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Transformation Research and the Longue Durée of 1989: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Data¹

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18778/1733-8069.15.1.05>

Abstract In recent years, historians have increasingly looked at social science data in their search for sources to study the transformation period. Researchers hope that a secondary analysis of this data will expand the existing sources. This expansion promises new perspectives, while simultaneously bringing new methodological challenges to the discipline. This article deals with both: 1. It uses a history of knowledge approach to evaluate the topics and tools of transformation research. It also argues that social scientists were not only producers of knowledge but historical actors in the restructuring of the institutions of social sciences in East Germany after 1989/90. 2. With the German Socio-Economic Panel and especially the Saxonian Longitudinal Study as an example, the article refers to the content of the studies itself – in this case, the East German school as a site of life-worlds in upheaval. It concludes that the encounter of social scientists and historians is very fruitful for historians interested in the interaction of system change and everyday life. That is, the secondary analysis of qualitative and quantitative social science data compliments ‘classical’ sources of historical research by providing insights into memories and experiences at different times in the historical process.

Keywords transformation, contemporary history, secondary analysis, history of knowledge, East Germany, school/education, panel studies

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In the early 1990s, social scientists analyzed the political and social transformation of East Germany. They were aware that they were not in a position to reach a final conclusion; rather, they assumed historians would do so in 40 or 50 years' time – as Hans Bertram, head of a prominent commission, stated in 1996 (Bertram 1996:XVII).² And his assumption was correct: In recent years, historians have increasingly looked at the 1990s, and the social science data produced at that time plays an important role in their search for historical sources to study the transformation period. Historians hope secondary analysis of this data will expand the existing sources. This expansion promises new perspectives, while simultaneously bringing new methodological challenges to the discipline (Medjedović 2014). Current historical research into the transformation period largely aims to examine the 1989/91 period of upheaval in the context of the preceding and subsequent developments, as well as in its long-term consequences (Ther 2014). Along with extending the period of inquiry, there is an extension of the sources.

Within this essay, and on the basis of the current state of transformation research described in the first part, we wish to explore the potential of the secondary analysis of social science data for historians. In the second part of the essay, we introduce

two examples from our current research:³ the German Socio-Economic Panel and the Saxonian Longitudinal Study. After a short history of the topics and tools of these two studies, we engage with the actors involved in social science transformation research, who are examined more closely in part four of the essay. Next, we discuss the question of representativity by looking at the way the two studies deal with it and by looking at it from a historian's perspective. After the engagement with the history of knowledge, we turn to the actual content of one of the studies. How can the Saxonian Longitudinal Study be used for a secondary analysis on a qualitative and a quantitative level? The final section concludes with some remarks on the encounter of social scientists and contemporary historians.

Social Science Data and Contemporary History: An Encounter

Historians interested in transformation research have to deal with an established division of labour that – in the case of the revolutions that ended the Cold War – limits what they study: Whereas the time before 1989 and the upheavals themselves are usually considered to be within the realm of historical research, the period after 1989 has lain in the hands of social scientists and has only recently attracted the attention of historians. Social scientists have been the main producers of knowledge about

¹ We would like to thank Piotr Filipowski for his intense discussions and for inviting us to Warsaw to present our findings at the conference 'Revisits and Reinterpretations of Qualitative Sociological Data' (2017). In addition, thanks go to the organizers of the conference, to the anonymous reviewers, to Maren Francke and Annalisa Martin for proof-reading, and to Clemens Villinger and Anja Schröter for discussions.

² Hans Bertram was head of the Commission for Research on Social and Political Change in the New Federal States (Kommission für die Erforschung des sozialen und politischen Wandels in den neuen Bundesländern e.V. KSPW).

³ The article was written as part of the research group "The Longue Durée of 1989/90. Regime Change and Everyday Life in East Germany before, during and after 1989" that is led by Kerstin Brückweh, funded by the Leibniz Association (2016-2020) and based at the Centre for Contemporary History, Potsdam, Germany. The themes of residential property, consumption, political culture and school form the basis of which segments of the daily life-worlds (Schütz and Luckmann 2003 [1975]) are examined in a long-term perspective.

the 1990s: knowledge stored in books, journal articles, and other academic output that is now source material for historians. In the case of transformation history, Paul F. Lazarsfeld's thoughts on the general obligations of the pollster to future historians brought up in 1950 proved to be a correct prediction (Lazarsfeld 1950). The US-based sociologist pointed out that whatever the pollster "considers worthy of a survey will, in later years, influence the range of possible historical inquiries" (Lazarsfeld 1950:625). In the case of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), social scientists produced a huge amount of qualitative and quantitative data, be it by ethnologists, sociologists, economists, psychologists, and so forth, that can be used as a vibrant source for historical transformation research.

