item scale (Adler and Kretschmar, 1993). However, some significant differences can be found when looking at the items separately. The quality of one's house (i.e. the kind of heating, an inside bathroom, or the number of rooms) as well as additional material standards connected with how one lived (i.e. owning a house, a *Datsche*, a car, and having a telephone) are slightly higher for those with a higher level of education, but the differences are not significant). Tables 3 and 4 show the regression analyses for the social distribution of different kinds of facilities. We used a person's occupational prestige in 1989, his political function, age, and the number of persons in his household as independent variables. According to the official rule, the number of children or the presence of grandparents in a household were the main criteria for allocating larger houses and having better facilities. These rules were supported by our findings, as can be seen in the Tables. Table 3 further shows that those who had a political function had more rooms, which was also in line with the official norm. In addition, older people had more rooms.<sup>7</sup>

Table 4 concerns additional indicators of the standard of living such as having a car, a phone, or a *Datsche* (a small cottage in the countryside). We did not find any effects arising from the sector in which an individual worked, his education, or vocational training. Table 4 shows that a political function did not help to explain how these highly desired goods were distributed.<sup>8</sup> Again, age is positively related with all items. Moreover, one's occupational prestige affects all indices. However, in general the models are not very powerful (see McFadden-R<sup>2</sup>).

In conclusion, it seems that housing policy in the former GDR was consistent with the official law. However, occupational prestige also influenced an individual's standard of living. We should note that an equal distribution of different quality houses is no proof of social mixing. More important from the perspective of the tenets of the ideology is the

**Table 3.** *OLS regression on the number of rooms in the household in the GDR, 1989*

No. of rooms	Independent variables				R <sup>2</sup>
	Age	No. of persons	Political function	Occupational prestige <sup>a</sup>	
Unstandardized coefficient (sd)	0.032 (0.006)	0.60 (0.03)	0.60 (0.24)	0.004 (0.003)	
Standardized coefficient	0.18**	0.60**	0.11*	0.04	0.43

<sup>a</sup>Treiman scale.

Notes:  $n=483$ .

+ =  $p < 0.1$ , \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ .

Interaction terms of the number of persons in a household, political function, and education included in previous models were not significant. The constant of the model is significant.

**Table 4.** *Logistic regression on selected indicators of standard of living in the GDR, 1989*

Dependent variable	Independent variables					-2Log-likelihood <sup>c</sup>
	Age	No. of persons	Political function <sup>a</sup>	Occupational prestige <sup>b</sup>	Constant	
Indoor bathroom	0.06 (0.02)**	0.17 (0.10)	-0.50 (0.40)	0.02 (0.01)+	-1.80 (0.9)*	354.29 (0.05)
Phone	0.03 (0.01)*	0.14 (0.08)**	0.52 (0.30)	0.03 (0.001)**	-4.20 (0.77)**	518.34 (0.04)
Car	0.03 (0.01)*	0.21 (0.08)*	0.12 (0.30)	0.002 (0.008)**	-2.30 (0.70)**	587.90 (0.04)
<i>Datsche</i>	0.08 (0.02)**	0.05 (0.05)	0.44 (0.33)	0.02 (0.009)*	-5.60 (0.90)**	441.16 (0.07)

<sup>a</sup>1=yes.

<sup>b</sup>Treiman scale.

<sup>c</sup>McFadden-R<sup>2</sup>.

Notes:  $n=483$ .

+ =  $p < 0.1$ , \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ .

Interaction terms of the number of persons in a household, political function and, education included in previous models were not significant.

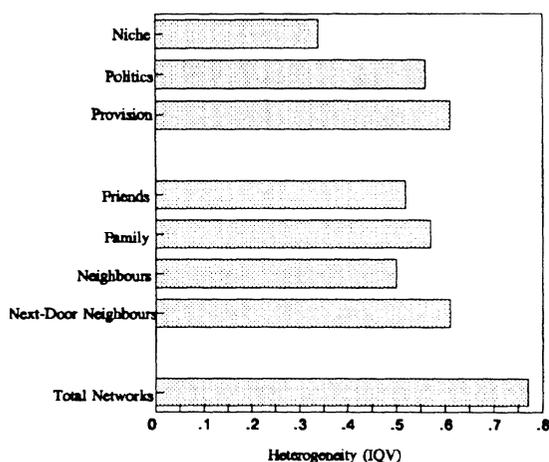
question whether the policy succeeded in creating a heterogeneous neighbourhood.

### The Social Composition of Neighbourhoods and Actual Relations between Neighbours

To investigate whether neighbourhoods were heterogeneous in their composition, we inquired into the occupational dissimilarity of pairs of next-door neighbours. About 83 per cent of our respondents knew the occupation of at least one of their next-door neighbours. Laumann (1966: 70) reports that about 78 per cent of his respondents were able to tell the occupation of their neighbours living next-door.

