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Following the destruction of the Berlin wall and the collapse of socialism in the Eastern bloc, the East German state, officially called the 'German Democratic Republic' (*'Deutsche Demokratische Republik'*) or 'GDR' was dissolved and incorporated into a reunified Germany on 3rd October 1990. Prior to this, the two halves of Berlin had developed separately for forty years, each self-consciously asserting its own distinctiveness in relation to the other. This was very much manifested in the physical landscapes of the two sides.

Over the forty years of the GDR's lifetime, hundreds of memorial plaques as well as multiple stone and bronze monuments were erected; these included monuments to GDR politicians, socialist heroes such as Lenin and memorials to those involved in 'anti-fascist' resistance movements. These were so numerous that all GDR citizens would have encountered them frequently in everyday life or in state ceremonies. I aimed to investigate how these monuments have been dealt with by Berlin's authorities over the past 25 years following the reunification of Germany, and how former citizens of East Berlin have experienced the monuments as material remnants of the GDR past.

This research forms the basis of my final year dissertation. As I am in the department of social anthropology, the bulk of my fieldwork was ethnographic – consisting of interviews and participant observation – with some archival work too. I lived in Berlin for six weeks in the district of Prenzlauerberg, formerly in East Berlin, a five-minute walk away from the *Volkspark Friedrichshain* ('people's park' of Friedrichshain, the neighbouring district). For the most part, my ethnographic research was carried out in and around the *Volkspark*, speaking to those that frequented it and observing the ways in which they used the monument sites as spaces.

I was most interested in talking to former residents of the GDR who had lived in that same area since before the political 'turn' of 1989-90, known to Germans as *'die Wende'*, since I wanted to find out how they had experienced the physical changes in this part of the city over time. Adjacent to the park is *'Platz der Vereinten Nationen'* ('Square of the United Nations') where a 19-metre-tall statue of Lenin used to stand. This statue was dismantled by order of Berlin's governing body in 1991 to much local protest. Its constituent parts were buried in a secluded forest on the outskirts of Berlin. Twenty-five years later, the statue's head has been unearthed and in 2016 will be displayed in a museum exhibition amongst other historical monuments from Berlin. The 1991 controversy, the recent plans to musealise the Lenin-head and the reaction of former GDR citizens to this became a main focus of my fieldwork. I also interviewed members of the Berlin Monument Authority who had been involved in the decision-making processes relating to the management of GDR monuments. My dissertation centres around the ways in which the material traces of a past epoch become designated as historical objects, and how this move from provocative and political to unprovocative and historical is supported or contested by different parties or individuals.