However, if we accept that this transformation research data provides an important source for historians, then we must address the methodological challenges that go beyond the more 'traditional' source analysis that historians face with data like this (Brückweh 2017a). This begins with the acquisition of additional knowledge of methods and theories of empirical social science research and ends with the acquisition of fundamental statistics skills – something that is rarely covered in historical training at German universities nowadays. First, however, we are faced with the fundamental question: what brings historians to the social science archives (Pleinen and Raphael 2014)? Within the German scientific community, Rüdiger Graf and Kim Christian Priemel spoke out in 2011 against the frivolous adoption of social scientific interpretations in contemporary history (Graf and Priemel 2011; previously remarked upon by Benjamin Zie-

mann in discussions and, in 2012, in written form: Ziemann 2012). Both argued that archive-based source work as a historical-critical method remains the core work of contemporary historians, who as authors of a "pre-history of the present-day problems" (Hockerts 1993:124) draw on differing theoretical frameworks. This often leads to the hasty application of historically contingent terms and theories from the social sciences. Instead, it should be the central duty of historians to "reflect upon the role played by social science analyses in constituting reality, and to read them as a source, and not as representation" (Graf and Priemel 2011:507). Jenny Pleinen and Lutz Raphael reacted with reference to the necessity, through appropriate methodological knowledge, of reflecting on the entire production chain of this research as a continual process of construction with the help of concepts and theories (Pleinen and Raphael 2014:176). It is not just the sociological research practice itself that is made a subject; rather, it is further necessary to re-read and interpret the answers and reactions of social scientists (Pleinen and Raphael 2014:193). They combine this with the demand for the use of social science data as sources for historical analysis. However, the use of this data as sources for contemporary history is not possible without the prior systematic preparation and critical indexing of those primary data sources (Raphael and Wagner 2015).

It is currently possible to identify five positions in approaches to (quantitative) social science data in contemporary history (Brückweh and Villinger 2017:485-6). The first position, following on from discussions on the relationship between history

and social science data and concepts, sees historians no longer integrate statistics and surveys in their own work. That is to say that they prefer qualitative sources over quantitative sources. Secondly, there are those historians who simply continue as they did, before the discussions on the relationship between the disciplines. A third position is represented by those researchers who situate their work in the history of knowledge and fully dedicate their study to the deconstruction of data sets and their production, and so explicitly make this a discussion, without venturing into the contents of the data sets. Representatives of the fourth approach argue that this deconstruction work has always been necessary, but that it falls under 'normal' source criticism. Statistics and surveys are analyzed as sources before their content is evaluated or they are used as a basis for one's own calculations. The fifth position is held by those historians who go beyond this – often as part of interdisciplinary work with social scientists – to approach the context of the data's production from a history of knowledge approach, to then use new or expanded methodological procedures in order to use social science data for historical analysis. As historians of the long history of 1989, we wish to argue for this last approach and to thus argue for a critical source-based approach to social science data inspired by the history of knowledge.

This seems to be necessary because social scientists themselves – or at least some of them – stress that they did not produce 'raw data' or 'objective' information (Raphael and Wagner 2015). Instead, they followed their own research and personal agendas, making decisions about methods, theories, staff, and cooperation partners. All this had consequenc-

es for the knowledge they produced and thus may also have consequences for historians' analyses and narratives. Transformation research (and the field of contemporary history in general) is concerned with a period in which the social sciences became a prominent force for interpreting society. As historians, we are interested in the images and interpretations of the world inherent in the knowledge produced by social scientists, including in the tools and methods they used. We do not wish to control or judge what has been produced by social scientists in recent times, but rather we are interested in questions about how the knowledge was produced, how it circulated among various historical actors, and how power and knowledge interact within specific fields of inquiry (Lässig 2016; Sarasin 2011). A good example to illustrate this is the term 'transformation research' itself. It had no clear status in the social-scientific repertoire before 1989 but instead was used as a catch-all term in a variety of academic disciplines for changes of all kinds (Sandschneider 1995; Kollmorgen, Merkel and Wagener 2015). This was not only due to specific circumstances in countries such as Germany but was similarly observed (and contested) in the much more internationally-oriented field of anthropology, whose Western representatives had taken an interest in communist regimes even before the revolutions of 1989/91 (for a glimpse at the underlying issues within the discipline of anthropology: Thelen 2011; Dunn and Verdery 2011). From the 1990s onwards, the term became closely associated with the end of the Cold War and the developments thereafter. Historians today can use the term 'transformation' with reference to a period of accelerated, radical, sudden, and extensive change in the political, economic, and social system (Ther 2014: 28). In the case of the upheavals of

1989/91, this period is not restricted to the actual revolution but it also includes at least the previous decade (so-called late socialism, Kotkin 2009; Yurchak 2006; Segert 2002) and a decade after that. When the period of transformation begins and ends in historical accounts depends very much on the specific topic, however. The history of knowledge of transformation research is a huge task that may easily need so much effort and time that the original question gets lost. We, therefore, decided to take a pragmatic approach and to limit the number of studies, working on this in-depth and also in close interdisciplinary co-operation.