Figure 1 shows that neighbours living next-door were occupationally quite different from each other. The next step would have been to compare this fig-

ure with the comparable figure for pairs of next-door neighbours who actually interacted with each other, that is, who were members of the personal network. Yet, astonishingly, among the persons who were named in response to the 18 name-generating questions, our respondents named only three next-door neighbours. Thus, next-door neighbours were persons with whom one hardly interacted. This is a strong confirmation of our assumptions about the strong system-induced incentives for citizens in a communist society to avoid their next-door neighbours. As we turn our attention to neighbours in the network, they are seen to be occupationally much more similar to each other, as can be seen from the index of qualitative variation for relations between neighbourhood neighbours (Figure 1). We also established the index for qualitative variation for other types of social relations. It is significant that



**Figure 1.** Index for qualitative variation for different parts of the personal networks in the former GDR, 1989 (n = 489).

niches, the circles of close, trustworthy others, form the most homogeneous part of the networks. Next-door neighbours were about as occupationally dissimilar as the people who provided the respondent with goods that were in short supply.

Contacts within a neighbourhood in general did not add up to much, and this is in line with the opinion of the residents themselves (this analysis is not presented here). Kahl (1993) has already described the GDR as a society with typically bad relations between neighbours.

We compared the heterogeneity of next-door neighbours and network-neighbours while applying the index for qualitative variation not only for employment sector but also for the vocational training required and for the specific occupation. Table 5 shows that all differences between the pairs of IQVs are significant.

Next we compared our findings with the results of Laumann (1966). We recoded the occupations of neighbours in our data-set according to the coding scheme used in Laumann's study. The categories he used were: top professional business, semi-professional business, clerical small business, skilled, and semi-skilled/unskilled. Table 6 shows the occupational status of next-door neighbours by respondent's occupational status. Table 7 shows the same for the neighbours in the personal network.

The values on the diagonal of Table 6 show that next-door neighbours were not as often in the same

occupational category as the respondent as they were in Laumann's data (see 1966: 72). The percentage of neighbours with similar occupational status in the Laumann study exceeds our figures, especially in the higher and lower status groups. The exception here was 'skilled workers'. In total, 22 per cent of next-door neighbours were in the same occupational status category as the respondent (in the Laumann study the corresponding figure was 35 per cent).

A comparison of the values on the diagonals of Tables 6 and 7 shows that network-neighbours are in similar status categories slightly more often than next-door neighbours: the values on the diagonal of Table 7 are all higher than those in Table 6, with the exception of unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Of all neighbours in a personal network, 27 per cent had the same occupational status according to this coding.

We applied the so-called diagonalization ratio, a measure also used by Laumann, in order to compare our findings more precisely to Laumann's findings. The measure can be interpreted as the proportion of frequencies falling into the diagonal that is higher (or lower) than the frequency to be expected by chance.<sup>9</sup> The diagonalization ratio (Ratio D) is remarkable low for next-door neighbours, that is 0.02, and indicates that the proportion of next-door neighbours falling into the diagonal of the matrix is no higher than what one would expect by chance. This proportion is higher for neighbours in the network, that is 0.24. Ratio D for the neighbours in the network in the former GDR is even lower than its value for next-door neighbours in the Laumann study, i.e. 0.42, a result that is plausible if one takes into account that the 'supply' of persons within the neighbourhood that could be selected in a personal network was quite heterogeneous in the former GDR.

So, the Marxist élite in the GDR was obviously very successful in mixing the social composition of the neighbourhood, as well as indistributing housing of different quality equally. However, it totally failed in creating friendship between the classes. The fact that there is some interaction with neighbours further away in the neighbourhood and little friendship and hardly any interaction between next-door neighbours is a total reversal of the association of propinquity and interaction that is usually found in the West.

**Table 5.** Occupational heterogeneity of next-door neighbours and network neighbours in the GDR, 1989 (IQV)

	Next-door neighbours		Network neighbours		<i>p</i>
	mean	sd	mean	sd	
Occupation	0.63	(0.09)	0.55	(0.15)	0.03
Sector	0.61	(0.12)	0.50	(0.12)	0.02
Vocational training	0.55	(0.28)	0.45	(0.26)	0.01

<sup>a</sup>330 respondents.<sup>b</sup>80 respondents.**Table 6.** Occupational status of next-door-neighbours by occupational status of respondent in the GDR, 1989 (%)

Both next-door neighbours' occupational status	Respondent's occupational status					Total ( <i>n</i> )
	Top prof. business	Semi-prof. business	Clerical small bus.	Skilled	Semi- and unskilled	
Top professional business	10.0 ( <i>48.6</i> )	15.7	10.0	9.1	8.3	10.9 (45)
Semi-professional business	24.0	22.5 ( <i>26.6</i> )	26.2	20.0	19.4	22.2 (92)
Clerical small business	14.0	10.8	11.25 ( <i>23.0</i> )	9.1	15.3	11.6 (48)
Skilled worker	30.0	35.3	36.2	41.8 ( <i>19.0</i> )	43.1	37.9 (157)
Semi- & unskilled worker	22.0	15.7	16.2	20.0	13.9 ( <i>56.1</i> )	17.4 (72)
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>n</i>	50	102	80	110	72	414

Note: figures in italics refer to values in Laumann, 1966.

**Table 7.** Occupational status of network-neighbours by occupational status of respondent in the GDR, 1989 (%)

Neighbours' occupational status	Respondents occupational status					Total ( <i>n</i> )
	Top prof. business	Semi-prof. business	Clerical small bus.	Skilled	Semi- and unskilled	
Top prof. bus.	14.3	15.8	20.0	13.6	19.0	16.9 (15)
Semi-prof. bus.	14.3	36.8	0.0	13.6	23.8	118.0 (16)
Clerical small bus.	14.3	5.3	15.0	9.1	9.5	110.1 (9)
Skilled	42.9	21.1	45.0	50.0	38.1	139.3 (35)
Semi & unskilled	14.3	21.1	20.0	13.6	9.5	15.7 (14)
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0 (89)
<i>n</i>	7	19	20	22	21	

### Personal Networks in the Former GDR and Relations with Neighbours

How are 'neighbours' represented in the personal networks of citizens before the political upheaval? Table 8 compares the different role relations of the members of the ego-centred networks of our

respondents. The average size of the personal network before *die Wende* was little more than 11 people, which is remarkably small, given that we employed 18 name-generating questions. Fischer (1982) found an average network size of 18 people in California by using 10 name generators, and Busschbach (1996) reports 21-person networks for Dutch citizens,

using 20 name-generating questions. As Table 8 shows, the proportion of neighbours within the networks is low, compared to the 10 to 20 per cent which are found in Western industrial countries. In fact 84 per cent had no neighbours at all in their networks. On average, respondents had fewer than one neighbour in their personal networks, while in Western countries people usually have two or more neighbours in their network (based on a different, but comparable, set of name generators). Even if one accepts that people in cities often have somewhat fewer neighbours in their network, and that we do not have proper controls for the level of urbanism, the absolute and relative number of neighbours is still higher in urban areas in the West, even for metropolitan cores (Fischer, 1982: 100; Héran 1987).

In comparison with other network studies the proportion of work relationships is quite high and, apart from the proportion of neighbours, numbers for close and extended family members are also somewhat lower. For example, Busschbach (1996), who used a relatively large number of similar name-generating questions to study Dutch personal networks, found about 50 per cent close and extended family-members, 36 per cent friends, and 14 per cent colleagues, acquaintances, and neighbours.

### Functions of Ties to Neighbours

Figure 2 shows the kind of functions neighbours fulfilled for each other in the former GDR. Formerly, neighbours were particularly important for so-called instrumental support: doing odd jobs in and around one's house like small repairs (x-label no. 7), and providing goods (x-label no. 10). They were also important for providing company during leisure activities (x-label no. 12). Neighbours were most often mentioned in answer to the question whether there were persons the respondent did not trust (no. 13 of the name generators). Further, neighbours were seldom called upon to discuss personal problems (x-label no. 17), and political problems were seldom discussed with them (x-label no. 15). A fact that would appear to contradict our assumption that neighbours performed only instrumental functions is the finding that they also provided some political information (x-label no. 8). Although the themes of conversation between neighbours were politics and

family matters, they more often informed each other about political issues than actually *discussed* them with each other (nos. 15 and 16).

One gets an even better impression of the minor role played by neighbours in the GDR if one looks at what neighbours did for or with each other and compare this to what they did with or for others such as friends, family, co-workers, or acquaintances. Appendix 2 provides an answer to this question. As a positive asset neighbours were only slightly important in terms of instrumental help, and in providing company. There were hardly any neighbours in the core-networks of those with whom an individual discussed personal problems. In the niche networks of trustworthy friends with whom one dared discuss political questions in addition to personal problems, neighbours were extremely rarely mentioned. Neighbours were only prominent among those who were distrusted by or who distrusted the respondent. Incidentally, co-workers also loom large among those who were not trusted, as well as among those who did not trust the respondent.<sup>10</sup>

Fischer's research on networks among people in California lends us a perspective here, because he asked similar questions and presents his results in a similar way. Fischer (1982: 386), in describing who fulfils what function, reports that neighbours figure especially highly (47 per cent) among those who look after one's house when one is away from home. They also do a fair job in providing help in and around the house (10 per cent). Social time is also spent with neighbours (12 per cent) and hobbies are discussed with them (16 per cent). One would rarely call on one's neighbour if one needed to borrow money (3 per cent), but they do have a role in discussing personal problems (9 per cent) and in making decisions about work (4 per cent). Note that in the GDR there was not one neighbour with whom problems related to work were discussed. Fischer did ask about trust in the neighbourhood, but only in a very general manner and without reporting specific names.