Two Examples of Transformation Research: The Saxonian Longitudinal Study (SLS) and the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP)

In choosing the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) and the Saxonian Longitudinal Study (SLS), we refer to two long-term panel studies which have gathered statistical data on households and individuals in East Germany, in the case of the SLS since 1987 and in the case of the SOEP since 1990. While the SOEP was established in West Germany in 1984 and is one of the major quantitative studies on Germans, the Saxonian Longitudinal Study has its roots in GDR empirical research, with a special focus on education. Both studies include data over the *longue durée* of 1989 and offer information such as living situations, income, jobs, political attitudes, education, health, and other, sometimes changing topics. They are particularly suited to research on East German society before, during and after 1989/90, as they approach the field of life-worlds and everyday life

during the system change. A basic premise for the secondary usage of this data is the willingness of those who generated the data to provide historians with access to the data, to background information and the original questionnaires. This is necessary for the fruitful linkage of social sciences and history, and the further development of their specific methodological and formal demands.⁴

Whereas the SOEP is primarily used in this essay as a reference point, the focus shall be placed on the SLS and the research project 'The East German School as a Site of Life-worlds in Upheaval.' In this project, memories of the upheaval in the school life-world are determined through a range of varying sources. The examination rests on three case studies, which are formed on the basis of archival sources, oral history interviews (with former pupils, their parents and teachers) and the SLS data. Central to the study is the question of the alternating conditions of system change and life-worlds, or more accurately: of the structure of the educational system and local actors. What kind of experiences, forms of knowledge and practices determined how the system change was processed and how did they influence the appropriation of teachers, pupils and their parents in the actual schools? By combining the results from the case studies with the secondary analysis of the SLS, a combination of micro and macro levels, and therefore of system and life-worlds, becomes possible.

The teenagers who first took part in the SLS in 1987 experienced the system change from the GDR

⁴ Gert G. Wagner (SOEP), Hendrik Berth and Yve Stöbel-Richter (SLS) are partners for our research project 'The *Longue Durée* of 1989'.

to the Federal Republic while in school or in their vocational training, and so they experienced the change from comprehensive schooling to the federal three-level school system. They belong to the age cohort of the so-called “Wendekinder” or “Children of Upheaval” (Schellhorn 2004), who had to adapt to two different societal and educational systems (Hacker et al. 2012; Gerland 2016). Personal experiences during the system change have, up to now, been described largely from memory and then analyzed academically. The SLS data instead offers direct access to experiences of the serious and accelerated change of system and life-worlds in East Germany, not only from today’s perspective but over a long and continuous period. Both the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the study are used as historical sources. The SLS data includes information about the life-worlds of those who took part, their worries and fears, but also their conflicts and hopes concerning their changed educational opportunities due to the upheaval.

We argue that a critical study of social science data requires a sufficient history of knowledge of the study to historically contextualize the impact of the research parameters, methods and questions on data production and results. However, what does cultivating a historically-critical approach to the data mean? This question is clarified on the example of transformation research, more specifically, on the genesis of the SLS and the SOEP.

Knowledge Production: Topics and Tools

The history of the SLS in two political systems shows particularly clearly what impact the circum-

stances under which researchers produced their knowledge had – and have – on the survey methods and the dissemination of results.⁵ The SLS was developed by the Central Institute for Youth Research (Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung – ZiJ) in Leipzig. The ZiJ itself was founded in 1966 and aimed to examine problems in the fields of education and youth resulting from the installation of socialism (Reinecke 2010:317). The Saxonian Longitudinal Study was to be organized as a panel study asking after, amongst other topics, teenagers’ identification with the GDR political system, their interest in politics as well as their involvement in school and their career plans (Berth et al. 2012:16). The studies of the ZiJ needed first to be accepted by the Central Council of the Free German Youth (Freie Deutsche Jugend – FDJ) and, before a study was carried out, the questionnaires had to undergo a complex authorization process including various official steps (Reinecke 2010:318). Questions that suggested a critical attitude towards the system tended not to be authorized. One way of circumventing this was the development of open questions, for “the central council of the FDJ could hardly object against relatively harmless sounding questions, such as ‘what do you currently like and dislike about the GDR?’ or ‘what moves you when you think of the current development of the GDR?’” (Förster 1999a:76). Thus, the narrow ideological framework imposed restrictions on the research, but it also led to the development of the survey. In addition, social scientists in

⁵ Publications on the foundation and contents of the Saxonian Longitudinal Study already exist; they are published by protagonists of the SLS (Friedrich et al. 1999). In addition to this published information, we have gathered further background information through conversations with Hendrik Berth and Yves Stöbel-Richter.

the GDR had incredibly restricted opportunities to publicize their results (Reinecke 2010:319). The data of the SLS did offer knowledge about society and evidenced a distancing of the younger generation from the political system (Reinecke 2010:319). However, this knowledge was kept hidden and only sporadically passed on to the Politburo or the Central Council of the FDJ. The insights of social scientists were given little attention by politicians from the 1980s onwards. Far more typically, they focussed on other ways of gathering information about society, such as the reporting system of the Ministry for State Security (Reinecke 2010:321-2).

Furthermore, with regards to the method of data collection, the circumstances of the SLS interviews are noteworthy. In the years 1987 to 1989, the teenagers received questionnaires to be completed in a classroom setting. The researchers were present, while teachers were asked to leave the room. The respondents were assured that the data would be used anonymously. The mostly open and often critical answers indicate that the pupils did not tend to formulate reserved or conformist answers.⁶ In order to historically locate these findings, the interviewees of the research project 'The East German School as a Site of Life-worlds in Upheaval' (who were themselves not participants in the SLS) were shown the open SLS questions from the years 1987 to 1995 and asked at the end of the oral history interviews to imagine themselves back in that time. The interview partners first asked about the exact situation they were to imagine. Dependent on this, they decided on sincere answers, which did not conform to the

⁶ cf. questionnaire SLS 1989 and 1990, question 3: "What bothers you the most concerning the GDR?"

regime. In the results, these retrospective answers from the interview partners overlapped in part with the original answers from the questionnaires. Taking these special requirements into consideration is part of the necessary source criticism when using social science data as a historian.