Of course, the relationship to a particular person can have various functions or contents of interaction. The mean number of interaction contents of a relationship, the multiplexity in neighbour networks, was 1.8 (sd 3, range 1–4), for the time under communist rule. This value is not much lower than

Table 8. *The composition and size of personal networks in the GDR, 1989*

	Size	Partner/ Spouse <sup>a</sup>	Close Kin <sup>b</sup>	Distant Kin <sup>c</sup>	Friend	Work <sup>d</sup>	Acquaints.	Neighbour
Mean	11.2	0.66	2.66	0.8	2.95	2.74	1.14	0.25
sd	4.7	0.51	2.16	1.1	2.4	2.18	1.5	0.67
Median	11	1	2	0	2	1	2	0
Range	2–52	0–1	0–7	0–7	0–14	0–12	0–10	0–5
% of whole	—	5.9	23.8	7.1	26.3	24.5	10.2	2.2

Note:  $n=489$ .

<sup>a</sup>If only those persons who had a partner are included in the analysis, the mean for partner/spouse is 0.67.

<sup>b</sup>Close family members are parents, parents-in-law, brothers, sisters, and children.

<sup>c</sup>Distant family members are all other family members.

<sup>d</sup>Work relationships are colleagues, superiors, and subordinates: 66% of all work relations are colleagues.

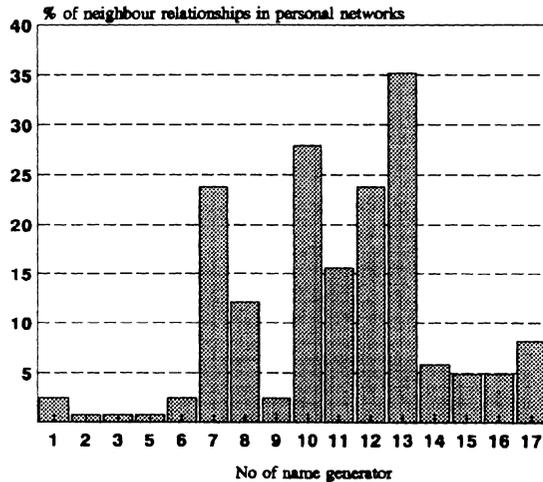


Figure 2. *Functions of relationships with neighbours in the former GDR: network data of 84 respondents (%); function no. 4 did not appear (for x-labels see Appendix 2).*

the average multiplexity of the whole network (2.2, sd .8).

In the GDR neighbours were only weakly connected to the respondent. The proportion of weak ties in neighbour networks before the political change was rather high (64 per cent weak, 12 per cent strong, 24 per cent medium). Since so many neighbours in the networks were persons who were not trusted, we investigated what multiplexity and tie-strength would look like if we included those who were trusted, or more precisely, were not named as 'not trusted'. Generally, about one third of neighbour ties were not regarded as trustworthy.<sup>11</sup> The strength of the ties to the 'trustworthy' neigh-

bours was not much higher: the ties to neighbours remained mostly weak (44 per cent weak, 38 per cent medium, 18 per cent strong). However, the multiplexity of ties to such neighbours was notably higher: the average increases to 2.9 if one excludes ties based on distrust.

Campbell and Lee (1992: 1087), in about the only existing study on multiplexity and strength of ties between neighbours, provide findings that can be usefully compared. They report that ties between neighbours in their Nashville sample have an average multiplexity of 1.3, when 9 name generators rather similar to ours were used. They also describe ties between neighbours as rather weak (on average 1.2 on a 4-point scale of closeness).

Thus we can conclude that, just as in the West, relationships with neighbours were used for a variety of purposes, although mainly for instrumental support and to a lesser extent for company. These ties were generally weak. A major difference is that neighbours play a far smaller part in the lives of GDR citizens, that they were kept out of the core-networks, and moreover they were very often seen as a liability. Far from being an asset, they were seen as posing a threat.

Up to this point, we have not established whether people in the GDR actually lacked various kinds of goods, and whether they had alternative ways of attaining them other than through informal channels. We have also yet to establish whether they felt controlled. Because of reasons of space we will not present all the data and the full analysis here (for more information see Völker, 1995: 159, 220). People reported that they lacked particular goods that could

not be obtained at the market, such as tools to repair things, fruit and vegetables, children clothes, shoes, electronic equipment, and furniture. Most of them also lacked other ways of obtaining these items and had to rely on the route of informal help. The black market, exquisite shops, West-Mark, or Forumchecks were hardly mentioned. Moreover, people also felt controlled in their living sphere, though even more so at work and during their education. Furthermore, the more neighbours people had in their network, the more controlled they felt.

In order to answer the question of whether ties to neighbours tend to be loaded with suspicion and distrust (concepts mentioned in an answer to name-generator no. 13, see Appendix 1) and what other relations are important in this respect, we computed a multi-level analysis.<sup>12</sup> The dependent variable was called 'distrust', indicating whether a certain relationship was mentioned as not trustworthy (coded 0 and 1). The analyses were computed using the VARCL program (Variance Component Analysis for Hierarchically Structured Data; see Longford, 1988). VARCL does not give the standard error of the variance components, only the standard *deviations* of these components. These standard errors are estimated by:

$$SE(\hat{\sigma}^2) = 2\sigma * SE(\hat{\sigma})$$

At the level of the alter we included variables referring to characteristics of the relationship between ego and alter, such as closeness, type of role relation, whether the tie involved a work relationship, whether the alter worked in the same domain as the respondent, and, of course, whether it involved a tie to a neighbour. At the level of alter we also included a characteristic of the alter, i.e. political function. Moreover, we also included sample and interactions between sample and important variables in the analyses to control for possible biases that might stem from using different samples. Table 9 shows the coefficients of the variables at the level of the ego (= the respondents) and the alter (= the relationship). Previous analyses (not shown here) had already indicated that other characteristics of ego and alter, like sex, or membership of the SED, were not significant in explaining distrust, so we left them out of the analyses presented here.

The improvement of Model 1a compared to the Intercept-only Model (not shown) is a difference in the variance of 671.65; it is highly significant. In Model 1b, a random parameter for 'neighbours' was added. When compared with Model 1a the improvement of Model 1b is significant: the difference in variance between the two models is 58.1.<sup>13</sup> The total reduction in variance is 729.75, which equals a proportional reduction in variance of 26.6 per cent (this proportional reduction in variance can be compared with McFadden-R<sup>2</sup> for logistic regression), so, roughly speaking, our model explains 26.6 per cent of the variance in distrust. Only about 5 per cent of this explained variance has to be attributed to differences between egos; the rest has to be attributed to differences between alters.

This analysis shows that neighbours and relationships at work are clearly associated with distrust (see Völker and Flap, 1995a for a more elaborate discussion of relationships with work-mates). We do not have comparative data on distrust between neighbours in the West, but we cannot think of a plausible argument as to why in the West relations between neighbours would be particularly loaded with distrust.

Weak ties also have a higher chance of being loaded with distrust. Moreover, having dissimilar occupations also increased the chance of distrust. Somewhat surprisingly, perhaps, there is no connection between political function and distrust. It turns out that, at the level of the respondents, a higher education promotes chances of distrust, a finding that is contrary to findings in the West that more educated and affluent people are more trusting (see Fischer, 1982: 245). Furthermore, the significant random effect indicates that, although on average neighbours are associated with distrust, there are significant differences between respondents with regard to distrust of neighbours. Table 9 shows in addition that the effect of 'neighbour' on the likelihood of distrust is higher than the effect of 'similarity of occupational domains'. The interaction between the two variables (not included in the model) was not significant. Being someone's neighbour is a more important characteristic for the explanation of 'distrust' than being socially different.

Are the people who had neighbours in their 1989 networks different from those who did not? We did not find any significant differences when we inquired into absolute or relative number of

**Table 9.** *Logistic random coefficient model on distrust relationships before the political change in the GDR, 1989*

Variables	Model 1a Coefficient (S.E.)	Model 1b Coefficient (S.E.)
Intercept	0.301	0.299
Alter/relationship		
Closeness	-0.07 (0.003)**	-0.6 (0.003)**
Friend	-0.05 (0.011)**	-0.05 (0.010)**
Work	0.08 (0.012)**	0.08 (0.012)**
Neighbour (network)	0.19 (0.032)**	0.21 (0.050)**
Similarity of work sector	-0.03 (0.012)*	-0.03 (0.012)*
Political function	0.02 (0.016)	0.02 (0.016)
Ego/respondent		
EDUCATION	0.08 (0.032)*	0.08 (0.032)*
POLITICAL FUNCTION	-0.02 (0.020)	-0.02 (0.020)
AGE	-0.04 (0.060)	-0.04 (0.060)
Control variables		
Sample	-0.01 (0.010)	-0.01 (0.011)
Sample*closeness	0.01 (0.007)	0.01 (0.007)
Sample*neighbour	0.03 (0.062)	0.03 (0.102)
Sample*size of network	0.01 (0.010)	0.01 (0.010)
Variance component estimates		
Random intercept variance (ego)	0.0042 (0.00089)	0.0040 (0.00088)
Random slope (neighbour)		0.10 (0.030)*
Cov (intercept, slope)		0.01 (0.005)
Variance	2074.63	2016.53

*Notes:* unstandardized coefficients based on 477 respondents and 4454 relationships.