The research conditions changed with the political upheaval of 1989/1990. As the respondents had finished their polytechnic schooling (at the Polytechnische Oberschule, POS)⁷ in the summer of 1989, it proved difficult to find the participants and to encourage their continued involvement in the study. Although the researchers no longer had to abide by any ideological restrictions, the disbandment of the ZfJ led to the collapse of the research infrastructure and the loss of jobs for the East German researchers (Bertram and Kollmorgen 2001). Only a few continued to be employed through temporary project jobs at the Deutsches Jugendinstitut with its headquarters in Munich. One of these exceptions was Peter Förster. He then applied for funding with the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation) to continue the Saxonian Longitudinal Study. He moved the focus of the study to the developments teenagers underwent on their journey from being GDR citizens to becoming citizens of the Federal Republic. He kept the open questions at the end of the questionnaires while adding further aspects, such as attitudes to the Federal German system in comparison with the GDR, or questions as to negative feelings regarding the changing society. The

⁷ Polytechnic schools were established in the GDR to educate students from grade one to ten with the focus on bringing up 'socialist personalities' and with a focus on engineering and practical education in the school subjects.

fundamental parameters of the study changed with the political upheaval of 1989/1990: the research conditions, the topics of the questions and the accompanying survey faced new possibilities but also new restrictions. The questionnaires were now sent to the respondents via mail, and have, since 2010, been computer-assisted. The year 2007 saw a renewed break, through Peter Förster's departure, with Yve Stöbel-Richter, Hendrik Berth and Elmar Brähler taking over responsibility.⁸ They used the change to shift the research focus due to the developments in the lives of the participants, but also due to their own research interests in the field of medical psychology. Since then, the relationship between unemployment and health has been the focus of the Saxonian Longitudinal Study (Berth et al. 2006).

The West German social scientists who had carried out the SOEP in the territories of the Federal Republic since 1984 also argued for the need to adapt the SOEP to new circumstances with the opening of the GDR in autumn of 1989. West German social scientists had not predicted the upheaval in East Germany. Until 1989, their research and data collection interests had lain primarily in West Germany; thus the social scientists, who had rarely looked eastwards, were caught off guard by the end of the Cold War (Mayntz 1994). This changed with the opening of the GDR in autumn of 1989. East German households were integrated into the SOEP in 1990 with a special questionnaire for East Germany. In order to do this, they cooperated with East German social scientists and interview teams. It remained without question, however, that the long-term goal was the

⁸ The scientists involved in the SLS today are psychologists and physicians.

assimilation of the East into the West German questionnaires. The succinctly described "Abweichung Ost" ("Anomaly East")⁹ was quickly integrated: by 1996 there were already no longer separate questionnaires for East and West. In a way, the methods determined the speed of unification; there was no content-driven reason for questionnaires for East and West to be combined, rather it was stated that the number of surveys would no longer be supported. While the historical actors of the SOEP had a strong interest in a unified Germany, the protagonists of the SLS remained focussed on East Germans.

Knowledge Production: Social Scientists as Historical Actors

Topics and tools were only two parts of the knowledge production. Social scientists from East and especially West Germany also influenced the institutional structure of the discipline and thus the knowledge that was produced. While the end of the GDR opened new possibilities for research and jobs for West German sociologists, East German sociologists had to face substantial difficulties: The underlying suspicion that they had supported the GDR system through their research and, in cases of doubt, that they had eventually subordinated methodological innovation and existing facts, was particularly addressed to social scientists. The ZiJ, for example, was disbanded as early as 1990, particularly due to its proximity to the Central Council of the FDJ, whose first secretaries had included central protagonists of

⁹ Infratest Sozialforschung. 1995. "SOEP 1995: Erhebungsinstrumente 1995 (Welle 12/West und Welle 6/Ost und Zuwanderer D1) des Sozio-oekonomischen Panels." SOEP Survey Papers 92. Reprint 2012. München. Retrieved January 10, 2019 (http://panel.gsoep.de/soep-docs/surveypapers/diw_ssp0092.pdf).

the GDR regime such as Erich Honecker and Egon Krenz. Peter Förster and Walter Friedrich (the former head of the ZIJ) dispute suspicions of the ZIJ's proximity to the state (Friedrich et al. 1999). They do not negate the GDR-specific work circumstances and criticize the ZIJ studies being held back from publication in the GDR. However, they see in the ZIJ primarily a research institution of international standing (Friedrich et al. 1999). They stress that the circumstances regarding the production of critical empirical work in the GDR had been restrictive, but they had used niches cleverly and had, through a wealth of methodological knowledge, carried out internationally-competitive research. And after all, East German sociologists had been less surprised than their West German counterparts about the societal upheaval in the GDR. From the eighties onwards, the East German researchers had empirically documented societal change and in particular the distancing of teenagers to the state (Förster 1999a; Reinecke 2010). It seems likely that the approximately 50 employees had strong feelings about the fact that their institute was disbanded at the end of 1990 and remodeled by West German researchers into an offshoot of the Deutsches Jugendinstitut in Munich.