For testing the null-hypothesis that a fixed parameter equals 0, a t-statistic is used with  $J-k-p-1$  degrees of freedom, where  $J$  is the number of level-one units,  $k$  the number of fixed parameters, and  $p$  the number of random parameters (see Snijders *et al.*, 1995).

\*= $p < 0.05$ , \*\*= $p < 0.01$ .

neighbours in a network, nor when we just simply focused on whether an individual did or did not have neighbours in the network. None of the differences which are commonly found between people of higher and lower income strata, men and women, married and unmarried could be replicated with our data. So, neither better educated people, those with more prestigious occupations, men, nor married people, had neighbour networks different from those of their counterparts. As already mentioned, the number of neighbours in the networks of the respondents in the sample is, however, correlated with the feeling of being controlled in the private sphere, indicating that contacts with neighbours stimulated feelings of being politically controlled.

People who had neighbours in their networks generally had significantly larger networks than those who had none (means are 12.7 and 10.9,  $t = -3.13$ ;  $p < 0.005$ ) and the absolute number of people who are important for instrumental support is somewhat higher if neighbours are present. This latter difference does not affect the relative number of persons providing help, however. To further test whether neighbours compensate for a lack of support from others, we counted the number of neighbours within the (instrumental) part of the network. Although the number of neighbours was higher if an individual had less friends, acquaintances, and relatives to provide instrumental help, this difference is not statistically significant. Thus we have to conclude

that neighbours do not substitute for a lack of instrumental support by others.

## Conclusion and Discussion

The major conclusion of our study on neighbours in the former GDR is that if socialist societies are not only considered as experiments in destratification but also in creating friendship among the classes, then the communist regime of the GDR was fairly successful in distributing quality housing equally between the classes, and in mixing social classes in the neighbourhood, but that it failed to create friendship between the classes. Important relations with next-door neighbours were practically non-existent, and ties to other persons within the neighbourhood were relatively rare, not intensive, and restricted to socially similar others. Communist housing policy, in fact, failed to decrease the social distance between neighbours and to create a more open society.

The success and failure of GDR housing policy becomes more obvious if we compare our research to what is known from research on neighbours in democratic industrial societies. In these societies quality housing is more or less unequally distributed among the classes, and there is social segregation of neighbourhoods. However, there is also rather extensive interaction among neighbours, and this is most intensive between next-door neighbours. Moreover, neighbours are not blocked out of each other's intimate networks, and class is not of overriding importance in deciding with whom to interact.

Obviously in a one-party state with a command economy, a regime can determine the composition of a neighbourhood, but it cannot force neighbours to interact and like each other. Why did the regime not succeed in actually levelling out social differences in everyday social interaction, and in realizing a convivium of comrades? We understand these phenomena as the unintended consequences of the Marxist belief system, the Leninist one-party system, and the ensuing and all-encompassing political control<sup>14</sup> (see Reve, 1969). People knew about this control. Because of the far-reaching consequences that allegations of being a class-enemy or of being merely a less-than-eager comrade would

cause, and because it was far from clear who were the unofficial informants of the Stasi, this control constantly forced people to consider whether others were to be trusted. The risk of being denounced was greater if strangers were concerned, especially dissimilar others or people forced on one by circumstances, such as neighbours and workmates. Neighbours are a special case: because of propinquity they have access to the private sphere of those who live next-door. A major finding of our study corroborates this argument: ties with neighbours and with socially dissimilar others had a greater chance of being loaded with distrust.

In the case of communist societies our investment theory of social relations as social capital has to be augmented with an auxiliary assumption about the influence of risk of loss through misplaced trust. People invest in others with an eye to the present value of future help from others in achieving well-being and social approval, while taking into account the possible dangers of losing everything through misplaced trust in such people as neighbours, and especially next-door neighbours. So, these choices or non-choices among neighbours can be understood as a way of dealing with the problem of whom to trust. Not only were neighbours generally avoided and contacts with them kept to a minimum, they were consequently excluded from core networks and used only in instrumental dealings. Neighbours did not act as substitutes, if someone had a network with less support from others. Moreover contacts within the neighbourhood were restricted to instrumental dealings with similar others. A telling result in this respect is that neighbours sometimes provided each other with information on politics but they hardly ever expressed their political opinions or discussed politics. Next-door neighbours were not even activated for instrumental support.

Our results are in line with other studies on relationships among members of work collectives in the GDR, which also demonstrated the lack of contact between higher and lower ranks (Erbe, 1982). Moreover, recruitment to the élite became heavily dependent on class membership after an initial period of greater social openness (Geißler, 1992). Perhaps there was more friendship between classes during earlier days of the communist regime. Our finding of a sizeable social distance between

neighbours in the latter days of the regime and that this was related to class is in line with the argument and evidence presented by Mayer and Solga (1994). They demonstrate the growing closure of the higher social strata in the GDR: the old communist élite increasingly blocked upward mobility during the forty-year life-span of the GDR.