The long-term repercussions and processes in the remodeling of the academic landscape after 1990 have not been researched so far. A historical-critical examination of the interlacing of eastern and western academic landscapes after 1990 remains a research question to be answered. Specific to Germany was the dual capacity of West German scientists. On the one hand, they were interested in studying the phenomenon of upheaval and its consequences. They came with a mixture of scientific curiosity, personal

motives and funding possibilities (Mayntz 1994). At the same time, they were involved in transforming the academic system of social sciences in the former GDR. Take, for example, the Commission for Research on Social and Political Change in the New Federal States (KSPW), which was constituted for three major purposes: to study social and political change in the former GDR and to enhance research on these topics; in doing so, to provide an empirical and theoretical foundation for policy recommendations; and to cooperate with social scientists in the so-called new federal states as well as to support young scholars there (Bertram 1996). By the time the KSPW ended its work in 1996, when its governmental funding ended, its members and other scientists had amassed a huge corpus of material, produced a wide-ranging body of knowledge, and contributed to the transformation of the field and discipline of social sciences in the former GDR (Weingarz 2003).

A Representative Role Model: Linking SOEP and SLS

Power struggles within the disciplines of social sciences also influence social science data. The genuine tension between the micro and the macro level – qualitative and quantitative approaches – poses the fundamental question: What can an individual case tell us about society, and what does a mass of data tell us about the individual case? This question occupies researchers who adopt a microhistorical approach, but also those who approach societal changes and patterns on the basis of macro-data. The ambition to generate knowledge about societies – in the case of transformation research about the upheaval of the communist regime – unites both perspectives.

Often the question emerges in this context as to how representative the individual case or the chosen examples are. Research strategies which try to combine both levels sit on the fence here. In the view of microhistory, the large is to be found in the small (Hiebl and Langthaler 2012). Moreover, multiple individual cases make it possible to recognize patterns or types that form a larger picture. For those who examine from the macroperspective, the question is how far the individual can still be seen behind the numbers. The level of generalization is both profitable and worthy of criticism. Both perspectives, the micro and the macro, are fully justified, but at the same time, they remain satisfying only to a limited extent. From the view of our research group, which looks to place the structures of the life-worlds, developed from case studies, in relation to society as a whole, a core question is: what exactly does representative mean?

The common self-description, taken as being representative in quantitative social research is, on closer consideration, an academic instrument, construct and a marketing strategy: in the internal conversation with social scientists, it quickly becomes clear that the concept of representativity underlies diverse assumptions and interpretations. In a statistical sense, representative means to examine conclusions or inferences about the population through varying statistical tests (Kohler and Kreuter 2012). The chosen sample is placed in relation to the population; this is possible, in particular, concerning census data. However, surveys such as the Saxonian Longitudinal Study often ask different questions than a micro-census and could thus only partly be put in relation to census data.

The protagonists of the SLS themselves wanted to find out for what its sample stood. To be able to still give statements about the representativity of the panel study, the data of the SLS were brought together with the SOEP data under the question “how representative is the data of the Saxonian Longitudinal Study?” (Berth et al. 2015). The SLS took the self-description of the SOEP for granted, and thus used one of the large, established, German panel studies as a role model. The SLS itself was subject to significant fluctuations, with the initial sample population having more than halved over the long period of data collection. Participant numbers in 2013/14 lay at 330 in comparison to the initial 1,407 participants in the spring of 1987. For the researchers, the data of the SOEP served as “a reference sample, on which basis the representativity of the SLS can be estimated” (Berth et al. 2015:48).¹⁰ SOEP questions were integrated into the questionnaires of the SLS and were asked in the 2013/2014 data collection cycle (Berth et al. 2015). The questions referenced topics such as life satisfaction, general feelings from the past four weeks, important values (for example, individual fulfillment, having children, being active in politics/society), the state of their health, and worries (Berth et al. 2015:54-6). Subsequently, the newly gathered data of the SLS participants were compared to 401 participants of the SOEP with the birth years 1971 to 1975, who had been born in the GDR. The authors came to the conclusion, on the basis of this comparison, that the answers from SLS participants varied only slightly from those of the

¹⁰ The Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) describes itself as a representative panel survey: SOEP. n.d. “Die Survey-Gruppe SOEP.” SOEP. Retrieved January 10, 2019 (https://www.diw.de/de/diw_02.c.221178.de/ueber_uns.html).

SOEP participants. Topics that varied included, for instance, bodily health and worries in various areas of their life, which were somewhat higher amongst the SLS participants (Berth et al. 2015:61). The researchers concluded that the SLS was representative (Berth et al. 2015).

From our perspective as historians, this means that a study is always as representative as the primary researchers define it to be. What matters more is that our historical project concentrates less on representativity than on plausible links between life-worlds and system, or rather system change. This makes the combination of qualitative and quantitative data particularly promising because both have their value. To connect them three steps seem to be necessary: First, we approach the case study in the form of a qualitative micro-case. On the basis of archival sources, media analysis, oral history and the secondary analysis of qualitative social science data, we analyze the structures of the life-worlds in upheaval. In the second step, we place the results of the case studies in relation to the quantitative data. Here the question of the system or the societal structures can be examined with the help of sources from social science transformation research. In the third step, which combines quantitative and qualitative dimensions, the question of the relationship between individual and system, life-world and system change is asked. Here we look less at the overall representativity of the study and more at the typicalities of the case studies in relation to societal structures. How far individual behavioral patterns and statistically-measurable frequencies fit together is a part of these questions. The first results indicate that there

are definite differences to be seen between patterns and frequencies. Within the Potsdam research group, the project on the restitution of residential property after 1989/90 in East Germany suggests that the East German occupants were 'statistically' very successful (Brückweh 2017b). They resisted the law that permitted claims to be filed for property left behind in the GDR before 1989. This so-called Vermögensgesetz (property law) had at its core the principle of 'return before compensation.' This meant that property that had been expropriated during the GDR years was to be returned to its previous owners, which led to differences with the sometimes long-term East German occupants. They used all the possibilities of the new Federal German system, for example, by using the media effectively in their protests or by founding interest groups. Quantitatively, they were effective in ensuring that the principle of 'return before compensation' was only partly carried out in practice. This can be interpreted as a success: some people did receive their property and the East German actors valued their property in case they became the owner. However – and this is a crucial point – they now regard this exercise as being doomed to failure; time was wasted and the quality of life deteriorated.

In order to situate an individual case, we neither want to generalize nor to negate the individual memory. In searching for typicalities in individual cases, we contextualize the individual experience in its relationship to society and the system. In this respect, the combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis makes an approximation of societal conditions and historical situations, of life-worlds

and system change. This shall now be shown on the basis of a situation of the qualitative and quantitative dimensions of the SLS.

Please Describe in as Much Detail as Possible: Open Questions in the SLS

The open questions of the SLS, in particular, from the years 1987 to 1995 offer a unique source for the historical research project 'The East German School as a Site of Life-worlds in Upheaval.' They enable direct insights into the thoughts and feelings of a large number of contemporary youths in a particular region (Saxony). These qualitative answers have not yet been evaluated. First, the qualitative statements illustrate the perspectives of the researchers as well as their assumptions about particularly relevant questions. References to contemporary societal discussions about changes within East Germany, as well as the personal interests of the researchers, can be identified (Berth et al. 2015a:24). A look into the original questionnaires illustrates particularly clearly Peter Förster's strategic attempts to take the youths of 1990 in upheaval seriously and to tie them to the study. Förster used occasional personal letter-based correspondences to ensure their continued participation (Förster 2002:9). These in part quite personal relationships can also be identified within the questionnaires. Particularly noteworthy is the questionnaire from 1990, at the end of which it stated:

We hereby would like to indicate our heartfelt thanks for your participation; we wish you all the best in the future and hope for future cooperation. You can approach us confidentially if you are concerned about further problems that have not come up in the ques-

tionnaire, or if you require the advice of experienced academics. (Questionnaire SLS 1990)

Some of the participants reacted to this invitation in their written replies with expressions such as: "perhaps you could give me advice on this" (Questionnaire SLS 1990, ID 35), "I would be very happy if you would let me know your thoughts on this topic. Many thanks!" (Questionnaire SLS 1990, ID 17). There are also greetings addressed personally to Förster.

Some answers which gave extensive information about the situation of the participants and which offer an insight into the topics they perceived as urgent are particularly useful for qualitative analysis. The open questions from 1990 and 1995 can be used as examples here. In 1990, two questions were sent to participants with the request to answer them "as extensively as they wished":

Three-quarters of a year has passed since you completed your time at the POS. When you think back on this time, how has the transition from school to your present occupation succeeded? Where are you unhappy, and where not? What problems or difficulties do you face? Are there serious conflicts? Please describe your current situation in its positive and negative aspects as extensively as you wish. (Questionnaire SLS 1990, Question 18)

Since the autumn of 1989, the GDR has been in societal upheaval, which strongly affects the lives of all citizens and raises many questions. Which questions and problems affect you in this context? Please give your detailed opinions on this. (Questionnaire SLS 1990, Question 19)

The participants answered these questions in various degrees. Replies range from no answer to extensive replies of up to three pages, in which they reported on problem situations and thoughts from their life-worlds. In their replies, two particular aspects emerge: their unsure futures and the fear of not being able to keep pace with the change of the societal system. This impression of the qualitative replies closely matches the quantitative results published by Peter Förster (2002).

In comparison with the statements from the oral history interviews, which we carried out in 2017 and in which past concerns about the future were hardly mentioned in retrospect, such concerns took up far more room in the SLS responses from 1990. One oral history partner, for instance, described that he had not felt any concerns about the future directly related to the upheaval.¹¹ He had concerned himself very little about the political upheaval and changes at school. In his biographical accounts, he described romantic relationships, music and what the weekend would look like as being far more important in his teenage years. This is in contrast to the worries and fears referenced in the replies to the SLS open questions of 1990. A direct comparison of the answers in the SLS and oral history interviews suggests a difference between the lived and remembered experiences in relation to the time of upheaval. While today's adults born between 1973 and 1975 tend to see the time of upheaval and their education positively in retrospect, and the fears of the time regarding their life experiences and courses as less serious, the answers to the SLS open questions show

a far more negative picture. In particular, the combination of SLS and oral history interviews opens a more in-depth insight into the complex processes of the *Wende* and post-*Wende* time.