Finally, two general conclusions on meeting and mating. First, our research demonstrates that the opportunities for meeting certain persons is not able to explain mating in high-risk situations very well (see Blau and Schwartz, 1984). In societies with a Leninist one-party state, with no separation of powers, and with a command economy, distrust has a devastating effect on social relations in everyday life, probably because damage will be high if trust turns out to be misplaced.<sup>15</sup> Secondly, we think our paper shows that the idea of social networks as social capital is useful in explaining why meeting sometimes does not lead to mating. Our assumption that ties come about because people invest in other people and take into account the present value of future support, enables us to understand why the political control exercised by the communist regime was counter-productive and why meeting did not lead to mating. It counteracted the possible integrative effect of a more socially mixed neighbourhood, because people invested very selectively in their relations with others in their neighbourhood in order to minimize the political risk associated with dealings with dissimilar others from which one could not escape.

## Notes

1. On 20 Sept. 1990 the last GDR Minister of the Interior, Peter-Michael Diestel, gave orders that all *Hausbücher* should be gathered together at the local places of registration and shredded (Herbst et al., 1994: 395).
2. Miller McPherson, and Smith-Lovin (1987) in their study on the status homophily of friendship relations among members of voluntary associations come closest to an ideal design to study meeting and mating. Their study demonstrates the overwhelming influence of group composition, that is meeting or, as they call it, induced homophily, on friendship choices. Homophily of friendship within voluntary organizations, because of free choice, is almost insignificant.
3. Diewald (1995) conducted a study on personal relationships and informal support in the former GDR. He found that neighbours helped in the attainment of items in short supply, but that they are not really important in an individual's personal network. Diewald's data are somewhat limited for our purpose because they do not contain information on individual network members but only on whether certain categories of persons like friends, parents or, for that matter, neighbours, were important in providing a particular kind of support (Diewald, 1995: 233).
4. In communist societies people can often circumvent the aim of central housing policy, as politicians and bureaucrats use their discretionary power in the allocation of goods and services as an instrument to make a profit for themselves, e.g. by engaging in corruption and political patronage. If this is the case citizens might offer their support in exchange for permission to live in a certain place, to get a house more quickly, or to attain better housing. In many communist societies the distribution of housing is part and parcel of a patronage system (Panev, 1983; Eisenstadt and Roninger, 1984: 187; Walder, 1986; Logan and Bian, 1993).
5. We want to discover which of people's interests are served by having certain networks, and how these interests are determined by societal institutions. Since social networks are a means to the ultimate end of improving one's life chances, people have an interest in building and defending these networks. And often this value of particular social networks as a resource is based on the presence of particular societal institutions. Lindenberg (1989), while presenting the argument in a more general form, introduced some useful distinctions. He calls goods or resources (e.g. particular networks) that are instrumental in achieving this ultimate goal 'instrumental goals'. Whenever the instrumentality of a certain good or resource (e.g. a particular network) in achieving the ultimate goal is largely created by certain institutional conditions, he calls this package a 'social production function'. One implication of this is, *inter alia*, that people have an interest in defending the institutions that guarantee or promote their life chances.
6. Respondents could choose among fourteen role-categories and in principle they were free to opt for more than one category (e.g. 'friend' and 'neighbour'). It turned out, however, that our respondents selected their network members nicely into only one of these categories, and we did not need to employ any kind of recoding, e.g. like the hierarchical recoding procedure employed by Fischer (1982: 40–1). Perhaps there

is some underestimation of the number of neighbours because it is possible that friends, family, and co-workers do live in the neighbourhood, but are not named as neighbours.

7. It might be plausible to argue that age effects are due to the increase of family size or the number of persons in one's household generally. The correlation between age and the number of persons in a household is, however, not significant (Pearson's  $R = 0.033$ ).
8. Although our study was not specifically designed to answer the question on patronage, we did not find much evidence in the GDR of houses being handed out to loyal clients. Moreover, having a political function did not produce better housing. Of course, being a member of the nomenclature in the GDR guaranteed a better way of life, including better living arrangements, but this was not as sumptuous as in the USSR (see Voslensky, 1980). There probably were not many people from the nomenclature in our representative sample.
9. The diagonalization ratio is calculated as follows (see Laumann, 1966: 81):

$$Ratio_d = \frac{\sum (X_0 - X_e)}{\sum X_0}$$

where  $X_0$  is the observed frequency in diagonal cell 0 and  $X_e$  is the expected frequency in that cell.