The times before and after the upheaval are further covered in the SLS questionnaires. Here there are retrospective questions which ask for a comparison of the times before and after 1990. In 1995, the participants were asked to respond to the following question:

Over five years have passed since the reunification – time enough for you to have formed an opinion on the societal system in which we now live. Which personal experiences have you made in the new system? Please indicate those experiences you have deemed most important and those you have just thought of. Keywords suffice here. (Questionnaire SLS 1995, Question 55)

Assessments about unemployment and worries regarding childcare and the compatibility of work and family life are repeatedly to be found within the answers. In 1995, the respondents were 22 years old, an age which saw the first experiences with the often difficult transition from training into working life, and at which some were already making important future-looking decisions, such as family planning. A further aspect that becomes clear is the references to contemporary events both in the questions themselves but also on the side of those being asked. The answers to the SLS in 1990 often include questions such as 'what will become of the GDR?' and thoughts on the planned currency union or the speed of reunification. Some made questions of property a topic in 1990, thus making clear the synergy within the projects of the research group

¹¹ Interview with M. Bremer, April 21, 2017, Hamburg. Interviewer: Kathrin Zöller.

'The Longue Durée of 1989. Regime Change and Everyday Life in East Germany':

Lots of [West German]-citizens are coming over now and want to reclaim their expropriated property. I think this is a very delicate problem. On the one hand, I understand the tenants, but on the other hand, I also understand the owners. Because with what rights were they expropriated? Just because the government ordered it. For me, this was a clear case of theft. Why should people who had bought houses have them taken away from them? This was only the will of the communists. Of course, I don't have an answer to this problem, and I also don't know how you could please both parties, owners and occupants. (Questionnaire SLS 1990, Question 19, ID 05)

These and other topics regarding daily life and the system change were asked, in addition to the collection of quantitative data.

Please Tick a Box: Standardized Questions in the SLS

As a long-term panel study, the Saxonian Longitudinal Study depends on those questions asked repeatedly in each round of the survey. In almost all of the rounds from 1990 onwards there are also additional questions on contemporary events or opinions on planned changes (e.g., on the continued existence of the youth radio station DT 64).¹² Featured items were influenced by contemporary public discussions.¹³ For

¹² Questionnaire SLS 1991, Question 14: "Do you want Youth Radio DT 64 to be preserved? 1: Yes, 2: No, 3: I don't care."

¹³ See, for example, the German political magazine *Der Spiegel*, where the author describes the GDR as a booming market for drug dealers: "Der Stoff versaut das Land. Die kriminelle Erfolgsbranche der Dealer (I): Massenhafter Zulauf und unbegrenzte Gewinne." (Fleischhauer 1990). The effects of drug

example, the fourth round of 1990 asked for the first time about "feelings of threat," which from then on regularly featured in the survey questions: "How far do you feel threatened by a) – g)? 1 rather strongly, 2 strongly, 3 rather weakly, 4 weakly. a) the possibility of unemployment, b) increasing criminality, c) increasing immigration, d) increasing aggression and violence, e) spreading right-wing radicalization, f) spreading left-wing radicalization, g) increasing selfishness in relationships with others ('dog-eat-dog society')" (Questionnaire SLS 1990, Question 7). On the quantitative level, the measurements of the feelings of threat were highest at the beginning of the 1990s (Berth et al. 2015b:33).

The sequence of the questionnaires influenced the answers to the open questions, as they were positioned after the multiple-choice questions. Thus, when replying to the open questions, the participants had already been asked to tick boxes for different threats or worries. The preformulated answers to the standardized questions were sometimes taken up by the respondents in their responses to the open questions. This can be seen in the following example from 1990:

Since the autumn of 1989, the GDR has been undergoing social upheaval, which strongly influences the lives of every citizen and raises many questions. What are your questions and problems in this context? Please write down your considerations!

Problems that move me: How is it going to be with the drug trade and all the crime, I'm really scared! It wasn't so bad

consumption towards adolescents in the GDR were also examined by sociologists in the 1990s. See: Kappeler et al. 1999.

around here, and now it's supposed to come to us. I'm scared that one day I will lose my job and then just stand there. I would say we have to wait and see how everything will turn out. (Questionnaire SLS 1990, Question 19, ID 39)

Furthermore, it should be noted that the dimensions of before, during and after 1989 were already created within the questionnaires. Retrospective questions on the evaluation of one's own time at school and on life in the GDR were placed at regular intervals.¹⁴

One of the items used for the examination of representativity on the basis of the SOEP was the question of overall life satisfaction. This featured in every round of questions for both the SLS and SOEP (Berth et al. 2015). The question was part of the so-called Happiness Research, which, above all, examined people's overall life satisfaction (Schupp et al. 2013). In general, the SOEP data in the longitudinal study shows East Germans as less satisfied than West Germans (Schupp et al. 2013). This seems to be the case regardless of whether the individuals stayed in the East or moved to the West. However, the SOEP study published by Schupp et al. did not differentiate between different age cohorts. The age group surveyed in the SLS (born 1971-1975) showed no difference in comparison with the (East German) reference group of the SOEP (Berth et al. 2015:55,59). The question of life satisfaction and its development in the *longue durée* enables us to reach conclusions on the effects of 1989 on individuals. This needs

further investigation as does an intergenerational comparison among East Germans. The assumption that the so-called *Wendekinder* had greater opportunities and more knowledge on how to deal with the system change is made by protagonists who published their experiences and conclusions in the literature and in scientific approaches (Hensel 2002; Lettrari, Nestler and Troi-Boeck 2016). Some of them were part of the Third Generation East (*Dritte Generation Ost*) initiative, where East Germans born between 1975 and 1985 gather and regard themselves – in comparison to their parents – as a generation with a certain “Competence in Transformation” (Schulze 2015:243). One can assume that life satisfaction varies throughout the different age cohorts in East and West Germany but also between different social strata and different regions. Further qualitative and quantitative investigation is needed, especially from a long-term perspective.

The first results show that while the circumstances of upheaval are described as very threatening in contemporary sources, feelings of fear and worry reduce in the long-term perspective. These findings are evident in both the qualitative and quantitative data from the SLS, as well as in the descriptions given by the oral history interviewees of the same age. From oral history, we know that memories are always constructed and that, looking back, events in one's personal biography are often seen differently (Wierling 2002). The secondary analysis of qualitative and quantitative social science data has complimented the oral history by providing insights into memories and experiences on a regular basis since 1987. In short: the combination of quantitative and qualitative data in both the statistically-based longitudinal study and

¹⁴ See, for example: “The last questions go back to the time before the change, in the years 1987 to 1989, when you were still a student. Please remember it.” (Questionnaire SLS 1994, Questions 30-34).

the qualitative case study offers the potential to approach and compare between individual case types and the individual experience of the upheaval.

Social Sciences and Contemporary History: A productive encounter

The Saxonian Longitudinal Study, due to its diversity, offers material for a variety of questions. In view of the research project 'The East German School as a Site of Life-worlds in Upheaval,' a secondary analysis of the SLS data offers a unique source for the examination of experiences of upheaval of East German teenagers. In particular, the answers to the open questions – originally a side project of the quantitative study – are used as a historical source. On the one hand, the quantifiability of the data and the recognizable trends for comparison with other single case studies or oral history interviews are relevant. On the other hand, details found both in the additional comments in the original questionnaire and in the answers to the open questions point to patterns and individual problems. Of particular importance for the historical analysis are, for example, statements from individual participants, in which they mention concrete opinions on the topic of school, as in the following:

Three-quarters of a year has passed since you completed your time at the POS. When you think back on this time, how has the transition from school to your present occupation succeeded? Where are you unhappy, and where not? What problems or difficulties do you face? Are there serious conflicts? Please describe your current situation in its positive and negative aspects as extensively as you wish.

Currently, there is such a demoralizing mood, it makes you scared! And I ask myself, what is our Abitur [A-level] even worth? I hope that with the introduction of the federal state system in the GDR a lot will also change in the world of education. For one thing, back to the four-year Abitur!!! The best pedagogues warned against the two-year Abitur. Clearly they knew better in Berlin. We can see where it led to! And we are the 'victims' of this education policy! A big problem at the EOS [High School] is the subjects Russian and 'Society Studies'! Everyone asks why we still even need Russian. Why do they still examine it? The majority would rather learn French! We were guaranteed that the subject 'Society Studies' would be a completely different subject to 'Citizenship Studies.' It is questionable if that is even possible when the teacher is the same. Both subjects are identical!!! What did they even think about the concept of the new history book for year 11? I feel like I've returned to the 'old days'! They clearly did not fully recognize the signs of the times. Conclusion: freedom of opinion in school has clearly not been achieved yet! There is a lot left to do... (Questionnaire SLS 1990, Question 18, ID 19)

This text example allows us to identify painful points regarding the system change and its implementation in the life-worlds of the school. The teenagers listed as problems the quality of the lessons, inadequate subject preparation in secondary schools and the simultaneously raised pressure, with which they could hardly keep pace. All in all, the GDR schools and the organization of the years of upheaval between 1989 and 1991 lost out. All the more astonishing is how the SLS respondents become more and more positive towards the GDR school system as they get older. No longer does the narrative dominate that they were victims of the education policy; instead, the majority of the SLS participants share the opinion that schools in the GDR communicated important principles and

were better compared to the current system (Berth et al. 2015b). A similar story of loss is identifiable in the topic of the restitution of residential property; even though the historical actors resisted and changed the law effectively, which is also measured in statistics, they tell a different narrative today. In the case of restitution, the decision-making process took quite a long time in some areas – on average between three and ten years; this time of undecided circumstances and the related insecurities play a crucial role in today's evaluation. Linking the quantitative and qualitative analysis thus brings out interesting tensions which are central to the interplay of life-worlds and system change.

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Through the secondary analysis of qualitative and quantitative social science data, which complements the 'classical' sources of historical research, insights into different times in the historical process are opened up for historical analysis. Through this, a change in memories and experiences becomes visible. The varied sources are not ordered hierarchically; rather, they complement each other in the sense of interdisciplinary cooperation between social scientists and historians. Historical analyses, which combine life-worlds and system change, and thus institutions and the everyday, remain in the beginning phase, both thematically and methodologically.

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Citation

Brückweh, Kerstin and Zöller, Kathrin. 2019. "Transformation Research and the Longue Durée of 1989: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Data." *Przeгляд Socjologii Jakościowej* 15(1):72-91. Retrieved Month, Year (www.przehladsocjologiiakosciowej.org). DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18778/1733-8069.15.1.05>.