10. Diewald's results are consistent with ours. He also finds that neighbours played only a minor role in personal networks in the former GDR, and in addition that co-workers had a relatively important part in solving usual everyday problems (cf. Diewald, 1995: 237). However, Diewald did not ask for names. If names of persons who were not trusted are asked for, co-workers are most prominent, and neighbours are next most prominent.
11. A criticism of our study might be that our findings are influenced by the transition. But if people saw things coming and adapted their networks in advance, our positive findings on the effects of *die Wende* are even stronger. However, it has been argued and shown empirically that the transition was not anticipated by the majority of GDR citizens (see e.g. Keiser and Lindner, 1991 for the younger generation). Another possible bias that might be suggested is that the public debate about the Stasi and its activities gave people more information about who had been trustworthy and who had not been trustworthy. But

then again, the transition should also have had a negative influence on respondents' opinions of other types of persons and not only neighbours (cf. Lipset and Bence, 1994). One could even argue the opposite: nowadays people feel more free to talk about people they did not trust because these persons can no longer harm them. This leads to the conclusion that retrospective data might be more reliable.

12. The data were aggregated to the level of the respondents, which means that not all available information on the relationships between respondents (ego) and their network members (alters) and on the characteristics of the alters is used. All relational data and characteristics of alters are reported by the respondents and one cannot assume that these relationships can be treated as statistically (and theoretically) independent from each other. The mutual dependence of relationships within a personal network would, strictly speaking, forbid the use of OLS methods on all relational data. In addition, if we want to investigate the functions of relationships the dependent variable is at the level of the relationship. Multi-level modelling enables us to take the nested structure of the network data (the alters are 'nested' within the ego) into account (see e.g. DiPrete and Forristal, 1994; Snijders *et al.*, 1995). The main advantage of applying hierarchical linear modelling in the analysis of personal networks is that it allows for the case that for each respondent the regression equation of X on Y may be different, that is, random. The intercept as well as the regression coefficient are dependent on the respondent.
13. Under the null hypotheses that the models are not different, the difference in variance is chi-square distributed (with  $n$  df).
14. One should make finer distinctions between types of ideology within democratic states (cf. Ultee, Arts, and Flap, 1992). E.g. it has been said of the Netherlands that it is a relatively cohesive society, knowing no sharp class divisions, nor, although there is an ongoing influx of immigrants, any large ethnic segregation, because the government and local authorities often worked to counteract such tendencies by specific zoning policies and a welfare system that provides subsidies to those whose income does not allow them to pay for a house with a high rent but who, with a subsidy, are still able to live in houses in more expensive neighbourhoods.
15. Lindenberg (1993) presents an argument on how behavioural alternatives might be differently framed because of the risk of losing something valuable. In such situations loss-avoidance will become the main goal and will dominate all other goals, including those associated with attaining physical well-being and social approval.

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## Appendix 1

### The Network Delineation Instrument

People were encouraged to mention 5 persons, although it was possible to mention more.

1. Did anybody help you to get the job you had before *die Wende*?
2. With whom did you discuss important matters related to work?
3. With whom did you discuss problems related to your work?
4. Who did you ask for advice with respect to your career?
5. Did you know anybody who did not want you to be successful and who would definitely not have helped you to be successful?
6. Did anybody help you to find your apartment/house?
7. If you had to fix or to repair something, to move your furniture, or to paper your walls who did you ask for help?
8. Who was important to you in getting political information?
9. For whom have you been important in providing political information?
10. Did anybody help you to obtain scarce goods or services?
11. Did you help anybody to obtain scarce goods or services?
12. With whom did you spend your leisure time?
13. Was there anybody whom you did not trust?
14. Was there anybody who did not trust you?
15. With whom did you discuss political opinions and events?
16. For whom have you been an important discussion partner concerning political opinions and events?
17. With whom did you discuss important personal matters?
18. We have already mentioned a lot of people, is there anybody left who should be included in your network but is important for any area of life which we have not talked about?

## Appendix 2

**Table A2.** Personal networks of East German citizens before the political changes: role relationships of network members mentioned by each name-generating question (%) and total network

Role	Name generating Question No.																	Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
Partner	8	14	15	9	3	8	17	10	10	5	5	8	1		11	10	23	6
Parents	11	6	6	3		13	9	9	7	8	10	4			7	9	15	9
Children	1	3	2	1		1	9	2	2	3	3	7		1	5	5	10	6
Siblings	4	2	2	4	1	4	6	6	6	6	8	5	1		5	5	5	6
Other Kin	9	1	1	1	1	4	11	5	3	9	6	6	6	3	6	7	3	7
Coworker	40	52	53	70	90	28	5	25	24	25	16	6	66	76	19	17	10	25
Neighbour	1				1	2	3	1	1	3	4	2	10	6	1		1	2
Acquaints.	13	5	2	3	2	27	8	6	5	13	13	8	13	8	6	5	27	10
Friends	12	16	17	8	4	7	26	33	39	24	33	52	2	3	38	39	26	26
Other	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Av. no.	1.6	2.7	2.1	1.5	1.4	1.2	2.3	2.5	2.5	3.2	2.6	4	1.8	1.6	4.4	3.4	3.4	11.2

Notes: Work relationships are colleagues, superiors, and subordinates: 66% of all work relations are colleagues.  
*n*=489.

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